



**GREATER
MANCHESTER**
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

General Fire Safety Advice

**Complying with the Fire Safety
Order and what to expect if GMFRS
inspects your premises**

September 2023

Introduction

Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS) is committed to ensuring the safety of the Greater Manchester community through our prevention, protection, and response activity. As the enforcing authority for the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (the Fire Safety Order) we undertake inspections of a wide range of premises across Greater Manchester.

This information provides a basic overview of responsibilities under the Fire Safety Order and explains when and how we will inspect premises and the information you will be asked about as part of an inspection. It also details the powers of our inspectors who carry out these visits and your rights if we inspect your premises.

Responsibility for Fire Safety

The Fire Safety Order applies to most premises. How the premises is used will determine who is responsible for fire safety – this is ‘the responsible person’. The responsible person has overall responsibility for fire safety in the premises.

In a **workplace** the Fire Safety Order says **the responsible person is the employer** if they have any control over the premises. The employer can be an individual, a company or another type of organisation for example a public body, a charity or a trust. In a workplace the responsible person has responsibility for ensuring that the of the requirements of the Fire Safety Order are complied with even if some parts of this are contracted out to another party.

In a premises which is **not a workplace**, for example a sports club, a block of flats or a community hall the Fire Safety Order says **the responsible person is the person in control of the premises** because they carry out a business, trade or other undertaking. The person in control can be an individual, a company or another type of organisation for example a charity or a membership society. In this type of premises, the responsible person has responsibility for ensuring that any requirements of the Fire Safety Order which are within their control are complied with.

If the premises is not a workplace and there is no individual or organisation in control, the **responsible person is the owner**. Where the responsible person is the

owner of the premises, they are responsible for ensuring that any requirements of the Fire Safety Order which are within their control are complied with.

As well as the responsible person there may be other people who have responsibility for complying with the Fire Safety Order – for example if managing fire safety is part of their job or they carry out work to fire safety provisions in the premises.

This information sheet is intended to assist anyone who has responsibility for fire safety in a premises to prepare for an inspection.

Duties under the Fire Safety Order

The Fire Safety Order is concerned with making sure that premises are safe for people in the event of a fire. It requires the responsible person to take steps to reduce the likelihood of a fire occurring and spreading and to ensure that if a fire does occur people in the premises do not come to any harm from the fire.

There is guidance available from the Government for different types of premises and this is free to download from the Government website www.gov.uk under '[Fire Safety law and guidance documents for business](#)'. You can find this by going to the Government website and searching for 'fire safety'.

Fire Risk Assessment

The starting point to ensure the safety of a premises is a requirement to make a **fire risk assessment**. This is a systematic approach to considering the risk to people from fire and what measures need to be put in place to ensure people are safe.

For most premises the fire risk assessment should follow the five step approach:

1. Identify fire hazards
2. Identify people at risk
3. Evaluate, remove, reduce and protect from risk
4. Record, plan, inform, instruct and train
5. Review

In large or complex premises, you may need to follow a more detailed methodology for making a fire risk assessment for example the approach set out in 'PAS 79-1:2020 Fire risk assessment. Premises other than housing'.

The Fire Safety Order does not require you to appoint someone external to help you to make a fire risk assessment and for most types of premises by following the relevant Government Guidance you should be able to make your own fire risk assessment.

If you do not think you have the ability to carry out the Fire Risk Assessment yourself and decide to appoint someone to do it for you it is recommended that you satisfy yourself that they are competent. The Fire Sector Federation has produced '[A Guide to Choosing a Competent Fire Risk Assessor](#)' which can be accessed along with other advice on the [National Fire Chief Council's website](#).

For most premises it is not currently a legal requirement to record your fire risk assessment but in future when changes are made to the Fire Safety Order all premises will be required to record the fire risk assessment. These changes will come into force from 1st October 2023 and it is recommended that you start to document the fire risk assessment as this will help you plan your fire safety arrangements and regularly review the fire risk assessment.

From 1st October 2023 the Fire Safety Order will change and all fire risk assessments will need to be recorded in writing.

The fire risk assessment must be reviewed regularly so it is kept up to date and particularly if you have reason to believe it is no longer valid or there has been a change to the premises, how you use the premises or the type of work carried out.

Fire Safety Arrangements

Your fire risk assessment will identify what you need to do to ensure the premises are safe – this includes what fire safety provisions you need and also how you manage fire safety in the premises for example how you communicate and practice your emergency procedures and what training staff must be given.

The Fire Safety Order requires you to make arrangements for the **effective planning, organisation, control, monitoring and review** of the measures you have in place to prevent fires and protect people from fires.

This means you must think about your fire safety arrangements and actively manage them through for example making sure you have systems in place for advising people what to do if there is a fire and carrying out evacuation drills. As part of your fire safety arrangements you should have systems in place to make sure any fire safety provisions – like fire alarms and emergency lighting are tested and serviced to ensure they work effectively.

For most premises it is not currently a legal requirement to record your fire safety arrangements but this will become a legal requirement from the 1st October 2023. It is recommended good practice that document your fire safety arrangements as this will help you plan and monitor the effectiveness of them and helps you demonstrate you are complying with your responsibilities under the Fire Safety Order.

From 1st October 2023 the Fire Safety Order will change and fire safety arrangements will need to be recorded for all premises.

Fire detection and warning

The Fire Safety Order requires you to keep people safe if there is a fire by ensuring they are warned about the fire so they can leave the premises. This is normally achieved through having a fire alarm in the premises.

Your fire risk assessment should identify how you will alert people in the event of a fire and the Government Guidance for your type of premises will provide further advice on this.

The type of system you use must be appropriate for the size and layout of the premises as well as the type of business. For example, in small low risk premises where small number of people are present, simply shouting “Fire, fire, fire!” may be acceptable.

In larger more complex premises with large numbers of “relevant persons”, an automatic fire detection and warning system is likely to be necessary.

Where you have a fire alarm system you must ensure you have a system of place to ensure it is maintained in efficient working order and good repair. As part of your system of maintenance and to ensure the effective operation of any fire alarm system, routine inspections and tests should be undertaken in accordance with a recognised standard.

The most commonly recognised standard for fire alarms is British Standard 5839: Part 1, which indicates the frequencies as follows:

- Daily checks
- Weekly test
- Periodic inspection and test by a competent person (i.e. six-monthly, annual service)
- Non-routine test (e.g. inspection and test of the system following a fire)

The requirements of BS 5839 for testing and maintaining fire alarms are included in the Government Guidance for different premises types.

It is recommended that all tests and maintenance of your fire alarm is recorded in a logbook. This is a way of showing compliance with the Fire Safety Order.

From the 1st October 2023 you must record your testing and maintenance in writing as part of your fire safety arrangements.

When planning when and how often you are going to test your fire alarm you should think about the people who work there and their working times. If you decide to carry out a weekly test at the same time every week, it may be necessary to carry out additional tests to ensure all employees are familiar with the sound of the alarm.

If you have an automatic fire alarm and utilise the services of an Alarm Receiving Centre or Fire Alarm Monitoring Organisation you should ensure that they have up to date information about your premises. GMFRS does not respond to automatic fire alarms in most premises during the day unless there is a confirmed fire. You can find advice on reducing false alarms on our website www.manchesterfire.gov.uk by searching for ‘[False Alarms](#)’.

Fire-fighting Equipment

Your fire risk assessment will determine the need for any sort of fire-fighting equipment in your premises. Types of fire-fighting systems and equipment include:

- Sprinklers and drenchers
- Wet and dry risers
- Foam systems
- Fire extinguishers

The most common fire-fighting equipment found in premises is fire extinguishers. The number and type of extinguisher should be correct for your premises. How many extinguishers you need and what type they are should be identified as part of your fire risk assessment.

If you have fire extinguishers, you should ensure only appropriately trained persons should be asked to use them.

A competent person should service the extinguishers, normally every 12 months. Between services, the extinguishers should be regularly checked to ensure:

- The pressure gauge is in the correct position
- It is not due or overdue a service
- No signs of rust, leaks etc.
- The safety pin in place and no evidence of tampering
- It is sited correctly and with appropriate signage in place

Emergency Routes and Exits

All escape routes should lead to a fire exit that should, in most cases, open outwards. This exit may be a usual entrance / exit from the building or an emergency exit. Fire exits may be locked when the premises is not in use but must be available for use when anyone is using the premises – this means that they should not be locked or fastened in such a way that they can't be easily and quickly opened.

Emergency routes and exits must be kept clear with no obstructions narrowing or preventing routes and exits from use.

In larger premises where the emergency exit doors are not immediately visible and obvious are likely to need emergency signage. Wherever you are positioned in a premises, you should be able to see at least one sign, showing a fire exit or escape

route. These should be positioned above doors, at any change in direction or change of level. Any fire assembly points should also be clearly marked.

Where your emergency routes and exits do not have any natural or borrowed lighting so if without your normal lighting it would be dark, you should have emergency lighting. Your fire risk assessment will determine whether emergency lighting is required or not. The emergency lighting may not be as bright as the usual lighting but will allow persons enough lighting to escape. Emergency lighting should illuminate:

- Escape routes
- Fire exits
- Exit signs
- Safety equipment (i.e. fire-fighting equipment, first aid points)

It is recommended that all tests and maintenance of your emergency lighting system is recorded in a logbook. This is a way of showing compliance with the Fire Safety Order.

From the 1st October 2023 you must record your testing and maintenance in writing as part of your fire safety arrangements.

Where emergency lighting is required, the system should have a visual check daily, be tested monthly and be serviced by a competent person (usually annually).

Fire Doors

Fire doors play an important role in preventing the spread of fire and smoke should a fire occur in your premises. Therefore, the maintenance of them is important. A fire door found to be damaged or defective should be repaired or replaced.

Fire doors should be inspected on a regular basis. The following points should be considered when an inspection is carried out:

- Any self-closing devices ensure that the doors close completely
- When the door is in the closed position, there must not be any large gaps that would allow the passage of smoke and flame.
- The fire door should have the appropriate signage provided (i.e., “Fire Door Keep Shut” or “Fire Door Keep Locked Shut”)

Fire doors must not be wedged because they are there to protect people in the building from fire and smoke if they need to evacuate.

Emergency Procedures

The Fire Safety Order requires you to establish procedures to be followed if there is an emergency. This will normally be how you evacuate the premises if there is, or you believe there is, a fire – this is often referred to as an **emergency plan**. In developing your emergency plan, you need to consider the following:

- How people will know there is a fire
- Who is responsible for calling 999 and requesting the Fire Service
- How people will escape the premises - which routes and exits they should use and how anyone not familiar with the premises will be directed out of the premises
- Where people should assemble outside the premises
- How you will ensure that everyone has left the premises
- Who will liaise with Firefighters when they arrive

You should test your emergency procedures through carrying out regular drills.

From the 1st October 2023 you must record your emergency procedures in writing as part of your fire safety arrangements.

You should ensure that the emergency plan is available to people who need to understand it - this might be through fire action notices displayed throughout the premises and staff briefings and training if people work in the premises.

You must nominate enough people to carry out your plan and they should be competent – that means they have sufficient training and experience or other knowledge to carry out the procedures.

Staff Training

The Fire Safety Order requires employers to ensure that their staff are provided with adequate training when they are first employed and on a periodic basis.

The training should be appropriate to the risks identified by your fire risk assessment and may be different dependant on the employee's role. The type of training should

be based on the how you use the premises, the risks and your emergency procedures. The training should:

- Consider the findings of the fire risk assessment
- Explain the emergency procedures
- Consider the work activities and explain the duties and responsibilities of staff
- Explain how and when and fire-fighting equipment should be used
- Take place during normal working hours and be repeated at frequent intervals
- Be tested by fire drills (i.e., block a usual exit so that employees have to use an exit they are less familiar with)

It is recommended that you document your staff training including the content, how it has been delivered and details of staff who have been trained and the date they were trained.

From the 1st October 2023 you must record your staff training procedures in writing as part of your fire safety arrangements.

Dangerous substances

There are additional measures that you must take if you have dangerous substances on your premises. Dangerous substances include **substances which are explosive, oxidising, flammable, highly flammable or extremely flammable.**

This type of substance will usually have a recognised mark. Dangerous substances also include **substances which create a risk because of their physico-chemical or chemical properties** and **dust which can form an explosive mixture with air or an explosive atmosphere.**

If you have dangerous substances on your premises, you should ensure that you comply with any guidance from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) on their use

and storage. The HSE website contains detailed guidance and can be accessed at www.hse.gov.uk.

The Fire Safety Order requires you to take steps to eliminate or reduce as far as reasonably practicable the risks to people from the presence of dangerous substances. You must also take additional steps as part of your emergency procedures in relation to accidents, incidents or emergencies which relate to the dangerous substances.

It is recommended that if you have dangerous substances present you ensure that you understand your legal responsibilities in relation to these and where necessary seek specialist advice.

GMFRS inspections of premises

GMFRS Fire Safety Inspectors carry out inspections under the Fire Safety Order to ensure that premises are safe, and the responsible person is complying with the Fire Safety Order.

In most cases we will give advance notice that we are planning to carry out an inspection. If we receive a complaint or information that the Fire Safety Order is not being complied with, an inspection can be carried out without giving notice. The powers of our inspectors under the Fire Safety Order are set out at the end of this document along with the rights of any one whose premises is inspected.

Audits

Most of our inspections will involve the premises being audited - this is in line with national guidance and involves discussing the fire risk assessment and fire safety arrangements with the responsible person or someone acting on their behalf - for example an employee or agent.

In advance of an audit we will write to you to provide an appointment time and how long we think the audit will take – we will also tell you what the inspector will need to see.

In order to establish whether the requirements of the Fire Safety Order are being complied with Inspectors will need to ask some questions before carrying out a physical inspection of the premises.

These questions will be focussed on how you have identified the risk of fire in your premises and what steps you are taking to manage these risks. They are intended to establish what training and procedures you have in place, what fire safety provisions you have in the premises (for example a fire alarm, fire extinguishers or emergency lighting) and how these are tested and maintained and how you ensure that emergency routes and exits can be used safely.

As part of an audit the inspector may ask to see any documents you hold relating to fire safety and this includes;

- The fire risk assessment
- Any testing and maintenance records for your fire alarm, fire fighting equipment and emergency lighting
- Records of staff training
- Emergency procedures to be followed if there is a fire

If the premises being audited is licensed or the responsible person employs five or more people this information should already be documented and made available to the inspector.

As part of our audits our inspectors will need to look around the premises to make sure:

- Any fire alarm and fire-fighting equipment is appropriate for the premises and is in working order
- Fire doors are in good condition
- Emergency routes and exits are signed and kept clear
- Any emergency lighting is working and is in the right locations
- Any fire safety provisions are in good working order

Inspections

If we visit a premises in response to a complaint or due to a concern and the responsible person or an authorised representative is not available, then it may not

be possible for us to undertake an audit of the premises. In these cases, we may ask some questions of anyone who is on site and carry out a physical inspection of the premises – we will look at the same areas as we would when carrying out an audit.

If we have concerns about the fire safety standards, we may return to carry out a full audit of the premises.

What happens after an audit or inspection

The outcome of our visits will depend on whether we are satisfied that the Fire Safety Order is being complied with and if the premises are safe.

In all cases we will write to you to confirm our findings and explain what, if any, action you need to take.

If you are complying with the Fire Safety Order and we are satisfied the premises are safe we will write to you and confirm this. We may include advice about how you can ensure the premises remains safe and small steps you can take to improve your fire safety arrangements.

If we consider that you are taking most steps necessary to comply with the Fire Safety Order but need to make some small improvements, we will write to you and set out which requirements of the Fire Safety Order you are not fully complying with and the action you need to take.

If we consider that you are not complying with a number of requirements of the Fire Safety Order, then we are likely to take formal action through an **Enforcement Notice**. This will set out which requirements of the Fire Safety Order are not being complied with and why that is the case and specify the action you need to take and a date by when this must be done.

If we serve an Enforcement Notice we will carry out further inspections of the premises to ensure that you have taken the necessary action. If you do not comply with an Enforcement Notice then you will be committing a **criminal offence** and depending on the circumstances you could be prosecuted.

If during an audit or inspection, we find that the premises is dangerous, and people would be at risk if there was a fire we will take immediate action. This can involve a **Prohibition Notice** being served which prohibits or restricts the use of the premises immediately or from a specified date and time.

A Prohibition Notice will specify why we think the use of the premises is putting people at risk and what needs to be done to reduce the risk. A Prohibition Notice does not give you a date by which you must take action and it is your responsibility to contact us once you have taken the action the notice states you must take.

If a Prohibition Notice is served it is a **criminal offence** to use the premises in a way it says you shouldn't and you could be prosecuted. If a Prohibition Notice is served, we will usually also serve an Enforcement Notice to ensure the premises is made safe.

Contacting us

When we write to you to arrange an inspection or confirm the outcome we will provide you with the details of the Fire Safety Inspector who will be visiting your premises. If you are not clear about what is expected from you or you do not understand the letters that they send you can contact them for further advice.

If you have a general enquiry you can contact us via email at FireSafetySupport@manchesterfire.gov.uk or via phone on 0800 555 815 between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday.

Tell us how we did

We are committed to continually improving the way we deliver our services and seeking feedback after our inspections. Once we have inspected your premises we will ask you to provide feedback on how we did. This is through an online survey which is hosted on the GM Consult platform and can be accessed via this link [GMFRS Customer Insight - Fire Safety Inspection Feedback - Greater Manchester](#)

[Combined Authority - Citizen Space \(gmconsult.org\)](http://gmconsult.org) or scanning this QR Code:



If you are not happy with the service you have received from us you can make a complaint under our Complaints Procedure which can be found on our website or by emailing complaints@manchesterfire.gov.uk