

## Risk Assessments in Business Premises

As from October 1<sup>st</sup> all businesses employing more than 5 people have to appoint a “Responsible Person” who will have a duty to undertake a fire risk assessment in the business premises and ensure that the working conditions are safe for staff and visitors.

Guidance to Employers has been issued and this instructs employers to:

- Carry out a fire risk assessment of your premises try using the five step guide overleaf
- Take action to reduce or remove risks
- Put in place fire precautions to protect against any remaining risks
- Regularly review your risk assessment and keep it up to date especially if there are any significant changes to the building or the activities in it or if you have reason to suspect that it might no longer be valid (for example if a fire occurs).”

A leaflet circulated by the DCLG (formerly the ODPM) presents this as 5 points, given below in brief:

1. Identify Fire Hazards - Where can a fire start
2. Identify People at Risk – Who will be affected
3. Evaluate, Reduce Risk, Protect
4. Record, Plan, Train
5. Review and Revise

Number 3 of these directs the Responsible Person to the premises and instructs:

“What do you need to do to ensure safety” then says that in the event of a fire:

**“Can you stop it spreading quickly?”**

**“How will people escape?”**

In order to stop the fire spreading and ensure that escape routes are available the responsible person needs to:

### Identify all escape routes

**Identify all Fire Separating Elements (FSE):** These will be those walls and/or ceilings that make up or surround escape routes and other parts of the building that divide it into areas of manageable risk.

<p><i>The objective of compartmentation and Fire Separating Elements is to keep the fire and smoke in the compartment of origin and so limit the damage and allow such things as sprinklers to control the fire.</i></p>
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## Passive Fire Protection Federation

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Having identified the **FSE** and **the fire rating of each such element** the Responsible Person should:

- Check that all escape routes are clear of impediments to escape such as stored goods, equipment or waste matter
- Check that all openings in the FSE are sound, these could be:
  - Doors in the FSE which will be fire rated to a required level,
  - Windows
  - Penetrations for services such as cables and pipes which may be hidden behind ceilings or in other cavities such as service ducts or shafts
  - Ductwork
  - Emergency Lighting
  - Signage
- Check for and seal with appropriate materials any gaps around walls, ceilings or other partitions through which smoke and flames could pass
- Check that the basic structure is sound and that any steel frame work which has added fire protection has not had that protection damaged or otherwise compromised in any way
- Check that any fire curtains or other emergency barriers are in good operating condition and not compromised
- Check any roof space or other hidden areas and ensure that FSE continue up to roof level and that any fire barriers within such spaces are continuous and in sound condition. Check also that any services within such areas are properly sealed at any point where they pass through an FSE
- Ensure that any maintenance of these elements that is found to be required and that any work on the building in future is undertaken by suitably qualified people working with fire rated materials. Any work that has an impact on the structure of the building must clearly identify the FSE and require that they be left sound and that their fire rating is not compromised

Guidance on Best Practice in PFP may be found by clicking on that section of this website where details of all types of PFP will be found together with the source of further detailed information from Member Organisations.

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