**Do you have paying guests?**

If so, fire safety law applies to you,

and you must take action.

**A guide to complying**

**with fire safety law**

**for people who**

**provide guest accommodation in**

**smaller premises**

**NFCC and HMG/ HO and DCMS branding**

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**Scope**

**If you receive payment for providing accommodation for guests in England and Wales, fire safety law applies to you.**

Fire safety law applies to you if anyone pays to stay in your property, or room, other than to live there as a permanent home. This is the case whether you rent your space for one night or much longer.

This guide is specifically for owners of holiday accommodation which:

* is to be occupied by not more than ten persons;
* has sleeping rooms only on the ground and first floors;
* does not act as the principal residence for paying guests;
* does not have a single storey area over 200m2
* has an escape route from bedrooms that is via a hall or stairway with at least one direct exit to the outside.

It also has limited application to smaller types of open plan accommodation, such as glamping pods, lodges etc.

If your property is outside any of these limited categories, the basic fire safety measures and advice in this guide may not be appropriate. You should instead refer to the detailed guidance for sleeping accommodation available here: <https://fireengland.uk/fire-safety-law-work-and-public-places/fire-risk-assessments>. If you are looking to convert an exsting premises or building to make it suitable for short-term holiday lets, you should contact the local planning authority and building control body.

The guide sets out:

* your responsibilities under the law
* how to undertake a fire risk assessment
* practical advice on what fire safety measures may be appropriate to provide an adequate level of fire safety
* where you can go for further information

**However you advertise your property for paying guests, you have a responsibility to make sure your guests are safe from fire.**

**Your responsibilities under the law**

**What must I do?**

The fire safety law that applies to short-term guest sleeping accommodation is the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. It is all about keeping people safe; taking steps to reduce the likelihood of fire and making sure that, in the event of a fire, people are alerted and can escape safely.

**You must:**

* carry out a fire risk assessment
* if necessary, improve your fire safety measures to:
  + ensure sufficient fire detection and warning is in place
  + provide safe escape routes that are kept clear
* ensure those on the premises know what to do in the event of a fire or on hearing an alarm.
* keep the risks, and your fire safety measures, under review

A fire risk assessment is something you may be able to do yourself. In many cases, particularly in smaller premises, it may be relatively simple. You will need to identify and assess thoroughly the risks on your premises and then put in place measures to minimise these risks and keep people safe. You will need to consider the people who are likely to use them, including older people, very young children and those with disabilities and how they will escape in the event or an incident.

You are required to review the risk assessment regularly and make sure the fire safety measures in place are maintained in good working order. The requirements will vary from premises to premises and should be proportionate to their specific risks. An annual review is usually appropriate, or following a significant change or incident.

**The law applies to all short term lets – even if you rent out a room in your home only once.**

**Where can I get help?**

This guide explains the fire risk assessment process and gives you some advice on what arrangements **may** be suitable to protect your premises.

In most cases, property owners are best placed to consider the fire risks in their premises – and this guide will help you to do that. More detailed and technical advice is available from the fire safety risk assessment guide for sleeping accommodation. You can download a free copy of the guidance from the links on page XX.

If you don’t have the time or expertise, or your building is large or complicated, you may wish to employ a fire risk assessor or consultant to help you. The National Fire Chiefs Council makes available guidance for choosing a competent fire risk assessor, which is available here: <https://www.nationalfirechiefs.org.uk/Finding-fire-risk-assessor>. Please note that if you get help from someone else to complete your fire risk assessment you remain legally responsible, so carry out reasonable checks that the contractor is suitably competent.

You can also contact your local fire and rescue service for more guidance and support. **Your local fire and rescue service cannot carry out the risk assessment for you.** But, they may be able to help you work through issues relating to the fire safety of your premises.

**Taking the time to carry out and act on your fire risk assessment protects you, your guests, your premises and your business.**

**Fire safety advice**

**What you need will depend on your business and your premises and whether you or other staff will be present when guests stay. The law does not require any particular measures to be in place. What it does say is that you must adequately manage the overall risk.**

There is likely to be a range of fire safety measures possible in individual premises. As the person responsible for fire safety in your premises, you will need to use your judgement to decide what is most appropriate. You need to consider:

* the hazards you have found
* the risks to – and the needs of – those staying or working there, and
* the character of the building. For example, what may be appropriate in a single room let as holiday accommodation in a home is unlikely to be the same as for a 300-year old self-catering holiday home.

**All premises are different, as are the people who own, manage or stay in them. What may be considered good enough protection in one premises may not be considered good enough in another.**

**The fire risk assessment is crucial in determining the appropriate measures for your premises and must be specific to it.**

In this guide, we offer you some practical advice on what measures may be suitable for many smaller, more domestic-type premises within its scope. More advice on a fuller range of specific and technical measures that you may need to consider – particularly if you have larger or more complex premises – is available in the ‘Fire Safety Risk Assessment: Sleeping Accommodation’ guidance. You can download this for free here: <https://fireengland.uk/fire-safety-law-work-and-public-places/fire-risk-assessments>.

**Fire detection and warning**

Smaller domestic-style guest accommodation (ground and first floor) which only has two or three guest bedrooms and short travel distances to a safe place outside is likely to need interconnected smoke alarms in all circulation spaces and rooms off. This means that any part of the escape route and areas where a fire might start need smoke or heat detection, including the kitchen – although they are not required in bathrooms, shower rooms or toilets. If roof voids contain any combustible materials or sources of ignition, fire detection should also be present there. This is technically known as category LD1 fire alarm system under British Standard 5839 part 6. The smoke alarms should be linked to a heat alarm in the kitchen and high risk rooms.

*Testing and maintenance*

Whatever types and number of alarms you fit, you will need to test them regularly – at least monthly and with every changeover – to check they work and are loud enough to wake anyone sleeping. Manufacturers also provide recommendations on other necessary maintenance, so check the manufacturer’s guidance. Specialist systems, based on vibration units and flashing lights, are available to protect people with hearing difficulties.

*False alarms*

The location of alarms is important to provide an early warning of fire, but also to reduce the chance of a false alarm. Don’t put smoke alarms in or near kitchens or bathrooms where smoke or steam can set them off by accident.

**Remember, this is just a guide. Your fire risk assessment should help you choose a suitable detection system. Larger premises are likely to need a more sophisticated system with a control panel and manual call points.**

**Means of escape**

You are required to ensure that it must be possible for guests and staff to evacuate the premises as quickly and as safely as possible in the event of a fire. Emergency routes and exits must lead as directly as possible to a place of safety.

*Providing information*

As well as providing emergency information on what to do when an alarm goes off, you need to make sure that any escape routes can be used safely. An escape route includes any rooms, corridors and stairs which you have to go through to escape from a building. They should be kept clear. External exit routes should be suitable for use by disabled people, other vulnerable people or children. If this is not achievable, the premises should be clearly advertised and marketed as not suitable for disabled, vulnerable people or children.

If an alarm goes off during the night when people are asleep they will evacuate more quickly if you have told them what they need to do at the beginning of their stay.

A simple plan and drawing may be useful for guests. This could include instructions on the back of the bedroom door and information in a welcome pack maybe useful for guests, including advice on how to call the emergency services and location details, especially If the post code might not lead to fire and rescue service access. Guests should be told to leave the building by the identified route if a fire breaks out. The fire and rescue service should be contacted from outside the premises.

*Doors*

You should keep all doors which open onto escape routes closed, especially at night.

This is very important in the case of a kitchen, if provided. If you leave doors open, it is less likely you will escape safely, even if the room has a heat alarm. Self-closing devices are a good way to make sure doors are closed, they can impact on appearance and affect how you use the premises. If you decide these would be unsuitable, ‘in-frame closers’ may be acceptable alternatives. Keeping doors closed, especially at night, can help prevent the spread of fire.

Doors (and walls protecting escape routes) need to be strong enough to hold back smoke and fire long enough to give you time to escape. For small premises, a reasonably solid timber door that fits well into its frame is likely to be good enough.

Exit doors, such as the front or back door, should always be easy to unlock and

must not need a key to unlock them from the inside. A simple latch or thumb

turn is usually good enough. However, you may need to consider whether all guests are able to open these doors – a simple action turn handle or lever may be more appropriate.

*Consider the guest*

Someone staying in your short-term accommodation let is unlikely to be familiar with the premises. Escape plans need to be appropriate for the whole range of potential guests, considering age, mobility and language. This means that allowing for escape through a first-floor window is unlikely to be suitable. It is not acceptable or appropriate to rely on the intervention of the fire and rescue service to evacuate guests or staff.

Guidance titled ‘Means of Escape for Disabled People’ is available to help you consider the needs of disabled people and is available for free download here: <https://fireengland.uk/fire-safety-law-work-and-public-places/planning-escape-routes>.

*Open plan*

Premises with an open plan layout present a unique challenge for protecting escape routes. Escape routes via an open plan layout, a lounge or a kitchen may require enhanced fire detection, automatic fire suppression systems or additional measures to reduce risks. For example – replace gas cookers with electric cookers, install automatic cooker cut off devices, replace open fires with safer heaters, prohibit smoking and candles within the premises, prohibit deep fat frying. You may need specialist advice to consider fire suppression systems or specific fire engineering solutions.

*Emergency escape lighting*

Normal light switches should be easy to find. If a fire trips the electrical supply, you should think about whether any ‘borrowed lighting’, for example from nearby street lamps, would be enough to allow people on the premises to find their way out. If not, it may be acceptable to rely on rechargeable torches which come on automatically if the electrical supply fails. You should have one in each room, with a sign that says what they are for.

Larger premises will need more sophisticated emergency lighting systems.

*Fire escape signs*

Signs are only required where they are needed. In small premises, the escape route and the front door are likely to be obvious, so there may not be a need for emergency exit signs. You should include details of the escape route in the information pack you give to guests.

You should have emergency exit directional signs showing any less obvious or more complicated escape routes.

**Firefighting equipment**

Evacuating the premises is the safest thing to do. If you provide firefighting equipment, staff – if you have them on site or if they regularly visit the premises – need to be trained on how to use them. You will need to make sure that the instructions on how to use any firefighting equipment are clear and that there is a warning that evacuation is preferable and not to tackle anything other than a very small fire. Guests should not be expected to use them. However, may wish to provide a small multi-purpose fire extinguisher, or a fire blanket for the kitchen area.

You can buy suitable multi-purpose extinguishers, guaranteed for five years, from a range of larger DIY outlets. You should check the gauge regularly to make sure the ‘stored pressure’ has not leaked.

**Automatic Fire Suppression Systems**

Automatic fire suppression systems such as sprinklers or water-mist, can be installed to enhance the fire protection of the premises, especially for complex and/or open plan layouts. These systems can be effective in suppressing and containing a fire, allowing more time for people to escape to a place of safety. They also protect your property by limiting the damaged caused by a fire. Specialist advice may need to be sought if the installation of an automatic fire suppression system is being considered.

**Fire safety risk assessment – the five key steps**

* Assess the fire risk and work out how to keep people and your premises safe.
* Make and implement a plan for how to improve fire safety measures in your premises.
* Keep a record of your assessment and use it to carry out regular reviews. You are legally required to record it if you employ five or more people or if your premises is licensed, but it’s good practice for other premises and demonstrates your actions.

**For more advice on what may be appropriate fire safety measures, see the advice on pages XX-XX.**

**Step 1**

**Identify fire hazards**

Look out for:

* Sources of ignition
* Sources of fuel
* Sources of oxygen

**Step 2**

**Identify people at risk**

Think about:

* People in and around the premises
* The needs of those especially at risk (for example older persons, young children, disabled persons etc)

**Step 3**

**Evaluate, remove, reduce and protect from risk**

* Evaluate the risk of a fire starting
* Evaluate the risk from fire to people in and around the premises
* Remove or reduce fire hazards
* Remove or reduce the risks to people
* Provide adequate fire detection and warning
* Provide safe and clear escape routes
* Consider further protection measures that may be appropriate:
  + Firefighting equipment
  + Emergency escape lighting
  + Signs and notices

**Step 4**

**Record, plan, inform, instruct and train**

* Record significant findings and action taken
* Prepare an emergency plan
* Inform and instruct relevant people, cooperate and coordinate with others
* Provide training to staff if you have them

**Step 5**

**Review**

* Keep the fire risk assessment under review
* Revise where necessary
* Maintain the fire protection measures in place

**Remember to keep your fire risk assessment under review and to ensure any fire protection measures are maintained in good working order.**

**A template risk-assessment form**

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| **Address of property assessed:** |  |
| **Name and position of person undertaking the assessment:** |  |
| **Date of assessment:** |  |
| **Number of floors/area:** |  |
| **Use:** |  |

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| **Step 1 - Identify fire hazards and fire risks** |
| This template is to help a responsible person carry out a fire risk assessment in smaller scale holiday accommodation, as defined in the scope on page XX.  Before a fire can occur, there needs to be three key components present:   1. Heat - i.e. an ignition source e.g. flame from a match or spark from defective wiring 2. Fuel - i.e. something that can burn e.g. wooden furniture, paper etc 3. Oxygen - i.e. the air that is all around us   (It is useful to keep this rule always in mind when carrying out a fire risk assessment.)   Of course, there will always be various forms of fuels, heat and oxygen present somewhere in a building/unit; however, in certain circumstances, particular combinations will present a greater fire hazard.  We can spot fire hazards, in most buildings, if we systematically list both the sources of ignition and fuel that are there and then simply apply our own good judgement in deciding whether or not there is a real risk of an unwanted fire.   1. What are the sources of ignition in your premises? Identify what might cause a fire in your property.  2. What fuels are present and where are they? Identify what there is to burn in your property.  3. With the combinations of fuels and ignition sources, is there a risk of an unwanted fire and are there any particular activities that could give rise to an increased risk of fire?  To the best of your knowledge, answer the questions relating to relevant items. To assist you, a number of common sources of ignition are listed below. You may also wish to look through the fire safety advice section in this guide.  If you do not have the time, relevant expertise or confidence to carry this out adequately, you should seek additional guidance in the Fire Safety Risk Assessment: Sleeping Accommodation guide or seek advice from an accredited fire risk assessor. |
| 1. **Electrical wiring and appliances** 2. Has electrical wiring been checked by a qualified contractor within the last 5 years? Are there any signs of damage? 3. Have trailing cables, overloaded sockets/adaptors/extension leads, damage to cables, scorched cracked or loose sockets/switches been eliminated? 4. Are the fuse board/circuit breakers in good condition and correctly labelled? 5. Are all appliances in good condition and subject to a suitable test and inspection regime? 6. Are washing machines, tumble dryers and other white goods clean and in good working order? Are lint filters cleaned regularly? 7. Have the appliances been registered with the manufacturer or checked against current recall lists? You can register appliances on [www.registermyappliance.org.uk](http://www.registermyappliance.org.uk). 8. Do appliances require checks between lets, to ensure no damage during previous let? 9. Guidance on electrical safety including FAQs on maintaining portable appliances, is available of HSE website at [www.hse.gov.uk/electricity](http://www.hse.gov.uk/electricity). |
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| 1. **Cooking – especially deep-fat frying** 2. Are there instructions for the safe use of cooking equipment? 3. Is equipment (particularly where fitted with extraction hoods & vents) regularly cleaned and free from grease? 4. The NFCC recommends that deep fat fryers should only be permitted if they are thermostatically controlled. |
|  |
| 1. **Smoking** 2. Smoking is a regular cause of fire and results in more fatalities that any other cause. 3. Is there a strict ‘no smoking’ policy or is smoking allowed in some bedrooms in serviced accommodation or in bedrooms and/or public areas of self-catering units? Is this limited to vaping or e-cigarettes? 4. Are sufficient ashtrays available and are they regularly emptied into a safe bin i.e. metal? 5. The NFCC recommends that smoking is not permitted or is in well-defined and protected smoking areas. |
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| 1. **Candles** 2. Are candleholders/candlesticks, tealights or ethanol burners provided? 3. Are suitable instructions and safe holders provided? 4. The NFCC recommends that candles are not used. |
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| 1. **Heaters and boilers** 2. What sort of heating is there in the property? 3. Are all heaters in good condition? 4. The NFCC advises that if freestanding heaters are provided, they are low risk due to the risk of fire. 5. Is the boiler regularly serviced by a Gas Safe registered engineer? 6. Consider the need for carbon monoxide detectors where living accommodation contains a gas or solid fuel burning appliance. |
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| 1. **Open fires and burners** 2. Is a fireguard provided? 3. Is the chimney regularly swept? 4. Are spark arrestors provided, where needed? E.g. thatch roofs. 5. Is the hearth adequate to prevent rugs etc. touching hot surfaces? 6. Are dry wood, kindling & firelighters provided and a safe distance from heat and hot surfaces when stored? 7. Are metal ashbins provided? 8. Are appropriate instructions given and procedures in place? 9. Carbon monoxide detectors are required where living accommodation contains a solid fuel burning fire |
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| 1. **Elements of structure** 2. Are there any wall or ceiling lining material, other than wallpapers that might burn (e.g. polystyrene ceiling tiles, wood effect or wooden cladding? 3. Consider thatch roof coverings and increased risk of fire and damage to building – wood burners/lightning/bonfires etc 4. Consider other combustible materials associated with any provided glamping pods, camping materials, tree houses etc. |
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| 1. **Furniture and furnishings** 2. Does it comply with the Furniture and Furnishing (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988 (as amended)? |
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| 1. **Domestic waste** 2. Is it removed from the property regularly? 3. Is it kept away from sources of ignition? 4. Is it stored away from premises, especially away from windows and exits. 5. Are further measures required, such as locks, metal bins? |
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| 1. **Other items – e.g. petrol for lawnmowers, cleaning materials etc** 2. Are any highly flammable liquids or substances kept on the premises? If so, they must be stored outside in locked metal bins or storage. Guests must either be restricted from using these or instructed on their safe use. 3. Are LPG BBQs and/or patio heaters provided? If so, they must only be used outdoors (but not on balconies) and instructions for their use provided. 4. Are there any linen stores or towel closets near heat sources? |
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| 1. **Activities that might cause a fire, including work processes/procedures etc**   The most common causes of fire are: cooking, electrical cabling, domestic appliances, smoking materials (including matches and lighters), heaters, etc.  While some of these issues will have already been considered above, it is worth spending a few moments to think about your particular circumstances and what else might create a risk of fire in your premises; moreover, what you could do to either remove or reduce these risks. For example, many owners of heritage buildings prohibit contractors using tools such as blowlamps on their premises.  In addition, you need to remember that guests are not familiar with the premises, nor the particular appliances and equipment on site. |

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| 1. **Others** 2. Are there any other sources of ignition in your property? |

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| **Step 2 - Identify persons at risk** |
| The next step in the fire risk assessment process is to consider the people who might be at risk from a fire in your premises and record this information. |
| 1. **Number of guests**   Consider both the numbers and types of guests you would expect to accommodate.   1. How many guests can your premises safely accommodate? 2. Do you anticipate that children will stay in the property and, if so, how many and where will they be? 3. Do you anticipate accommodating people who require assistance to escape the property (e.g. people with mobility, sight or hearing issues, a respiratory condition, physical injury or other temporary impairments)? Guidance on providing an adequate means of escape for disabled people is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-risk-assessment-means-of-escape-for-disabled-people>. 4. Are any staff on site to oversee or assist in an evacuation? If not, consider any additional measures that may be required for those not familiar with the premises. |
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| 1. **Number of staff/employees** 2. Consider the number of employees and their ability to escape. 3. Consider other people who may work on the site, contractors, cleaners etc. 4. Are there any employees under 18? If so, the risk assessment will need to take into consideration the inexperience, lack of awareness of risks and immaturity of young persons. |
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| **Step 3 – Evaluate the risks** |
| With all the aforementioned aspects considered, the levels of risk can be established and simple 'common sense' measures taken to reduce them. However, the law still expects you to plan for a fire occurring and ensure that it is detected and persons are warned and then able to escape.  For most small buildings the fire precautions should be fairly basic. You should note, however, that buildings built to domestic requirements have different standards to those built for commercial (e.g. emergency lighting, open plan layout, escape windows), so you may need to factor in additional measures if a private dwelling is being used for short-term accommodation lets. |
| 1. **Means of escape – detail the type of property** 2. What sort of building is it? 3. How many levels does the premises have? 4. Is the premises part of a multi-occupied building? |
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| 1. **Means of escape – detail the number of exit doors and where they are** 2. Are doors on the escape route always easy to open without the use of a key? 3. Are escape routes always kept clear and available for use? 4. Does the escape route rely on any open plan areas? If so, can all persons still escape effectively without placing themselves at risk from fire? |
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| 1. **The fire alarm and fire detection and warning system**   Describe what fire detectors and warning systems have been provided.   1. Is the fire alarm and detection system in the premises adequate? 2. Have you considered detection and audibility in high risk and sleeping rooms? 3. How will deaf or people who are hard of hearing respond to a fire alarm? 4. How regularly is your fire detection and warning system tested and maintained? |
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| 1. **Firefighting equipment**   Detail what fire extinguishers/blankets are provided and where they are.   1. Where provided, is all firefighting equipment inspected and maintained regularly? 2. If fire extinguishers are provided, have staff been trained how to use them? 3. Guests should not be expected to use them. However, may wish to provide a small multi-purpose fire extinguisher, or a fire blanket for the kitchen area. 4. If so, have they been adequately instructed in their use? |
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| 1. **Escape lighting**   Detail areas covered by emergency escape lighting (if any). For small premises, it might be acceptable to simply provide a rechargeable torch.   1. Do you need to install any additional emergency escape lighting to help those unfamiliar with the premises to escape in an emergency? |
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| 1. **Evacuation procedures**   Describe the evacuation procedures.   1. Is the location remote and might this leave guests with difficulty in calling the emergency services? 2. Have you recorded the evacuation procedures and ensured guests are aware of them? |
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**Further information**

**If you are responsible for the premises, you are legally responsible for making sure you comply with the law. However, there is guidance and people there to help.**

**Fireengland.uk**

You will find more questions and answers on the fireengland.uk website about fire safety law –

<https://fireengland.uk/fire-safety/how-protect-your-business-fire>.

For detailed information about your premises providing sleeping accommodation, see our technical guide to fire safety risk assessments in sleeping accommodation. You can download a copy for free here – <https://fireengland.uk/fire-safety-law-work-and-public-places/fire-risk-assessments>.

A supplementary guide providing information on accessibility and means of escape for people with mobility needs is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-risk-assessment-means-of-escape-for-disabled-people>.

**Local fire and rescue service**

Fire and rescue authorities have a legal responsibility to make sure you are complying with fire safety law and you are managing the risks of a fire adequately. Your local fire and rescue authority might be able to give you advice if you’re not sure your risk assessment’s been carried out properly. However, they can’t carry out fire risk assessments for you.

You can find the details of your fire and rescue service here: <https://fireengland.uk/your-fire-and-rescue-service/find-your-service>.

**Competent Risk Assessor**

If you do not have the time or are unsure on how to complete a fire risk assessment, you can get help from a competent fire risk assessor. The NFCC has made available guidance and information for responsible persons when considering appointing a specialist to undertake the fire risk assessment and provide fire safety advice. The guide provides advice on finding a competent person or organisation and identifies the certificating bodies that operate registration schemes - <https://www.cfoa.org.uk/19532>.

Ultimately, as the responsible person, you must satisfy yourself that the measures you have put in place are adequate and justifiable. You should therefore ensure that any advice you receive is of sufficient quality.

**Example plan drawings**

[This requires some explanation/intro as to what they are and what they show]

* Single household up to two-storeys and no more than three bedrooms.
* A two-storey household with more than three bedrooms.
* Three storeys plus (to identify which premises are not within scope of the guide)
* Open plan ground floor
* Part of a domestic dwelling, one or two rooms in the home.
* Basement
* Single unit (summer house, yurt, garage conversion, caravan, bunkers, lighthouse, windmill, treehouse etc).

[We need to direct people to these within the body of the guide.]