

# Commercial Building Fire Safety.

A guide to fire safety in the workplace

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# Introduction.

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This guide is to provide business owners and Responsible Individuals with a reference document regarding their legal responsibilities in respect of fire safety in the workplace. It is based guidance from the fire service and The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (FSO) which is the main piece of legislation governing fire safety in buildings in England and Wales.

The above legislation places legal duties on anyone in control of the premises - usually the owner or landlord, or the responsible individual(s) - to undertake a fire risk assessment and put in place and maintain general fire precautions.

It provides some useful top tips on everything from conducting a fire risk assessment, keeping fire exits and escape routes clear, to your responsibilities for regular testing of fire alarm systems and ensuring maintenance inspections are up to date.

We hope you find the guide useful. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

**Colin Milligan**  
**Sales Director**

**[colin.milligan@tecservuk.com](mailto:colin.milligan@tecservuk.com)**  
**Tel: 07747 533528**

# Fire Risk Assessment & Fire Safety Arrangements.

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**Although there are no specific time periods in law for how often fire risk assessments must be done or reviewed, if you are new to the role or there is no documented evidence that a review has been carried out recently, we highly recommend that one of your first actions is to conduct a fire risk assessment.**

The law simply says that the person responsible for the assessment in your building must review it 'regularly' to make sure it's up to date.

If there have been alterations in the workplace such as operating practices or building layouts, these changes that may affect your risk profile related to both internal and external factors.

**Factors that will help determine the when to carry out a fire risk in your business may include:**

- Having different tenants in a shared building
- Building refurbishments and construction works internally and externally in the adjacent areas.

You should consider these any other factors as part of your fire risk assessment.

The Responsible Individual(s) must also make sure that the fire safety arrangements are appropriate. These arrangements will range from something very simplistic, i.e. weekly testing of the fire alarm, through to complex arrangements requiring the provision of trained fire wardens.

The responsible person must ensure that there are sufficient available employees present at the premises to perform and carry out these arrangements. This is an extremely important consideration because a significant number of employees may not be on-site due to hybrid working arrangements.

**“ Ensure regular fire risk assessments are carried out”**

# What a Fire Risk Assessment Involves:



01

A qualified Fire Risk Assessor will identify any potential fire hazards including combustible materials, sources of heat, unsafe practices and potentially dangerous conditions.



02

This will also include identifying any particular locations or individuals at risk.



03

Reducing risk. This can be achieved by removal or separation; and by putting measures in place to encourage a culture of risk prevention.



04

Evaluating the level of risk and if current fire alarm systems meet the required category. Check if appropriate detection and fire fighting equipment is installed and located in the right places. This includes reviewing escape routes and signage.



05

A regular programme of maintenance and inspections is required to ensure your systems meet compliance legislation, and more importantly, will work should the need arise.



# Escape Routes & Exits.

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**All fire exit doors should be checked to ensure they are capable of being opened easily and immediately from the inside when required.**

If you share an escape route remember that those other businesses may not be open so it is wise to check with them what measures they are planning to safely evacuate their buildings.

All exits, passages, landings and stairways should be checked to ensure they are available and free from obstruction. A clear and unobstructed route leading from each fire exit to a place of safety outside the premises should be provided and maintained available for use.

Fire resisting doors should be effectively self-closing (except those serving storerooms, plant rooms etc. which should be kept locked shut). Door closers need to be fitted and set correctly to ensure fire doors fully close into the frame.

If emergency lighting is installed it should be operated to ensure that it is in efficient working order. Lamps in emergency lighting units should be visually examined/checked for operation by walking all the escape routes.

During this check it should be possible to see all fire extinguishers and fire alarm call-points. The lighting level provided should be sufficient in order to safely find your way out of the building and operate any devices found on exit doors.

Arrangements should be made to ensure the system is inspected and serviced in accordance with the maintenance recommendations described in British Standard 5266-1.

**“ All fire doors should be checked and access routes kept clear.”**

# Fire Doors.

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We cannot stress enough how important it is not to wedge fire doors open.

Fire doors are a critical element in the fire safety of a building and are there to protect people and property should a fire occur and need to remain closed.

**“ Do not wedge open fire doors.”**



# Fire Alarm Systems & Maintenance.

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**Simply put, a fire alarm system is redundant if it does not operate effectively, placing the safety of your employees at risk and exposing you to prosecution.**

At Tecserv UK, we believe that an ongoing programme of maintenance inspections, sometimes referred to as **planned preventative maintenance (PPM)**, should be part of your operational strategy to ensure the optimum performance of your fire, security alarm, access control or CCTV surveillance systems.

Fire security experts like ourselves offer advice on which fire safety equipment and maintenance package will be best suited to your needs. They also provide alarm test certificates so that you are able to prove that fire safety compliance processes have been met.

By ensuring your systems are regularly maintained you'll meet compliance obligations and have peace of mind that all the components of your fire protection system, including control panels and software, detectors, MCPs and sounders, and extinguishers have been tested and inspected so that your system remains in peak condition.

## Managing False Fire Alarms

No-one benefits from false fire alarms which activate due to a fault or another unwanted false trigger. These false activations cause inconvenience, affect productivity and profits and also brand reputation.

Preventing false fire and intruder alarm activations begins by ensuring that all systems and equipment is regularly inspected and maintained.

## Summary

Tecserv UK will help you comply with your legal obligations by conducting a bi-annual inspection service so that you can rest easy knowing that your alarm systems have been inspected and certified as functioning correctly.

If a recent maintenance inspection has not been completed, we advise that arrangements are made to ensure the whole system is inspected and serviced in accordance with the maintenance recommendations described in British Standard 5839 Part 1.

**“ Ensure all systems and equipment is regularly maintained and test the fire alarm regularly.”**



# Fire Extinguishers.

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**One of the most important and easily available item of fire safety equipment is the fire extinguisher.**

They are usually the first line of defence in the event of a fire for those who find their only fire escape route obstructed by fire.

You should ensure that your fire extinguishers remain in full working order and are legally compliant. It would also be prudent to regularly remind staff when and how to use them safely should a fire emergency occur.

Fire extinguishers should be regularly serviced to ensure they remain in good working order and function correctly should they be needed. Legally, it is the responsibility of a business owner and part of the role of the responsible individual for a building to ensure that extinguishers are serviced in accordance to the BS 5306-3:2017. This does not apply to maintenance-free P50 fire extinguishers.

It is important to ensure that the right fire extinguisher is used according to the accelerant that caused the fire. Rather than extinguishing the fire, using the wrong fire extinguisher can make a fire worse. During safety checks of your building it would be wise to check the right fire extinguishers are in still in the right locations and working effectively.

The recommendation is that all fire extinguishers should be inspected on a monthly basis and documented in a log book. Furthermore, the fire extinguisher should be inspected and certified annually by a BAFE Approved fire protection equipment company like Tecserv UK.

The Tecserv UK “GOLD service agreement for fire Extinguishers” is a fixed price truly ‘all inclusive’ fire extinguisher service package which means Tecserv UK takes over responsibility of ensuring that all the extinguishers serviced by us comply with current British Standards.

**“ Are your fire extinguishers in full working order and legally compliant?”**

# General Fire Precautions & Other Fire Protection Systems.

Any element of fire safety provided on your premises should be maintained and serviced to ensure it is in working order. It is essential to carry out these to protect the wellbeing of your employees and visitors too.

It is best to keep all equipment regularly serviced rather than leave it until it is too late, which can generate more costs in repairs and replacements.

You must provide appropriate information, instruction and training to your employees about the fire precautions in your workplace. This is particularly important to all new employees. The training to be provided will depend upon the significant findings of your fire risk assessment.



# Training.

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Ensure there is regular practice fire drill to remind staff of the process and know what to do in a fire situation.

Always ensure new employees are given fire safety training and, if required, arrange for refresher fire safety training for other staff.

Always ensure there are sufficient trained Responsible Individuals available on site at all times.

**“ Ensure that all staff fire safety training and record keeping is up to date.”**

# About Tecserv UK.

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## **We're dedicated to protecting what matters.**

Tecserv UK Ltd was founded in 2001 by our CEO Grahame Tilley based on a passion to provide expert advice on fire prevention and building security.

Our services include the installation and maintenance of fire systems, intruder alarms, access control solutions and CCTV surveillance equipment for commercial, industrial and prestige buildings located across the UK.

We are a quality assured and BAFE approved company with a network of experienced and fully trained field engineers who you can trust to ensure your systems are maintained and supported on a nationwide basis, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Our approachable team of industry experts always deliver on their promises with bespoke and innovative solutions. Our company is built on care, dedication and a passion for delivering honest advice, great results and excellent customer service.

This wealth of technical knowledge and experience along with holding distributor agreements with most of the leading manufacturers of fire, intruder alarm, access control, and CCTV surveillance equipment allows us to provide the best solutions.

As well as a wide range of owner managed businesses, many of the UK's leading retailers, hotels, schools, industrial buildings, offices, museums and heritage sites trust Tecserv UK to protect their people, processes and property. These include: Marks & Spencer, Harvey Nichols, The Ritz, The Bulgari Hotel, Pinewood Studios, The National Trust and St Paul's Cathedral to name but a few.

# Sectors where we have specialist expertise:

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**Education**

**Hotels**

**Heritage & Listed Buildings**

**Healthcare & Carehomes**

**Industrial Buildings**

**Offices**

**Retail**

**Restaurants**

**Warehouses & Distribution Centres**

## Contact

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Tecserv UK Ltd  
Apex House  
1 Mansfield Road  
Underwood  
Nottinghamshire  
NG16 5FF

01773 764626  
[www.tecservuk.com](http://www.tecservuk.com)  
[sales@tecservuk.com](mailto:sales@tecservuk.com)

 [TecservUK](#)

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