

FIRE & SAFETY BULLETIN

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WHAT TO EXPECT FROM A FIRE BRIGADE VISIT?

If an inspecting officer visits your premises, you will be asked to evidence that you have met the duties required by the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

Please note: the Fire Brigade do not carry out your fire risk assessment.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THEIR VISIT?

Your visit will involve an examination of the premises and relevant documents. This will help the inspecting officer determine how your premises is being managed.

Sometimes, the inspecting officer may wish to speak with staff or residents to gain an appreciation of their level of fire safety standards.

During this process a score is generated in line with national guidance, which identifies the level of compliance achieved and any action required.

WHAT DOCUMENTS SHOULD I HAVE READY?

Examples of what you may be asked to provide evidence of are:

- ▶ Fire risk assessment
- ▶ Responsible Persons' plan to action risk assessment findings
- ▶ Action plans related to outcomes of the fire risk assessment



- ▶ Policies and procedures detailing the effective planning, organisation and control of fire safety matters
- ▶ Emergency plans for the premises in the event of a fire, including evacuation
- ▶ Records of staff fire training and fire drills (if applicable)
- ▶ Fire safety information for staff, e.g. Caretakers
- ▶ Fire safety and emergency information for dangerous substances
- ▶ Testing maintenance records by competent persons of the:
 - ▶ fire detection and warning system
 - ▶ emergency lighting
 - ▶ sprinkler system
 - ▶ ventilation system
 - ▶ portable firefighting equipment (fire extinguishers)
 - ▶ electrical installation condition report (EICR)
 - ▶ portable appliance testing (PAT).



WHAT ARE FIRE DOORS AND WHY DO THEY MATTER?

Fire doors are an important element of your fire safety strategy. Used correctly, they stop fires from spreading through a building, giving people time to escape and the Brigade time to attend and potentially save your premises.



LEGIONELLA RISK ASSESSMENTS

A Legionella risk assessment is a formal evaluation of a water system to identify and reduce the risk of legionella bacteria growth. The assessment should include a physical inspection, a review of records, and a consultation with relevant people.

Risk assessments should be completed on the communal water system every two years or sooner, if there is a significant change. This process can include water testing although not a legal requirement.



WHAT IS SMOKE VENTILATION?

Smoke ventilation systems play a critical role for the safety of building occupants in larger and multi storey buildings, where they are called upon in the event of a fire to keep escape routes clear of smoke and help occupants to safely exit the building.

Smoke vent systems are commonly employed in high rise, complex or specifically identified residential buildings, and are subject to a variety of standards and regulations to ensure that the smoke ventilation strategies and components that deliver them have been properly selected, fitted and maintained so that they can be depended upon in the event of a fire.

WHAT IS A LIGHTNING CONDUCTOR?

Lightning conductor is a metal rod which starts from the roof of the building and leads to the ground. It's designed to protect buildings from lightning strikes. There are different types of lightning conductors; they can be hollow or solid; pointed or rounded. However, one thing is always true about lightning conductors – they're all made from conductive materials, most commonly alloy, aluminium or copper.

HOW DOES A LIGHTNING CONDUCTOR WORK?

There are many technical ways to describe how a lightning conductor works but the concept behind it is surprisingly simple. A lightning bolt is constantly looking for the path of least resistance to the ground. The lightning conductor provides just that – a straight, fast track for the electric current to use. It's as straight-forward as this.

There is no guarantee that the lightning won't "jump" and choose a different path on its way to earth. However, if your building is equipped with a lightning conductor taller than the building itself, this provides the lightning with what should be the perfect route to take. It must be noted, however, that a single lightning conductor is usually only an element of a larger lightning protection system, which contains multiple lightning conductors.

IEC/BS EN 62305/1 provides you with the general lightning safety standards observed in the UK.



BALCONY SAFETY TIPS

- ▶ Never use barbecues, including disposable ones on your balcony. They pose a fire risk.
- ▶ Fire pits, patio heaters and chimineas should also not be used on balconies.
- ▶ Never store flammable or hazardous materials (i.e., gas cylinders) on balconies.
- ▶ Keep balconies clutter free. They should not be used for storage. Balconies can be an important escape route for residents or access point for firefighters.
- ▶ Do not use or set off fireworks or sky lanterns from a balcony.
- ▶ White goods (e.g., washing machines) should not be stored or used on balconies.
- ▶ Do not modify your balcony or install combustible screening.
- ▶ Avoid smoking on your balcony. If you do smoke on a balcony, do not discard cigarettes or smoking materials on or over the balcony. Use a sturdy ashtray with a small amount of water in it to ensure materials are extinguished.



KEY MESSAGES ON A FIRE ACTION NOTICE

The “Fire Action Notice” sign is displayed adjacent to each manual call point. The fire instructions are meant to be clear. The instructions are directed at the person about the raise the alarm.

IF YOU DISCOVER A FIRE:

- ▶ Operate nearest fire alarm point
- ▶ Call the Fire Brigade on 999
- ▶ Leave the building by the nearest exit
- ▶ Report to your assembly point
- ▶ Do not stop to collect personal belongings.

In blocks of flats, it is not mandatory to erect an external sign for the fire assembly point but state on your “Fire Action Notice” where to assemble, e.g., front car park.

FLAT FIRE: WEMBLEY

12th JANUARY 2025 – 9.48AM

Four fire engines and around 25 firefighters attended a fire at a flat on Wembley Park Drive in Wembley.

A studio flat, situated on the ground floor of a three-storey block of flats, was destroyed by fire.

One person who was inside the flat was treated for smoke inhalation by London Ambulance Service crews. A second person was led to safety from a top floor flat by crews via an internal staircase. Around 20 people left the building before firefighters arrived.

The fire is believed to have been caused by an electrical event in an extension lead.

A London Fire Brigade spokesperson said: "Overloaded sockets are one of the most common causes of electrical fires. Some electrical appliances use more power than others, so be mindful not to overload extension leads".

A smoke alarm was present at the property but did not operate.

A London Fire Brigade spokesperson said: "Smoke alarms give the earliest possible warning when a fire starts and we would urge everyone to make sure they have one fitted



in every room where a fire can start except kitchens or bathrooms".

Control Officers mobilised crews from Wembley, Willesden and Stanmore fire stations to the scene. A 32-metre turntable ladder was also used at the scene as an observation tower. The fire was extinguished by 11.05am.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD LADDERS BE CHECKED?

Responsible Persons need to make sure that any ladder or stepladder are both suitable for the task and in a safe condition before use.

Only use ladders or stepladders that show no visible defects if stored in the common areas. Such ladders or stepladders should be secured in place to prevent unauthorised use and hence prevent an accident.

The ladders or stepladders used in the common areas should have a formal inspection every 3-6 months conducted by a competent person. Records should be kept.



COMMON FIRE ISSUES WHEN CONVERTING COMMERCIAL UNITS TO A BLOCK OF FLATS; FIRE DOORS, COMPARTMENTATION AND SIGNAGE.



FLAT FIRE – ENFIELD

12th JANUARY 2025 – 6.19AM

Four fire engines and around 25 firefighters tackled a fire at a flat on Hereford Road in Enfield.

Part of a two roomed flat on the first floor was damaged by the fire. Three people left the property before the Brigade arrived. There are no reports of any injuries.

The fire is believed to have been accidental and was caused by an extension lead.

A London Fire Brigade spokesperson said: "Overloaded sockets are one of the most common causes of electrical fires. Some electrical appliances use more power than others, so be mindful not to overload extension leads and always check that you're

One of the Brigade's 32-metre turntable ladders was used as an observation tower to provide the Incident Commander with an aerial view of the fire.

Control Officers took the call at 6.19am and mobilised crews from Enfield and Edmonton fire stations to the scene. The incident was over for firefighters at 8.18am.

FIREFIGHTERS' TOP TIPS FOR ELECTRICAL DEVICE SAFETY:

- ▶ Try to keep to one plug per socket, especially for high powered appliances like washing machines.
- ▶ Always check that you're using the right fuse.
- ▶ Be lead safety savvy – cable drum extension leads should always be completely unwound to avoid overheating, and be careful not to overload extension leads.
- ▶ Always make sure electrical appliances have a British or European safety mark when you buy them.
- ▶ Keep electrical appliances clean and in good working order.
- ▶ Don't buy cheap counterfeit chargers for items that use lithium batteries, and never leave phones or laptops plugged in to charge overnight

OUR RISK ASSESSMENT PROCESS

We have a specific process to ensure our reports are of value to you:

1. Our starting point is to collect information about the management checks in place via our document checklist;
2. We aim to visit your property at the next available date and access as many areas as possible, including a sample number of flat entrance doors;
3. Our goal is to issue your reports within 3 working days; and
4. We include a block summary sheet with our reports. This quick reference sheet lists the required actions, report references and timescales.