



Rialtas na hÉireann
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Code of Practice for Fire Safety Assessment of Premises and Buildings

Prepared by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

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An Stiúirthóireacht Náisiúnta um Bainistíocht Dóiteáin agus Éigeandála
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Introduction

Persons having control over premises to which Part III of the Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003 applies, have statutory duties in respect of provisions for fire safety on the premises. These duties are set out in section 18(2) of the Acts. Guidance on these duties is given in the 'Guide to responsibilities for persons-having-control over premises', published by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

Under section 18(6) of the Acts, a person authorised by a fire authority may require a person having control over premises, an owner or an occupier of premises, to carry out a fire safety assessment of the premises and to notify the fire authority of such assessment.

Persons having control, owners or occupiers of premises may also require a fire safety assessment of the premises, to assist them in making provision for safety of life from fire, in meeting the duties set out in section 18(2) of the Acts, or in providing evidence to regulatory bodies or registration agencies (for example, **Tusla** or **HIQA**).

Where a fire safety assessment has been requested by a Fire Authority, it should be completed in a timely fashion, without undue delay or within an agreed timeframe.

Scope of Code of Practice

Code of Practice

2.1 This code of practice is published under section 18A of the Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003. It provides guidance in respect of steps to be taken, and items to be considered, in carrying out and compiling a fire safety assessment. The guidance in this code of practice will be of assistance to:

- Those carrying out fire safety assessments of premises or buildings,
- Those reviewing fire safety assessments of premises or buildings, and,
- The person having control, an owner or an occupier of premises or buildings to which the Fire Services Acts apply.

Qualified Persons

2.2 The fire safety assessment of a premises or buildings should be carried out by a person with appropriate qualifications and experience. The following qualifications are considered suitable:

- Registered Architects that are on the register maintained by the RIAI under Part 3 of the Building Control Act 2007,
- Chartered Building Surveyors that are on the register maintained by the SCSI under Part 5 of the Building Control Act 2007,
- Chartered Engineers on the register maintained by Engineers Ireland under section 7 of the Institution of Civil Engineers of Ireland (Charter Amendment) Act 1969, or,
- Members of the Institution of Fire Engineers who hold the title Chartered Engineer.

Fire Safety Assessment Report Overview

2.3 The suitably qualified competent professional should carry out a fire safety assessment, and provide a fire safety assessment report to the person having control, the owner or occupier of premises. The fire safety assessment report should address each item listed in sections 3.7 and 3.8 below and should indicate where an item may not be applicable. The report should also indicate the basis of assessment, refer to information, standards and evidence considered, and set out conclusions and recommendations.

Recommendations may deal with remedial works, as well as fire safety management measures, such as maintenance of fire protection equipment (fire detection and alarm systems, emergency lighting systems, fire resisting doors, hold-open devices, etc.), limitations on use or numbers of occupants on the premises, or part thereof, or other relevant measures.

The items listed in sections 3.7 and 3.8 are intended to identify the items that are expected to be relevant in the case of many premises and buildings. Where additional issues arise in the case of premises or buildings under assessment, or come to the attention of the competent professional, these should be similarly addressed and highlighted in the fire safety assessment report.

The guidance in this code of practice deals with assessment of provisions for safety of life from fire; measures that may be necessary to protect against loss or damage to property are outside the scope of this document.

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Fire Safety Assessment

Fire Safety Assessment Overview

3.1 Where a fire safety assessment is being carried out for the person having control over premises, an owner or an occupier of premises, the suitably qualified competent professional should consider if the passive and active fire safety measures in the premises, as well as management of fire safety in the premises, are to appropriate standards, and commensurate with the use and/or occupancy of the premises.

3.2 A fire safety assessment should be a specific consideration of each building or premises, taking into account the construction, characteristics, circumstances, and the use(s) to which the premises or buildings are put.

Contents of Fire Safety Assessment Report

3.3 The fire safety assessment report should include and address the following:

- Description of the premises or building, and the use(s) and occupancies of the premises and individual buildings, or parts of buildings,
- Information on any feature(s) of the premises or building that are relevant to the fire safety assessment,
- Information on assessment method(s) (including surveys, inspections and/or invasive investigations), standards or codes of practice, evidence, and information taken into account in the fire safety assessment,
- Information taken from the building safety file, fire safety certificates, fire safety notices, correspondence from Fire Authority etc.
- Plans, drawings, photographic evidence etc.
- Recommendation(s) in respect of the suitability of existing fire safety provision in the premises or buildings to accommodate the existing use(s) and/or occupancies,
- Recommendations in respect of any remedial works considered necessary for use of the premises and buildings to accommodate the existing use(s) and/or occupancies,
- Recommendations for prioritising and programming remedial works – see Appendix B,
- Recommendations for interim compensatory fire safety works or measures, where these are considered adequate to permit continued use of the premises, pending completion of all remedial works,

- Recommendations for measures to be implemented, or conditions to be observed in using the premises – for example:
 - maximum occupant numbers for the premises, or part thereof,
 - conditions for use of individual buildings, storeys, or rooms,
 - provisions for management of fire safety in the building, or
 - on-going maintenance of fire protection facilities and systems.
- A report summary, including the items indicated in the report summary form at Appendix A.

Remedial Works Considerations

3.4 In considering the need for, and the extent of, any remedial works or other fire safety measures, the suitably qualified competent professional should take account of the building construction and the use(s) and/or occupancies to which premises are put. The requirement for remedial works or other recommended measures may be greater in the case of premises providing sleeping accommodation, high-rise premises and premises habitually accommodating large numbers of people, than in the case of other premises – for example, buildings of single storey construction, with low numbers of occupants, without sleeping accommodation.

Where remedial works are recommended, and where it is proposed that the premises or buildings will remain in operation while works are carried out, it may be necessary to set out a proposed schedule for works, which should form part of the report. A method such as that outlined in Appendix B may be applied to prioritise and programme required works or measures.

3.5 Where the suitably qualified competent professional considers that the danger to life or safety of persons, in the event of fire, is sufficiently serious, the report should recommend that use of premises, buildings, or part thereof, should be restricted or discontinued, until specified works or measures have been carried out and certified.

Compliance

3.6 In preparing the fire safety assessment, the suitably qualified competent professional should consider compliance with relevant standards, including Building Regulations requirements where applicable, and applicable codes of practice for premises and building(s) concerned.

Codes of practice for a range of existing buildings have been issued by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage – they are available at the Department's website (www.gov.ie/housing).

Buildings or works that attracted the requirements of Building Regulations at the time of construction or works should be assessed with reference to those requirements.

In the absence of applicable Irish standards or codes of practice, reference may be made to relevant international standards or codes of practice for fire safety in buildings; care should be taken, however, to ensure that their application in Ireland is appropriate, and that Irish practice, policy and statutory requirements are taken into account when considering such application.

For example, a “stay put” policy may be permitted in other jurisdictions but is not permitted in Ireland and evacuation of buildings is the default policy here.

Considerations for Assessment

3.7 The fire safety assessment should include consideration of:

- numbers of persons habitually resorting in buildings or accommodated therein,
- adequacy of means of egress from buildings, including horizontal escape routes and vertical escape routes,
- appliances or fittings for
 - automatic detection of an outbreak of fire,
 - giving warning to persons in case of fire,
 - securing that means of escape can be safely and effectively used at all times,
 - enabling the occupants to escape on the occurrence of a fire,
 - emergency lighting systems,
 - extinguishing fires occurring in buildings,
- power supplies and emergency lighting systems with which buildings are provided (defects, adequacy and maintenance),
- heating or ventilation systems with which buildings are provided (defects and maintenance),
- the flammable nature of the materials of which buildings are made, including internal linings and external cladding systems¹,

¹ Guidance on fire safety assessment in respect of outer cladding of a wall construction with a drained and/or ventilated cavity, on existing buildings, is given in Fire safety guidance note 01 of 2017 **Assessing existing cladding systems in buildings of more than six storeys, or more than 18m in height** (December, 2017), issued by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.

- the flammable nature of the furniture, furnishings and fittings in premises and buildings,
- the flammable, explosive or potentially explosive nature of anything used, stored or deposited in premises and buildings,
- structural fire precautions (elements of structure, compartmentation, provision of fire/smoke dampers, separation of escape routes etc.),
- the potential for a fire therein to spread rapidly within buildings or to other buildings or premises,
- access and facilities for the fire and service,
- any special risks,
- any other relevant consideration.

The suitably qualified competent professional should consider the scale and scope of fire safety assessment required for the premises or buildings concerned, taking into account:

- the scale and complexity of buildings,
- the use to which premises are put, and,
- the age of buildings, including whether construction or works were carried out within the building control system, and extent of certification available in respect of compliance with relevant Building Regulations requirements.

Every fire safety assessment must include a survey or inspection of the premises or buildings concerned.

In addition to the survey of premises and buildings, the suitably qualified competent professionals may find relevant information in available documents, such as fire safety certificate application file, certificates of compliance on completion, planning permissions, plans of the premises, construction drawings etc.

In some cases, the suitably qualified competent professional may recommend certain exploratory works or invasive investigation, to provide sufficient information for a fire safety assessment. While the extent of such works will be a matter to be determined in each individual case, in general, such investigation begins on a limited scale, with decision on further investigation, based on the findings of initial investigation.

Fire Safety Management of Premises

3.8 The fire safety assessment should consider the fire safety management of premises, and compliance with section 18(2), including arrangements for

- ensuring, as far as reasonably practicable, the safety of persons on premises in the event of an outbreak of fire whether such outbreak has occurred or not,
- management duties, including appointing a responsible person to take charge of a fire safety programme, to see that they are met,
- record keeping - including details of the fire safety management system and fire safety programme, fire prevention, training, drills, escape routes, inspection & maintenance, and assistance for fire services,
- measures to guard against the outbreak of fire – including fire prevention, including good housekeeping practices, periodic inspections, identification and elimination of fire hazards inside and outside the building, and application of safety procedures,
- provision of fire safety measures and fire safety procedures for ensuring the safety of persons on premises, and ensuring that measures and procedures are applied at all material times,
- staff training – what to do before, during and after an outbreak of fire or other emergency,
- provision of notices as to the procedure which should be followed in the event of fire,
- emergency evacuation plans,
- personal emergency evacuation plans (PEEPs), where required,
- control of work on the premises,
- fire and evacuation drills,
- maintenance of escape routes,
- periodic inspection and maintenance of fire protection equipment,
- providing assistance to fire and rescue services, and,
- emergency planning.

Evidence in this regard may be available from sources such as a survey of premises or buildings, discussions with management or staff, fire safety register for premises, or other records or documents.

Where premises are occupied by multiple tenants, the assessment should include consideration of liaison between tenants, information sharing on any significant issues affecting fire safety on the premises, and co-ordinated arrangements for fire safety for the premises.

Guidance on fire safety management of premises may be found in 'Guide to responsibilities for persons-having-control over premises', published by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

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Remedial Works

Any remedial works should comply with the requirements of Building Regulations and Building Control Regulations. Where the remedial works are material alterations it should be noted that the Building Regulations also apply to every part of a building affected by works in connection with the material alteration, but only to the extent of prohibiting any works which would cause a new or greater contravention, in such buildings, of any of the Regulations. This provision does not require extra work to ensure compliance in other parts of the building, but prohibits material alterations that may cause greater non-compliance with the Regulations.

Such remedial works may also require a fire safety certificate – refer to article 11 of the Building Control Regulations, 1997 - 2019.

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Interim Compensatory Fire Safety Measures

Where remedial works have been identified in the fire safety assessment, and it is intended to continue to use the building while these remedial works are under way, interim compensatory fire safety measures and precautions may be considered, in certain limited circumstances.

It is important to note that whilst these measures may be acceptable in the short-term to facilitate the continued use of the building, they are not to be viewed as a long-term solution. In general, the purpose of interim compensatory measures will be to provide the minimum acceptable level of fire safety in the building, pending completion of remedial works.

The premises or building concerned should not be used without the implementation of the interim compensatory measures recommended by the suitably qualified competent professional. Where interim compensatory fire safety measures are proposed, it is advised that the suitably qualified competent professional consults with the relevant Fire Authority.

Interim measures that should be considered include:

- Closure of parts of the premises,
- Enhanced provisions for management of fire safety – for example, limitations on occupant numbers,
- Provision of self-contained smoke or heat alarms, or provision of a fire warden, as a temporary measure, in advance of provision of a fire detection and alarm system,
- Temporary fire resisting construction,
- Any other relevant, specific proposal.

Appendix A

Fire Safety Assessment – Report Summary	
Name of premises or building (including any aliases)	
Address, including Eircode	
Person for whom the report is provided – may be the person having control of premises, owner or occupier of building.	
Approximate floor area of premises or building(s) (m ²)	
Description of type of premises or building (including map/photograph as appropriate) – for example, single-storey, two-storey, concrete block construction, timber frame construction, timber floor, etc.	
Use(s) of premises or buildings – for example, sleeping accommodation, assembly use, residential (flats), hotel, etc.	

Fire Safety Assessment – Summary of Conclusions

	Tick box(es) as appropriate
Tick box(es) as appropriate	
I confirm that I have carried out a fire safety assessment of this premises and buildings.	
I attach my report on the fire safety assessment of the premises and buildings.	
The fire safety provision in the premises and buildings is suitable to accommodate use as ...	
The fire safety provision in the premises and buildings is not suitable to accommodate use as ...	
The building will require remedial works if it is to be used as ...	
Details of remedial works, along with an indication of timeframe and approximate costs, are set out in appendix ... to the fire safety assessment report.	
The building will require interim compensatory fire safety works or measures - to permit use of the building as ..., pending completion of remedial works.	
Details of interim compensatory works are set out in appendix ... to the fire safety assessment report.	
Fire safety conditions to be observed in using the building are set out in appendix ... to the fire safety assessment report.	
The assessment method(s) and considerations used in preparation of this fire safety assessment are set out in the report.	

Signature: Print name: Date:	Qualification
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Appendix B

Remedial Works – Prioritising and Programming

B1 Introduction

In the case of recommended remedial works to premises or buildings, the method described in this appendix may be appropriate for use to prioritise and programme any required works.

It is recognised that, as premises, buildings and circumstances vary, there will be a need for flexibility in the implementation of remedial works, in particular instances.

B2 Identification of Risk Items

The first step in the process is to identify those hazards which present a threat to persons, in the event of a fire occurrence.

A hazard is a situation which has the potential to cause harm. In this case, the assessment identifies fire hazards with the potential to cause harm to occupants or visitors to the premises or buildings. Hazards in this assessment method are referred to as risk items. The risk items will typically be either management issues (for example, poor housekeeping practices) or physical fire protection features which are absent or deficient (for example, breaches of compartmentation).

The risk items should be set out in column 2 of Table B2, below – described in words and, where appropriate, reinforced with photographic records in column 3 of the item as observed during the survey.

B3 Evaluation of Risk Items

The second step in the process is to rate each risk item. This involves three sub-steps, as follows:

- Assign a (likelihood of) occurrence rating to the risk item,
- Assign an (anticipated severity of) impact rating to the risk item,
- Assign an overall score to the risk which is a product of the likelihood and impact ratings, to give an overall risk rating.

The likelihood rating is judged by reference to the likelihood of the risk item occurring (and potentially causing ill-effects) in accordance with the following scoring criteria:

1. Rare / remote
2. Unlikely
3. Possible
4. Likely
5. Almost certain

Impact scoring is based on the anticipated severity of the outcome. In scoring impact the risk item is graded from 1 to 5, with 5 indicating the most serious outcome, and 1 the least serious outcome. The scoring criteria are as follows:

1. Negligible harm
2. Minor harm
3. Moderate harm
4. Major harm
5. Extreme harm

B4 Establishing the Overall Risk Rating for Each Risk Item

The product of the two scoring outcomes provides an overall risk rating, based on the following table:

Table B1 – Risk rating for each risk item

RISK MATRIX	Negligible (1)	Minor (2)	Moderate (3)	Major (4)	Extreme (5)
Almost certain (5)	5	10	15	20	25
Likely (4)	4	8	12	16	20
Possible (3)	3	6	9	12	15
Unlikely (2)	2	4	6	8	10
Rare (1)	1	2	3	4	5

B5 Action Plan

In the fourth column of the Risk Rating Findings and Recommendations table (Table B3), recommended remedial actions, to mitigate or eliminate the risk items, are set out. In some instances, there may be a short term initial action, followed by a longer term, more significant, intervention. The objective is to achieve an acceptable standard of fire safety, either immediately or within a reasonable timeframe.

B6 Priority Ratings for Individual Action Items

The recommended remedial actions are assigned a priority rating, taking account of the overall risk rating as follows:

Table B2 – Priority Ratings

Red rating (15 – 25):	High risk	Intervention rating A	Immediate or as soon as possible
Amber rating (6 – 12):	Medium risk	Intervention rating B	Early or short term
Green rating (1 – 5):	Low risk	Intervention rating C	Within a limited time frame

The application of professional judgement may be required when considering the risk ratings, and certain remedial improvements may be accorded a higher priority than indicated by the risk rating alone. For instance, certain fire safety management improvements may not have a very high risk rating, but may be recommended for immediate implementation, due to being of low cost and practicable to achieve.

When scheduling works, it may be convenient to complete some rating C works at the same time as rating A works, to avoid creating disruption to operation of premises on two separate occasions.

Table B3 Risk Rating Findings and Recommendations

Risk item number	Risk item description	Photo	Recommended intervention	Impact rating	Likelihood rating	Overall risk rating	Intervention Priority – see
Building [-----]							
Floor level [-]							
	Description in words of the unacceptable Risk Item	Photograph illustrating the Risk Item	Description of remedial action or actions required. See note (1)	X	Y	XY	A Or B or C
1							
2							
FLOOR LEVEL [-]							
1							
EXTERNAL ISSUES							
E.1							
FIRE SAFETY MANAGEMENT ISSUES							
M.1							

Notes:

- 1) In some instances, there may be a short term and a longer term recommendation. In those cases, the competent professional should set out the basis for the two-stage approach.
- 2) Column 8 to be colour coded red, amber or green, according to the risk rating and as per Table B1 above.

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