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An Stiúirthóireacht Náisiúnta um Dóiteáin agus Bainistíocht Éigeandála  
National Directorate for Fire & Emergency Management

# Code of Practice for Fire Safety Assessment of Premises and Buildings

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Prepared by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

[gov.ie/housing](https://www.gov.ie/housing)

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# 1 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 **Fire Safety Guide for Building Owners and Operators - Guide for persons with responsibilities under section 18(2) Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003** – to be 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.

Where a fire safety assessment has been required by a person authorised by a fire authority, it should be completed in a timely fashion, without undue delay or within an agreed timeframe.

## 2 Scope of 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, owner or occupier of premises or buildings to which the Fire Services Acts apply.

**2.2** The guidance in this code of practice deals with assessment of provisions for compliance with the requirements of the Acts, in respect of the safety of persons in the event of fire; while provisions for life safety may also enhance protection of property, this guidance is not intended to deal with protection of property.

### **3 Fire Safety Assessors - Qualifications**

- 3.1** The fire safety assessment of a premises or buildings should be carried out by persons with appropriate qualifications and experience. In some cases, the assessment may be carried out by a team – the experience of the team should include suitable experience of the items listed in sections 5.5 and 5.6, below, where relevant to the premises under assessment.

Overall responsibility for the assessment, and for preparation and sign-off of a fire safety assessment report (see 5, below), should be held by someone who is in one of the following categories:

- Registered Architects that are on the register maintained by the RIAI under Part 3 of the Building Control Act 2007,
- 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.

The assessor or assessment team should hold suitable professional indemnity insurance.

## **4 Fire Safety Assessment**

- 4.1** 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.
- 4.2** The assessor or assessment team 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 evidence or certification available in respect of compliance with relevant Building Regulations requirements.
- 4.3** The assessor or assessment team should consider if the passive and active fire safety measures, as well as procedures and management of fire safety in the premises, are to appropriate standards, suitable for the use and/or occupancy of the premises, and in compliance with section 18(2) of the Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003.
- 4.4** Every fire safety assessment must include a survey or inspection of the premises or buildings concerned.
- 4.5** In addition to the survey of premises and buildings, the assessor or assessment team 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, fire safety register, etc.
- 4.6** In some cases, the assessor or assessment team may consider that exploratory work or invasive investigation is required, to provide necessary 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.
- 4.7** In preparing the fire safety assessment, the assessor or assessment team should consider compliance with relevant standards, including Building Regulations requirements where applicable, and applicable codes of practice for premises and building(s) concerned. In some cases, the use of a fire engineering approach to assess the existing construction and facilities may be applicable.

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.

Guides and codes of practice, relevant 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](http://www.gov.ie/housing)), and are listed at Appendix B.

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 in effect for certain categories of building in some countries, but, in Ireland, in most buildings and circumstances, the recommended approach for all occupants is to evacuate to a place of safety in the event of fire or alarm. Special provisions (such as progressive horizontal evacuation) are necessary for buildings, such as hospitals or residential care homes, where full evacuation of patients or residents may not be feasible or advisable.

## **5 Fire Safety Assessment Report**

- 5.1** The assessor or assessment team, having carried out a fire safety assessment, should provide a fire safety assessment report to the person having control, the owner or occupier of the premises. The fire safety assessment report should address each item listed in sections 5.5 and 5.6 below, or 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.
- 5.2** The items listed in sections 5.5 and 5.6 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 assessor or assessment team, these should be similarly addressed in the fire safety assessment report.
- 5.3** The report should include recommendations considered necessary by the assessor or assessment team for fire safety in the building or premises. Recommendations may include recommendations for remedial works (see 6, below), 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.
- 5.4 Contents of Fire Safety Assessment Report**
- 5.4.1** 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,
  - Date of Inspection(s)
  - 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 used in the assessment – such as information taken from the building safety file, fire safety certificate application, correspondence from fire authority, building control 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 (see 5.7, below) considered necessary for use of the premises and buildings to accommodate the existing use(s) and/or occupancies.
- Recommendations for interim compensatory fire safety works or measures (see 5.8, below), where these are considered necessary and adequate to permit continued use of the premises, pending completion of remedial works,
- Recommendations for fire safety management 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 at Appendix A.

**5.4.2** Where the assessor or assessment team 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.

## **5.5 Buildings or Premises**

**5.5.1** The fire safety assessment should include consideration of the following:

- numbers of persons habitually resorting in buildings or accommodated therein,
- adequacy of means of egress from buildings for all occupants, including horizontal escape routes and vertical escape routes,
- appliances or fittings (systems and equipment) 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 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 systems<sup>1</sup>,
- 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 rescue service,
- any special risks – for example, handling or processing of dangerous substances, or highly flammable materials, car stackers, transformers, switchgear rooms,
- services in the building – for example, natural gas, liquefied petroleum gas, oil.
- any other relevant consideration.

## 5.6 Fire Safety Management of Premises

5.6.1 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,

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

- 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,
- any other relevant consideration.

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

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

**5.6.3** Guidance on fire safety management of premises may be found in the **Fire Safety Guide for Building Owners and Operators - Guide for persons with responsibilities under section 18(2) Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003** – to be published by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

## **6 Remedial Works**

- 6.1** The assessor or assessment team should consider whether remedial works or other fire safety measures are necessary. In considering the need for, and the extent of, any remedial works or other fire safety measures, the assessor or assessment team should take account of the nature and degree of any identified non-compliance with relevant standards, as well as 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, multi-storey or complex 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.
- 6.2** Remedial works may be intended to bring identified non-compliance into compliance with relevant standards. Where this is not practicable, alternative proposals for works which provide an equivalent level of fire safety may be considered. In such cases, it is advised that the assessor or assessment team consults with the relevant fire authority.
- 6.3** The assessor or assessment team may consider that use of premises, buildings, or part thereof should be restricted or discontinued until specified remedial works have been completed (see 5.4.2, above).
- 6.4** Where remedial works are recommended, and where it is proposed that the premises or buildings will remain in operation while works are carried out, the works should be completed in a timely fashion, without undue delay. Where a fire safety assessment has been required by a person authorised by a fire authority, it may be necessary to agree a proposed schedule for works with the fire authority.
- 6.5** Where it is proposed that the building or premises will remain in occupation or operation while works are carried out, consideration may be given to interim compensatory fire safety measures, to provide an adequate level of fire safety to facilitate continued use (see 7, below).
- 6.6** Any remedial works should comply with the requirements of the Building Regulations and Building Control Regulations. Where such remedial works constitute a material alteration 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.

- 6.7** Such remedial works may also require a commencement notice, fire safety certificate, certificate of compliance on completion – refer to the Building Control Regulations, 1997 - 2021.

## **7 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, where these are adequate to facilitate continued use.

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 an acceptable level of fire safety in the building, pending completion of remedial works, and the premises or building concerned should not be used without the implementation of the interim compensatory measures recommended by the assessor or assessment team.

Where interim compensatory fire safety measures are proposed, it is advised that the assessor or assessment team consults with the relevant fire authority.

Interim measures that may be considered include:

- closure of part(s) 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,
- fixed extinguishing equipment,
- updated certification of existing systems,
- gas detection,
- any other relevant, specific proposal.

## Appendix A

<b>Fire Safety Assessment – Premises Information Summary</b>	
Name of premises or building (including any alias)	
Address, including <i>Eircode</i>	
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 <sup>2</sup> )	
Description of type of premises or building (including map/photograph/drawings as appropriate) – for example, number of storeys, height of building, general form of construction (concrete block, timber frame construction, timber floor, external cladding), etc.	
Use(s) of premises or buildings – for example, sleeping accommodation, assembly use, residential (flats), hotel, etc.	
Number of occupants:	

## Fire Safety Assessment – Summary of contents

Name of premises or buildings to which this fire safety assessment applies ..... .....	Tick box(es) as appropriate, or indicate not applicable
I confirm that I have carried out a fire safety assessment of these premises or buildings.	
Date(s) of inspection(s) of the premises or buildings: ..... Inspection(s) carried out by (names): .....	
I attach my report on the fire safety assessment of the premises or buildings.	
The fire safety provision in the premises or buildings is suitable to accommodate use as .....	
The fire safety provision in the premises or buildings is not suitable to accommodate use as .....	
The building will require remedial works	
Details of remedial works are set out in appendix ... to the fire safety assessment report.	
The premises or building will require interim compensatory fire safety works or measures - to permit use of the building, pending completion of remedial works.	
Details of interim compensatory works are set out in appendix ... to the fire safety assessment report.	
Fire safety management conditions to be observed in using the premises or 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:  Professional body registration number:

## **Appendix B Codes of Practice and Guides to Fire Safety**

- Code of Practice for the Management of Fire Safety in Places of Assembly (1989)
- Code of Practice for Fire Safety of Furnishings and Fittings in Places of Assembly (1989)
- Guide to Fire Precautions in Existing Hotels, Guesthouses and Similar Premises (1989)
- Guide to Fire Safety in Flats, Bedsitters and Apartments (Existing) (1994)
- Guide to Fire Safety in Existing Nursing Homes and Similar Type Premises (1996)
- Code of Practice for Fire Safety at Indoor Concerts (1998)
- Guide to Fire Safety in Fire Safety in Hostels (1998)
- Guide to Fire Safety in Fire Safety in Preschools (1999)
- Guide to Fire Safety in Guest Accommodation (1999)
- Code of Practice for Fire Safety in New and Existing Community Dwelling Houses (2017)



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