



**Northern Ireland
Fire & Rescue Service**

SMALL BED AND BREAKFAST AND SELF-CATERING PREMISES GUIDE

Information on Complying with Fire Safety Law in Northern Ireland

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INTRODUCTION

- 1 This document provides guidance for proprietors of certain small bed and breakfast (B&B) and self-catering properties who have duties under Part 3 of The Fire and Rescue Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 and The Fire Safety Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010. It is designed to help proprietors understand steps that they should be taking to meet their legal obligations.
- 2 In general, The Fire and Rescue Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 and The Fire Safety Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010 seek to ensure the safety of persons (whether residents, visitors, employees or others), in the event of a fire, by setting out the responsibilities of persons for fire safety. Anyone who has control to any extent of the premises will have some responsibilities for ensuring that those occupying the premises are safe from harm caused by fire.
- 3 It is acknowledged that relative to other 'sleeping risk' premises, the risk from fire to persons in well managed small B&B and self-catering premises is likely to be relatively low.

WHO IS THIS GUIDANCE FOR?

- 4 The guidance is for proprietors of existing B&B properties and self-catering properties which:
 - are offered as accommodation for self-catering holidays, to be occupied by not more than 10 persons; or
 - offer accommodation for not more than eight bed and breakfast guests in the home of the resident operator; andin either case:
 - have a means of escape from bedrooms via a traditional 'hall' with at least one exit directly to the outside, rather than by way of a living or kitchen area;
 - do not have letting or guest accommodation below a ground floor or above a first floor;
 - do not act as the principal residence for paying guests;
 - do not have any storey area over 200m² internal floor space.
- 5 The guidance is not intended to cover private dwellings outside the scope of The Fire and Rescue Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 and The Fire Safety Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010; nor houses in multiple occupation (HMOs), small hotels, boarding houses, and hostels.
- 6 This guide applies only to fire safety law. Additionally, building regulations apply to the construction of new premises or conversions, alterations or extensions to existing premises intended to be used for B&B or self-catering. If in doubt you should contact your local authority building standards department for further advice. Building legislation and guidance can be accessed at www.buildingcontrol-ni.com.

- 7 B&B and self-catering properties outside the scope of this guide will require additional fire safety arrangements which are detailed in the HM Government Fire Risk Assessment Sleeping Accommodation Guide, available through the Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS) website www.nifrs.org/firesafe.

WHAT DOES THE LAW REQUIRE?

- 8 Fire safety law requires any person who has control of the premises to carry out an assessment to identify risks to the safety of persons in respect of harm caused by fire in the premises. It also requires them to take fire safety measures which are reasonable to ensure the safety of persons.
- 9 As the owner or operator you are likely to be the best person to know about the risks on your own premises and how they can be controlled. You should therefore be able to carry out the fire safety risk assessment yourself.
- 10 Guidance on the steps you should take are provided in the Annex.
- 11 NIFRS will not carry out a fire safety risk assessment for you, but will be able to give you information and advice. We may also visit your premises, ask about your fire safety risk assessment and examine the fire safety measures. If we are not satisfied with the steps you have taken, we could take formal enforcement action. As an initial step, however, NIFRS is more likely to work with you to help you take appropriate measures to ensure the safety of your guests.

BENCHMARKS FOR FIRE SAFETY

- 12 The following benchmarks describe fire safety measures recommended to ensure the safety of occupants should a fire occur (step 3 of your fire safety risk assessment). Before you consider these benchmarks, you will want to carry out your fire safety risk assessment and take any practical steps highlighted as a result to reduce or limit the risk of a fire starting. It is for you as the proprietor/responsible person to judge what practical steps to take in your individual circumstances.
- 13 These benchmarks are generally applicable to typical situations in a well managed property for which it is not expected that a higher level of fire safety measures will be needed to meet your obligations under fire safety law. You may of course voluntarily decide to provide enhanced measures in excess of your legal obligations.

BENCHMARKS FOR SMALL BED AND BREAKFAST PROPERTY

Fire Detection and Warning

- 14 The type of fire detection and warning system you require depends on the type of premises, the number of guest bedrooms and the number of floors in the premises.
- 15 When the fire alarm is powered by mains electricity (and has an additional stand-by supply in the form of a battery or capacitor), the following benchmarks should be considered:
- 15.1 For a Single Storey Property
- one or more smoke alarms should be installed in the hall or corridor, sited so that no part of a hall or corridor is further than 7.5m from a smoke alarm and no bedroom door is further than 3m from a smoke alarm;
 - a smoke alarm should also be installed in all living rooms* and separate dining rooms;* and
 - a heat alarm should be installed in the kitchen.
- 15.2 For a Two-Storey Property
- one or more smoke alarms should be installed in both the ground floor hall and first floor landing, sited so that no part of a hall or corridor is further than 7.5m from a smoke alarm and no bedroom door is further than 3m from a smoke alarm;
 - a smoke alarm should be installed in all living rooms* and separate dining rooms;*
 - a smoke alarm should be installed in any ground floor bedroom which has a door to the hall, corridor or stair; and
 - a heat alarm should be installed in the kitchen.
- 16 In all cases where there are **more than three guest bedrooms**, smoke alarms should also be installed in each bedroom. In such cases, the smoke alarm(s) required to be installed in the hall or corridor need not meet the 3m requirement but should still meet the 7.5m requirement referred to in Sections 15.1 and 15.2 above.
- 17 Alarms should be in accordance with BS 5839-6:2004 and be installed in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

* If you permit smoking in the living or dining rooms, or there are other possible sources of smoke in these rooms, eg, a toaster, you may wish to consider changing the type of alarm to a heat alarm to reduce the likelihood of false alarms. Any ground floor room which has a heat alarm installed and a door opening onto an escape route should have intumescent strips with smoke seals fitted on that door. This is because a heat alarm takes slightly longer to operate than a smoke alarm and the intumescent strips will help prevent the ingress of smoke into the escape route.

- 18 Smoke alarms installed in halls and landings should be of the optical type¹ (although there is no need to replace existing non-optical alarms during their lifetime).
- 19 When the fire alarm is powered by a long-life (10-year) tamper-proof lithium battery or equivalent, the following benchmarks should be considered:
- one or more smoke alarms should be installed in the ground floor hall and on the first floor landing (where applicable), sited so that no part of a hall or corridor is further than 7.5m from a smoke alarm;
 - a smoke alarm should be installed in all living rooms* and separate dining rooms;*
 - a heat alarm should be installed in the kitchen; and
 - smoke alarms should also be installed in each bedroom.
- 20 Fire Alarm General
- 20.1 The smoke alarms **should be capable of rousing sleeping occupants** (including the proprietor); therefore, alarms **should be interlinked** so that actuation of one causes the actuation of the others. Interlinking of the alarms can be either by wiring or radio signal but it must be in accordance with BS 5839-6:2004.
- 20.2 You should establish a system which ensures the regular testing and maintenance of the alarms – this should ideally be a weekly test.
- 20.3 If long-life battery powered systems are used you should consider installing mains-powered alarms permanently wired to a circuit when the lifetime of the battery is ended or when repair or redecoration work is being carried out to the property.

Doors

- 21 A door between a room (other than a bathroom or toilet) and any corridor, hall or stair which would be the route out in the case of a fire need not be a fire door² but should be capable of holding back smoke and fire for sufficient time (a minimum of 20 minutes) to maximise the chances of the occupants escaping safely. An example of a suitable door type is a solid timber door.
- 22 The following check list will help you decide if you need to repair, adjust or replace any door:
- doors need to be capable of holding back smoke and fire for sufficient time to maximise the chances of occupants escaping safely;
 - doors should be solid timber doors that fit well into their frames;
 - hollow 'egg-box' type doors would not offer adequate protection and should be replaced;

¹An optical smoke alarm is a conventional smoke alarm which utilises a light obscuration principle to detect smoke and is responsive to the type of smoke particles which could enter circulation areas during a fire.

² A fire door is a door assembly which is rated by its fire-resistance performance under test conditions.

- doors should be close fitting to their frame with gaps of no more than 4mm;
- doors should have no sizeable splits, gaps or cracks and should not be warped;
- Self-closing devices can impact on appearance and affect how you use the premises. If you decide these would be unsuitable, 'in-frame closers' or rising-butt hinges may be acceptable alternatives;
- the glazing in doors, or onto escape routes, is to be half-hour fire-resistant; and
- doors should be closed at night to inhibit the spread of smoke.

23 For a two-storey property with sleeping accommodation on the upper floor, it is important that if a fire occurs in a ground floor room off the escape route while persons are asleep, the door of the room on fire remains closed. **Where there are more than three bedrooms on the upper floor of a two-storey property, these ground floor doors should be provided with self-closing devices³ and fitted with intumescent smoke seals.**

24 Doors will only be effective at holding back fire and smoke if the corridor or hall structure also has the ability to hold back fire. Therefore, the corridor and hall structure needs to be able to withstand the effects of fire for at least 20 minutes.

Exit Door Locks

25 To facilitate escape from fire, the exit door should only be secured with a lock or fastening which can be readily opened from the inside, **without the use of a key**, while the premises are occupied.

Lighting

26 If a fire disrupts the normal lighting, there should still be sufficient illumination for occupants to find their way out of the property. Where an escape route does not receive adequate illumination from a street light or other external source, alternative lighting should be provided. This could be through ensuring that the hall and landing (if applicable) have one or more automatic plug-in night lights of a type which continue to operate if the mains electricity fails; by providing rechargeable torches in guest bedrooms, or installing self-contained luminaries complying with BS 5266-1-2011.

27 Where additional lighting is provided, you should establish a testing and maintenance system which ensures that the plug-in light or alternative lighting provided, is present and in working order.

³ There are various types of self-closing device available, including concealed, which may be suitable.

Firefighting Equipment

- 28 A fire blanket should be provided in the kitchen for the operator to use. A dry powder fire extinguisher in the kitchen is also recommended and for additional protection you may wish to consider providing a water extinguisher on each floor of your property.

Emergency Fire Action Plan

- 29 You should prepare a plan of what action you will take in the event of fire. This should include:
- clearly identifying the route of escape;
 - how to raise the alarm;
 - ensuring all guests are evacuated; and
 - calling the Fire & Rescue Service.
- 30 You may also wish to give them further advice regarding the regular emptying of ashtrays (if smoking is permitted) and the use of their own portable electrical equipment, when they arrive.

What Signage is Required?

- 31 A simple notice should be displayed in a prominent place in each bedroom, so that the guests know what to do in the event of fire. Where rechargeable torches are provided to assist with evacuation, there should be a sign adjacent to each torch stating what it is to be used for.
- 32 **Exit 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 an emergency exit sign. Less obvious or more complicated routes will require emergency exit directional signs.
- 33 You should regularly and at least once annually carry out a rehearsal 'fire drill' when no guests are present to ensure that everyone is aware of their role in a fire.

BENCHMARKS FOR SMALL SELF-CATERING PROPERTY

Fire Detection and Warning

- 34 The type of fire detection and warning system you require depends on the type of premises, the number of guest bedrooms and the number of floors in the premises.
- 35 When the fire alarm is powered by mains electricity (and has an additional stand-by supply in the form of a battery or capacitor), the following benchmarks should be considered:
- 35.1 For a Single Storey Property
- one or more smoke alarms should be installed in the hall or corridor, sited so that no part of a hall or corridor is further than 7.5m from a smoke alarm and no bedroom door is further than 3m from a smoke alarm; and
 - a smoke alarm should also be installed in all living rooms* and separate dining rooms;* and
 - a heat alarm should be installed in the kitchen.
- 35.2 For a Two-Storey Property
- one or more smoke alarms should be installed in both the ground floor hall and first floor landing sited so that no part of a hall or corridor is further than 7.5m from a smoke alarm and no bedroom door is further than 3m from a smoke alarm;
 - a smoke alarm should also be installed in all living rooms* and separate dining rooms;* and
 - in any ground floor bedroom which has a door to the hall, corridor or stair; and
 - a heat alarm should be installed in the kitchen.
- 36 In all cases where there are **more than three bedrooms**, smoke alarms should also be installed in each bedroom. In such cases, the smoke alarm(s) required to be installed in the hall or corridor need not meet the 3m requirement but should still meet the 7.5m requirement referred to in Sections 33.1 and 33.2 above.
- 37 Alarms should be in accordance with BS 5839-6:2004 and be installed in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

* If you permit smoking in the living or dining rooms, or there are other possible sources of smoke in these rooms, e.g. a toaster, you may wish to consider changing the type of alarm to a heat alarm to reduce the likelihood of false alarms. Any ground floor room which has a heat alarm installed and a door opening onto an escape route should have intumescent strips with smoke seals fitted on that door. This is because a heat alarm takes slightly longer to operate than a smoke alarm and the intumescent strips will help prevent the ingress of smoke into the escape route.

- 38 Smoke alarms installed in halls and landings should be of the optical type⁴ (although there is no need to replace existing non-optical alarms during their lifetime).
- 39 When the alarm is powered by a long-life (10-year) tamper-proof lithium battery or equivalent, the following benchmarks should be considered:
- one or more smoke alarms should be installed in the ground floor hall and on the first floor landing (where applicable), sited so that no part of a hall or corridor is further than 7.5m from a smoke alarm;
 - a smoke alarm should also be installed in all living rooms* and separate dining rooms*;
 - a heat alarm should be installed in the kitchen; and
 - smoke alarms should also be installed in each bedroom.
- 40 Fire Alarm General
- 40.1 The smoke alarms **should be capable of rousing sleeping occupants** (including the proprietor); therefore, alarms **should be interlinked** so that actuation of one causes the actuation of the others. Interlinking of the alarms can be either by wiring or radio signal but it must be in accordance with BS 5839-6:2004.
- 40.2 You should establish a system which ensures the regular testing and maintenance of the alarms – this should ideally be a weekly test.
- 40.3 If long-life battery powered systems are used, you should consider installing mains-powered alarms permanently wired to a circuit when the lifetime of the battery is ended or when repair or redecoration work is being carried out to the property.

Doors

- 41 A door between a room (other than a bathroom or toilet) and any corridor, hall or stair which would be the route out in the case of a fire need not be a fire door⁵ but should be capable of holding back smoke and fire for sufficient time (a minimum of 20 minutes) to maximise the chances of the occupants escaping safely. An example of a suitable door type is a solid timber door.
- 42 The following check list will help you decide if you need to repair, adjust or replace any door:
- doors need to be capable of holding back smoke and fire for sufficient time to maximise the chances of occupants escaping safely;
 - doors should be solid timber doors that fit well into their frames;

⁴An optical smoke alarm is a conventional smoke alarm which utilises a light obscuration principle to detect smoke and is responsive to the type of smoke particles which could enter circulation areas during a fire.

⁵ A fire door is a door assembly which is rated by its fire-resistance performance under test conditions.

- hollow 'egg-box' type doors would not offer adequate protection and should be replaced;
- doors should be close fitting to their frame with gaps of no more than 4mm;
- doors should have no sizeable splits, gaps or cracks and should not be warped;
- Self-closing devices can impact on appearance and affect how you use the premises. If you decide these would be unsuitable, 'in-frame closers' or rising-butt hinges may be acceptable alternatives;
- the glazing in doors, or onto escape routes, is to be half-hour fire-resistant;
- doors should be closed at night to inhibit the spread of smoke.

43 For a two-storey property with sleeping accommodation on the upper floor, it is important that if a fire occurs in a ground floor room off the escape route while persons are asleep, the door of the room on fire remains closed. **Where there are more than three bedrooms on the upper floor of a two-storey property, these ground floor doors should be provided with self-closing devices⁶ and fitted with intumescent smoke seals.**

44 Doors will only be effective at holding back fire and smoke if the corridor or hall structure also has the ability to hold back fire. Therefore, the corridor and hall structure needs to be able to withstand the effects of fire for at least 20 minutes.

Exit Door Locks

45 Although there may be a key operated lock on the door, to facilitate escape from fire, the final exit door should be capable of being easily opened from the inside without the use of a key, although it remains the personal choice of the occupiers how to secure the door.

Lighting

46 If a fire disrupts the normal lighting there should still be sufficient illumination for occupants to find their way out of the property. Where an escape route does not receive adequate illumination from a street light or other external source, alternative lighting should be provided. This could be through ensuring that the hall and landing (if applicable) have one or more automatic plug-in night lights of a type which continue to operate if the mains electricity fails, by providing rechargeable torches in bedrooms; or installing self-contained luminaries complying with BS 5266-1-2011.

47 Where additional lighting is provided, you should establish a testing and maintenance system which ensures that the plug-in light or alternative lighting provided, is present and in working order at the commencement of each let.

⁶ There are various types of self-closing device available, including concealed, which may be suitable.

Firefighting Equipment

- 48 A fire blanket should be provided in the kitchen for the operator to use. A dry powder fire extinguisher in the kitchen is also recommended and for additional protection you may wish to consider providing a water extinguisher on each floor of your property.

Emergency Fire Action Plan

- 49 You should prepare a plan of what action any occupier should take in the event of fire. This would include:
- clearly identifying the route of escape;
 - how to raise the alarm;
 - ensuring all occupants are evacuated; and
 - calling the Fire & Rescue Service.
- 50 You should also ensure that the occupier is advised of basic precautions such as closing doors at night to inhibit the spread of smoke, and the need to inform the owner or agent if any equipment develops a fault (such as electrical or smoke alarm defects).
- 51 This should be available for each party arriving at the premises.

What Signage is Required?

- 52 A simple notice advising the occupants of what to do in the event of a fire should be fixed in a prominent place such as the hall, and/or be provided within a welcome pack. Where rechargeable torches are provided to assist with evacuation, there should be a sign adjacent to each torch stating what it is to be used for.
- 53 **Exit 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 an emergency exit sign. Less obvious or more complicated routes will require emergency exit directional signs.
- 54 You should regularly and at least once annually carry out a rehearsal 'fire drill' when no guests are present to ensure that everyone is aware of their role in a fire.

HOW CAN YOU TAKE ACCOUNT OF THE NEEDS OF GUESTS WITH DISABILITIES?

- 55 You will need to consider this and plan accordingly. A free guide is available to assist which is called Means of Escape for Disabled People. This is available through the NIFRS website www.nifrs.org/firesafe.

IS A LOG-BOOK REQUIRED?

- 56 Yes. A fire precautions log book must be maintained to record the testing and maintenance of:
- the automatic fire alarm;
 - any provision for emergency lighting;
 - any first aid firefighting equipment; and
 - any fire drills.

WHAT YOU CAN DO IF YOU DISAGREE WITH ADVICE PROVIDED BY NIFRS

- 57 It is the responsibility of NIFRS to decide how it will deploy its resources to address risk to life to improve the safety of the community. NIFRS may or may not contact you to discuss your fire safety risk assessment. You are, however, free to contact them for advice.
- 58 This guidance is issued by NIFRS to assist owners and responsible persons comply with the legislation. Should you disagree with any advice given to you by NIFRS, you can:
- discuss this further with us to work towards an acceptable action plan in an agreed timescale. NIFRS also has a complaint system you can use;
 - in the case of a formal enforcement notice, you can lodge an appeal with the court. In this case you may wish to get legal advice.

SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION

- 58 For further information visit the NIFRS website www.nifrs.org/firesafe Here you will find general guidance plus the relevant sector specific guidance for properties within the scope of this guidance.

ANNEX

HOW TO CARRY OUT A FIRE SAFETY RISK ASSESSMENT

The steps below are intended to help you through the process of carrying out an assessment of the fire risks in your property.

Step 1: Who is at risk?

Consider the numbers and capability of people who may occupy your property and who could be at risk. This includes guests, owners, any other visitors including cleaners, tradespersons, etc. Make a note if particularly vulnerable persons are likely such as children, elderly, or disabled persons (you will need to consider the fire safety of guests with any special needs or vulnerabilities).

Step 2: What fire hazards are there?

Think about how a fire could start on your premises and identify sources of ignition such as cooking, heaters, open fires and smoking. Do family members smoke? Are there designated bedrooms where guests are permitted to smoke? Where are electrical appliances such as tumble dryers and TVs? What is the likelihood of a deliberate fire?

Consider what could burn and act as fuel for a fire. This could include furniture, bedding, laundry, wood/kindling for open fires, rubbish, flammable liquids, solvents, chemicals or gases, cooking oil, paint, white spirit, cleaning products, aerosols, LPG, or fuels such as petrol.

Consider what could happen if a fire occurred and how quickly it could spread. The construction of the property can affect how fire can spread; it may spread faster if there are multiple layers of wallpaper, polystyrene ceiling tiles or interior wood panelling. If rubbish stored outside caught fire, could it spread to inside the property or block an exit door?

Step 3: What can you do to reduce/remove risk; what fire safety measures should be put in place?

Now that you have considered the people at risk and the hazards, you can take steps as necessary to reduce the risk both of a fire occurring and of injury or loss of life should a fire occur. You may also wish to consider the risk of damage to your property, and any subsequent loss of business.

If ignition sources and fuel sources are reduced and these are kept apart, the chances of a fire starting are low. The following lists some of the actions that are advised for dwellings as part of normal community fire safety which you should consider to reduce the risk of a fire occurring:

- ensure good housekeeping, so that storage is in designated areas only; is orderly; refuse and packaging is disposed of frequently and carefully; bins are secure;
- ensure flammable materials and liquids are stored properly, away from ignition sources, electrical fuse box and meter, boilers, etc. Do not store aerosols in damp areas (such as under sinks);
- avoid the use of portable gas heaters; use only in an emergency when only butane should be used;
- ensure that electrical and gas appliances and equipment are maintained, serviced and kept in good working order. Clean extract equipment to kitchens regularly;
- replace any chip pan with a deep fat fryer with a thermostat;
- individual heating appliances should be fixed in position and guarded;
- ensure the electrical installation to the property is in good order; get it checked if in any doubt. Ensure correct wiring of plugs and correct fuse ratings;
- if anyone smokes, ensure ashtrays are provided, emptied regularly and safely. Inspect or advise your guests to inspect smoking areas before bedtime;
- keep halls, corridors and stairs, which would be used to escape from a fire clear and hazard free, and advise guests to do this also. In particular, keep clear of items which can burn, or are a source of ignition such as electrical equipment, coat racks, refuse, laundry, upholstered furniture, portable heaters or gas cylinders;
- if your property is in an area where vandalism or deliberate fires can be a problem, consider security measures to prevent entrance to the grounds of the property and access to refuse storage and storage of any flammable liquids/gases.

You should then consider what further safety measures are necessary to reduce the risk of injury or loss of life should a fire occur in your premises, for example:

- means for detecting and effectively warning occupants of a fire which occurs in any part of the premises;

- means to restrict the spread of fire and smoke from the source to other areas especially the escape route;
- means of escape which are easy to use at any time by persons who are not familiar with the premises, for example guests who have recently arrived;
- means for fighting a small fire such as a fire in a waste bin or in a cooking pan.

Guidance on what is expected in these areas is provided in the section: **‘BENCHMARKS FOR FIRE SAFETY’**.

Step 4: Record

It is a good idea to keep a written record of your fire safety risk assessment. This will make it easier for you to review your assessment and it will also be easier to demonstrate that you have carried out an assessment. You should also record the arrangements for reviewing your fire safety risk assessment, your emergency fire action plan and the maintenance arrangements for fire safety measures.

Step 5: Review

You need to regularly review your fire safety risk assessment. Is there anything that has altered the risk and means you need to consider again the fire safety measures you have in place? For example are you doing building work, maintenance or decorative work? Do you have a different range of guests such as more elderly or disabled?