

HEALTH TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM 88

Fire precautions in housing providing NHS-supported living in the community

2001

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Fire precautions in housing providing NHS-supported living in the community

AN UPDATE OF HEALTH TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM 88

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Introduction and scope

General application

HTM 88 is a Code of Practice prepared by a working group under the direction of the Department of Health's National Fire Policy Advisory Group and has no statutory force. It is a set of standards, which recognises the problems particular to the provision of supported living in the community. It should allow the current statutory regulations to be applied sensibly within a framework of understanding. The measures in this document are supplementary to the requirements of Part B of Schedule 1 of the Building Regulations 2000.

HTM 88 provides recommendations and guidance to address the special requirements of fire safety in community-based premises providing supported living for people who have learning difficulties or mental illness (including those with physical handicap).

This edition replaces HTM 88 – 'Fire precautions in NHS housing in the community for mentally handicapped (or mentally ill) people', first published in 1986, and forms a part of the Firecode suite of documents.

The document provides guidance on the required fire safety standards for existing premises and additionally, for new build premises or new extensions. The measures in this guide are supplementary to the requirements of Part B of Schedule 1 of the Building Regulations 2000.

It is intended for use in both staffed and unstaffed accommodation. The document shall be used for the acquisition of new properties ("new" meaning new to the trust, etc.). For the purpose of this guidance, a competent person referred to elsewhere in the document is considered to be a trust fire safety adviser, estates officer, building control officer, fire service officer, architect or approved inspector.

For reasons of clarity, the term "residential care premises" should be taken to include both statutory homes run by local authorities, and homes run by voluntary organisations or the private sector. The definition includes all premises defined as classes 2(a) and 2(b) in Table 1 of Appendix D in the Building Regulations Approved Document B.

The term "house in multiple occupation" (HiMO) has a legal definition which is "a house which is occupied by persons who do not form a single household"¹. It is

considered that premises used for the provision of NHS-supported living do not constitute a HiMO. The fire safety provisions within this guide are the minimum to be accepted or applied. They are of sufficient standard to meet those which may be required by a local authority to meet the standard for a HiMO.

The guidance contained in HTM 88 should not be used for premises where residents or staff will be accommodated on a floor more than two floors above the ground or access level. It is not considered suitable to locate supported living accommodation within multi-storey blocks of flats unless the accommodation is provided at ground-floor level only.

The guidance is intended for premises providing accommodation for no more than six residents. It is assumed that where more than six residents are to be accommodated, the premises will fall into the category of residential care/nursing home status. Therefore the contents of this document will not be appropriate.

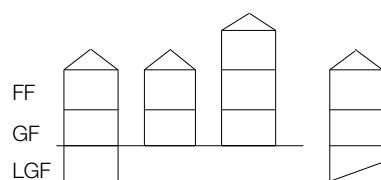


Figure 1. Acceptable situations

NON-NHS PREMISES

This document is intended for use in premises owned or occupied by NHS trusts, primary care trusts, primary care groups, health authorities or premises that are rented for providing supported living accommodation by a trust.

PHILOSOPHY

Community-based housing provided for people with learning difficulties or mental illness covered by this document is a home to these individuals. Therefore, in providing an acceptable level of fire safety, due recognition should be given to this fact. It is important to maintain a homely, non-institutional environment. Careful consideration should be given to any intended standards to avoid adverse effects on the quality of the

¹ Encyclopaedia of Housing Law and Practice. A. Arden (Ed.), Sweet & Maxwell, London, August 1997.

residents' life, or the care they receive. In trying to adhere to this philosophy, consideration should be given to:

- the number of residents in the property;
- the physical ability of the residents;
- fire hazards present within the property;
- management policies;
- availability of an adequate² number of staff, suitably trained in fire safety;
- physical fire precautions within the property.

[Appendix 1](#) provides a worksheet record for undertaking fire risk assessments.

[Appendix 2](#) provides a checklist to assess the suitability of premises prior to acquisition for use in providing supported living accommodation.

[Appendix 3](#) provides guidance on the use of hold-open devices (which includes free swing units).

STAFFING LEVELS

It is not within the scope of this guidance to set staffing levels in homes providing supported living. However, it is important that where staff are present on the premises to provide 24-hour supervision and support to residents that they are adequate in number. The trust has a legal obligation under the Health & Safety at Work Act and the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999 to undertake a risk assessment. In carrying out this risk assessment it must be borne in mind that where staff are working alone (for example, on night duty) they are regarded as lone workers under the Regulations.

USE BY COMPETENT PERSONS

The guidance in this document has been written on the understanding that a competent person will use it. For this purpose a competent person is regarded as having sufficient training and experience or knowledge and other qualities to enable them to both fully understand the dangers involved, and to undertake properly the measures referred to in the guide.

CONSULTATION

Early consultation should take place between the trust, designers, building owners, enforcing authorities, approved inspectors and other appropriate bodies³ to ensure:

- the content of this guidance or other appropriate measures will be applied;
- the premises chosen are suitable;
- any conflict between nursing care and fire safety can be resolved.

It is not possible to provide absolute safety against fire. Guidance contained within this document, if followed, should reduce the risk to residents, staff and visitors as far as is reasonably practicable. The trust must be consulted prior to any decisions to accept relaxation of, or dispensation from, this guide.

FIRE SAFETY DURING BUILDING ACTIVITIES

A significant number of fires occur during building activities. Site activities of contractors should be adequately supervised and controlled. Adequate precautions against the risk of fire should be put into place, and regular contact with contractors maintained to ensure agreed procedures are being complied with. Further guidance on fire safety on construction sites can be found in the following guides:

- 'Fire prevention on construction sites'
- 'Designing for health and safety in construction'

OTHER FIRECODE GUIDANCE

The guidance contained within this HTM should be read in conjunction with the current editions of the following Firecode documents:

- 'Policy and principles'
- HTM 82 – 'Alarm and detection systems'
- HTM 83 – 'Fire safety in healthcare premises' – General fire precautions
- HTM 87 – 'Textiles and furniture'
- FPN 6 – 'Arson prevention and control in healthcare premises'
- FPN 9 – 'NHS healthcare fire statistics 1994/95'.

² It is for the trust to determine what constitutes an adequate number of staff taking into account paragraph 15.9.

³ Other appropriate bodies may include social services, GPs, occupational therapy, etc. This list is not exhaustive.

Glossary of terms

For the purpose of this document the following terms are defined:

Compartment: Building or part of a building, comprising one or more rooms, spaces or storeys, constructed to prevent the spread of fire to or from another part of the same building, or an adjoining building. The period of fire resistance provided will be 60 minutes.

Door release mechanisms: A device designed to retain a door in the open (or locked) position, which is electronically controlled via the operation of the fire alarm and detection system.

Element of structure: A member forming part of the structural frame of a building or any other beam or column.

- A loadbearing wall or loadbearing part of a wall.
- A floor.
- An external wall.
- A compartment wall (including a wall common to two or more buildings).

The following are excluded from the definition of an element of structure:

- A structure that only supports a roof, unless:
 - the roof performs the function of a floor such as for parking or for means of escape;
 - the structure is essential for the stability of an external wall which needs to have fire resistance.
- The lowest floor of the building.

Reference should also be made to Table A1 of Approved Document B 2000 edition.

Escape lighting: That part of the emergency lighting that is provided to ensure that the escape route is illuminated at all material times.

Final exit: The termination of an escape route from a building giving direct access to a place of safety outside the building.

Fire door: Door or shutter provided for the passage of persons, air or objects which, together with its frame and furniture as installed in a building, is intended when closed to resist the passage of fire and /or gaseous products of combustion and is capable of meeting specified performance criteria to those ends.

Fire precautions: Measures that can be taken to reduce the likelihood of ignition occurring and/or mitigate the consequences should ignition occur. Precautions are considered under five headings as identified below:

Prevention: precautions to control potential ignition and fuel sources, to ensure that fires do not start. Prevention also includes general fire precautions.

Fire alarm and detection systems: Precautions that inform the occupants of a building and an external agency.

Means of escape: Precautions that enable the occupants of a building to turn their back on a fire and escape to a place of safety away from the effects of the fire.

Containment: Precautions that contain the fire into the smallest possible area, and control the threat to life safety and the extent of property damage.

Extinguishment: Precautions that ensure a fire can be quickly extinguished with the minimum disturbance to the function of and damage to the premises.

Fire resistance: The ability of an element of building construction, component or structure to fulfil, for a stated period of time (30 minutes), the required load bearing capacity, fire integrity and/or insulation and/or other expected duty in a standard fire resistance test.

Fire stop: Seal provided to close an imperfection of fit or design tolerance between elements or components, to restrict the passage of fire and smoke.

Ignition sources: Sources of heat or flame which will cause ignition.

Place of safety: Place where no persons are in danger from fire.

Protected shaft: Shaft that enables persons, air or objects to pass from one compartment to another, and which is enclosed in fire resisting construction.

Supported living: Accommodation in the community provided for the care and support of people with learning difficulties, mental illness, or physical disability.

Sub-compartment: Areas into which the premises can be divided to reduce travel distance and which will provide 30 minutes fire resistance in relation to integrity and insulation.

Fire precautions in existing premises

This document can be used to assess the level of fire safety in existing community housing providing supported living. The process of assessment is partly by visual survey of the premises, and partly by desktop analysis of plans, policies and records. HTM88 is only a guide to help identify the degree of fire safety; it is not a precise tool. It will be a matter of professional judgement to determine the level of tolerance that will be considered acceptable in the assessment. It is therefore essential that the assessment is undertaken by a competent person in order for a safe judgement to be made. To undertake such an assessment, the following stages should be considered.

STAGE 1 – PEOPLE

Assess the number of residents in the premises to determine appropriate guidance (i.e. under six residents or over six residents). By assessing the risk to the residents, who are the most vulnerable in a fire situation, the risk to staff and visitors will also be taken into account.

STAGE 2 - HAZARDS

Identify and assess the hazards using [sections 1–6](#).

STAGE 3 – PRECAUTIONS

Use [sections 7–17](#) to assess the precautions and management aspects.

STAGE 4 – ASSESSMENT RECORD

Significant findings of the assessment should be recorded in writing. An example assessment sheet is provided in [Appendix 1](#). There should be a record for each separate property.

STAGE 5 – ACTION

Having completed the assessment, an action plan should be developed and implemented to rectify any identified shortfalls in fire safety. These actions may include:

- Reduce or remove unacceptable fire hazards.
- Decide whether existing precautions identified in Stage 3 are to an acceptable standard or if they require improvement.
- Undertake any necessary improvement work identified.

STAGE 6 – AUDIT

Having completed the assessment and any identified remedial action, it will be necessary to audit the process to ensure the assessment remains valid.

The risk assessment should be reviewed (and if necessary, revised) annually, and, when there is reason to believe the existing assessment is no longer valid.

1 Ignition sources – management issues

1.1 The management of the premises should be such that all reasonable provision is made to reduce the possibility of unwanted ignition.

REQUIREMENT

1.2 Smoking⁴ should be restricted to a single room within the premises and there should be a sufficient number of suitable ashtrays provided. Where the premises are fully supervised, inspections should be made at regular intervals and 30 minutes after the room has been vacated for the night to ensure there are no signs of carelessly discarded smoking materials.

1.3 On no account should smoking be permitted in bedrooms.

1.4 An approved person should check electrical equipment prior to being used for the first time.

1.5 Electrical equipment should be subjected to portable appliance testing requirements in accordance with the Electricity at Work Regulations. Reference should be made to PM32- Safe use of portable electrical apparatus (HSE), Maintaining portable equipment in offices and other low risk environments and Low Voltage Safety Policy – Model Documentation.

1.6 Electrical sockets should not be overloaded, and the use of plug adapters and multi-way sockets should be avoided, and where deemed necessary, only used under appropriate supervision.

1.7 Electric blankets should be used, stored and maintained in accordance with manufacturers instructions

1.8 There should be no cooking appliances used outside of the kitchen area, within the premises.

1.9 Electrical equipment should only be used for its intended purpose and operating instructions should be readily available for all equipment.

1.10 The use of portable heaters is prohibited. Where individual heaters are deemed necessary, they should be subjected to a detailed risk assessment. Should the assessment support their requirement, they must be fixed in position and used only in accordance with manufacturer instructions. The use of LPG naked flame or exposed element heaters is not permitted.

1.11 The use of open fires located within a specifically designed fireplace should be subject to a detailed risk assessment of their use. In all cases, an open fire should be provided with a suitable fireguard.

1.12 There should be an effective programme of planned preventative maintenance, with an agreed procedure for the reporting of faults. Action should be taken to ensure that residents and staff are not placed at risk whilst awaiting the repair of defective equipment.

⁴The Health & Safety Executive is currently in the process of preparing an Approved Code of Practice (AcoP) on passive smoking. The content of the AcoP should be applied when published.

2 Ignition sources – fire hazard rooms

2.1 Fire hazard rooms are rooms or other areas which because of their function and/or content present a greater hazard of fire occurring and developing than elsewhere. Within the context of this guidance such rooms would include:

- kitchens;
- laundry rooms;
- storerooms over 1m²;
- designated smoking areas;
- boiler rooms;
- lift motor rooms;
- bedrooms;
- understair stores.

REQUIREMENT

2.2 All fire hazard rooms should be enclosed in 30-minute fire-resisting construction. Rising-butt hinges should be fitted to all fire hazard rooms. Where positive action self-closing devices are fitted to fire doors, consideration should be given to the fitting of free swing units, in accordance with the requirements of [Appendix 3](#).

Note

2.3 The term “fire resisting” (or fire resistance) refers to the ability of a component or construction of a building to satisfy for a stated period of time, some or all of the appropriate criteria specified in the relevant Part of British Standard 476 (see Note in Appendix 4).

3 Combustible materials – management issues

3.1 Controlling combustible materials by good housekeeping can reduce the likelihood of fire occurring. Some of the good practices to be followed are indicated below. The list is not exhaustive.

- Avoid the use of highly flammable materials and liquids where possible.
- Store, use and dispose of aerosols in a safe manner.
- Stack and store linen, paper and plastic or cardboard packaging in an orderly manner.
- Prevent the accumulation of rubbish.

- Dispose of waste and other combustible rubbish promptly.
- Make adequate arrangements for waste storage and removal.

REQUIREMENT

3.2 There should be an audit undertaken within the premises, at least annually, to ensure the likelihood of fire is not increased through excessive amounts of textiles, furniture or equipment which does not conform to standards prevalent at the time.

4 Combustible materials – surface finishes

4.1 To inhibit the spread of fire within a building, the internal linings should offer adequate resistance to the spread of flame over their surfaces and have a low rate of heat release when ignited.

REQUIREMENT

4.2 Apart from small areas of wall surface (0.5m²), the finish applied to a wall and ceiling should conform to the standard below:

- circulation spaces – Class 0;
- rooms (over 4m²) – Class 1;
- small rooms (not exceeding 4m²) – Class 3.

Notes

4.3 Class 0 means as defined by Approved Document B to the Building Regulations. The highest product performance classification for lining materials is Class 0. This is achieved if a material or the surface of a composite product is either:

- composed throughout of materials of limited combustibility; or
- a Class 1 material which has a fire propagation index (I) of not more than 12 and a sub-index (i1) of not more than 6.

4.4 Class 1 and 3 means in accordance with British Standard 476 Part 7.

4.5 Materials likely to be found in existing premises are difficult to assess in terms of their contribution to the

spread of flame. As a guide the following materials would normally be expected to achieve Class 0:

- brickwork;
- blockwork;
- concrete;
- plasterboard;
- ceramic tiles;
- plaster finishes;
- woodwool slab;
- thin vinyl and paper coverings on a non-combustible substrate.

4.6 Partitions, space dividers and other similar vertical surfaces should possess the same standard of surface finish as walls (Class 0).

4.7 Full technical guidance should be sought where it is intended to use intumescent or anti-graffiti paints over existing painted surfaces.

4.8 The use of blown vinyl wall covering should be restricted to small rooms or small areas of no more than 10m². Blown vinyl coverings should not be used in circulation areas.

4.9 The use of recessed light fittings on suspended ceilings is only permitted where the integrity can be maintained. The use of roof lights of thermoplastic construction is prohibited.

5 Combustible materials – textiles and furniture

5.1 The hazards associated with textiles and furniture being involved in a fire are dependent upon the overall environment. Whilst advances in materials and technology may reduce the risk, they will not entirely eliminate it.

REQUIREMENT

5.2 All textiles and furniture should comply with the requirements of HTM 87 – ‘Textiles and furniture’.

5.3 There should be a trust-wide policy on procurement which includes textiles and furnishings. This policy should be as applicable to supported living premises as it would be to a hospital.

6 Combustible materials – bedding and sleepwear

6.1 Bedding and sleepwear should not present any additional hazard to residents.

REQUIREMENTS

6.2 The Nightwear (Safety) Regulations 1985 consist of measures aimed at the control of sleepwear ignitability, including dressing gowns, for both adults and children. In these Regulations, garments worn by children between the ages of three months and 13 years must meet the requirements stipulated.

6.3 In the case of sleepwear for adults, these garments need not be labelled with the warning “keep away from fire”, if they do not meet the requirements of the Nightwear (Safety) Regulations 1985.

Notes

6.4 It is appreciated that in these types of premises, residents will provide their own nightwear. As a minimum standard, it is strongly recommended that where possible all sleepwear achieve the requirements of the Nightwear (Safety) Regulations 1985.

6.5 Dressing gowns with a raised pile surface, commonly known as “terry towel” type and used as bath robes are not covered by the Nightwear (Safety) Regulations 1985. Such fabrics are prone to the phenomenon known as “surface flash” when tested in accordance with British Standard 4569 or ISO 10047, and may easily ignite when exposed to a small source of ignition. Their use in all accommodation should be discouraged.

7 Prevention – management

7.1 Adequate management controls need to be in place to safeguard residents, staff and visitors against the risk of fire. Further guidance can be found in Firecode – ‘Policy and principles’.

REQUIREMENT

- 7.2** A clearly defined fire safety policy addressing the specific needs of the home
- 7.3** A suitable, up-to-date, emergency plan based on the fire risk assessment, which is brought to the attention of all staff
- 7.4** An appropriate number of available staff, who have received fire safety training
- 7.5** A fire safety training programme that addresses the risks faced within the home
- 7.6** Means of escape are readily available at all material times
- 7.7** Records of staff training should be kept for three years
- 7.8** Equipment provided for fire-fighting, emergency lighting, and giving warning in case of fire, are maintained in efficient working order and regularly tested by a competent person, in accordance with the requirements of the current relevant British Standard
- 7.9** Records of all tests carried out of the alarm and detection system, emergency lighting, and fire-fighting equipment should be kept for a period of three years.

Notes

7.10 It is important that staff be familiar with the locations of smoke alarms, etc. The trust should consider maintaining up-to-date, simple line drawings of the premises indicating the locations of smoke alarms, fire-fighting equipment, escape routes and utility service isolation locations as part of the recorded findings of the risk assessment.

8 Prevention – training

8.1 All staff (including temporary and agency staff), and where appropriate, residents, should be given information, instruction and training about the precautions to be taken or observed within the home. This information must include the action to take in case of fire to call the fire service.

REQUIREMENT

8.2 Information, instruction and training should be given at the start of a person's employment in the home. It should be repeated at regular intervals which will be determined by the level of risk identified in the fire risk assessment, but in any case not less than annually.

8.3 Where it is deemed appropriate, residents should be included in the training sessions.

8.4 Fire drills should be held as appropriate, in accordance with the recorded findings of the fire risk assessment.

Notes

8.5 Fire safety training should be specific to the premises and should cover:

- Correct action on discovery of a fire.
- Correct action following operation of the alarm and detection system.
- Fire prevention.
- Action to take on discovery of a person with their clothing alight.
- Advice on the importance of fire doors and their correct use.
- Use of manual fire-fighting equipment.
- Evacuation and escape routes.
- A competent person should provide and supervise the provision of training. Records of training should be kept for a period of three years.
- Persons identified in the emergency plan as being responsible for supervising, controlling and putting into effect the plan should be given such additional training as necessary to enable them to perform their duties.
- Practice fire drills should take the form of a walk through the relevant escape routes, noting fire doors, fire alarm points and fire-fighting equipment.

9 Prevention – signs and notices

REQUIREMENT

9.1 Safety signs in supported living premises are required if the risk assessment indicates that they are necessary.

Notes

9.2 If the risk assessment indicates that risks can only be avoided or reduced by the provision of safety signs, then such signs must be provided. Particular attention should be given to the provision of fire exit signs where the escape route is not apparent. Where signs are displayed, they should comply with the requirements of the Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996.

9.3 The purpose of fire signs is to direct persons towards fire exits, or to provide specific information or warning about particular equipment doors, rooms, or procedures. They should be recognisable, comprehensible and informative as they convey important information to infrequent users of the premises. Careful consideration should be given to height, visibility and any necessary illumination.

9.4 The purpose of fire notices is to give concise instructions on the action to take on discovery of a fire and on hearing the alarm.

10 Communications – alarm and detection systems

10.1 For life safety, early detection and the raising of the alarm are of vital importance. Early detection will allow for a more orderly evacuation, and offers the potential for the fire to be tackled at an earlier stage, thereby reducing the risk to life and minimising damage to property.

REQUIREMENT

10.2 The system installed must, as a minimum, comply with the requirements of British Standard 5839: Part 6. The grade of system will be a Grade C, with a protection level of LD1 (see paragraph 10.9 for clarification of the system required). Detectors should be provided throughout all parts of the premises. On the basis of the findings of the fire risk assessment, there may be no requirement to install fire detection in roof, ceiling or floor voids, bathrooms, or small cupboards (less than 1m²).

10.3 The smoke/heat alarms must be permanently wired to a separate fused circuit at the distribution board, and may be operated at a low voltage via a transformer. The smoke alarm installation should incorporate a stand-by power supply. **No other equipment should be connected to this circuit.** Connection should be via a protective device (a fuse or miniature circuit breaker), and should be labelled “Fire Alarm – Do Not Isolate”.

10.4 The power supply to the smoke alarm installation must be monitored. There must be either a visual or audible warning of the failure of the mains supply.

10.5 Smoke alarms should not be fixed next to or directly above heaters or air-conditioning outlets, or within 1½ times the radius of any ceiling-mounted cooling fans.

10.6 Smoke detectors should not be installed in bathrooms, showers, cooking areas or garages, or any other location where steam, condensation or fumes could give rise to unwanted alarms. In these locations heat detectors should be installed, and linked into the smoke alarm circuit.

10.7 Arrangements must be in place to ensure an alarm can be rapidly acted upon by external agencies.

Notes

10.8 A Grade C system is a system of fire detectors and alarm sounders (which may be combined in the form of smoke alarms) connected to a common power supply, comprising the normal mains and a standby supply, with an element of central control. An LD1 system provides for full coverage

10.9 Consideration should be given to the audibility of the alarm throughout the premises. The recommended level in British Standard 5839: Part 1, of 65dB(A) is considered too high for supported living homes. In staffed accommodation, this should be reduced to 45–55dB(A) in general areas of the home and 75dB(A) at the staff bedhead. In accommodation without 24-hour staff support, the level should be reduced to 45–55dB(A) in general areas of the home and 75dB(A) at the bedhead of all residents. Consideration should also be given to the mental condition of the resident so as not to cause undue stress, upon operation of the alarm.

10.10 Due regard must be given to where staff sleep. Any potential for future changes to the sleeping accommodation should be subject to an assessment of the audibility of the alarm to ensure it is sufficient to awaken sleeping staff.

10.11 It is also important to consider those persons in the premises who may have a hearing or visual impairment. The trust should ensure there are suitable arrangements in place to supplement the audible alarm with visual and/or sensory devices. Any signal forming part of the fire warning system should be clearly distinguishable from any other form of warning device.

11 Means of escape – travel distances

11.1 There should be adequate means of escape in case of fire, capable of being used safely and effectively at all material times.

REQUIREMENT

11.2 Means of escape in one or two storey premises is relatively simple. There are few provisions necessary beyond ensuring that each habitable room either opens directly into a final exit or into a hallway or stairway which itself leads directly to a final exit (Figure 11.1).

11.3 An inner room situation is only acceptable where the inner room is:

- a kitchen;
- a laundry or utility room;
- a dressing room;
- a bathroom or shower.

11.4 Where an open plan stairway forms part of the escape route, it will be necessary to either:

1. fully enclose the stairway; or
2. install a residential sprinkler system throughout the premises to an appropriate standard.

11.5 Means of escape from premises with any floor over 4.5m above the ground level requires a protected stair which either:

- leads directly to a final exit (Figure 11.2); or
- gives access to at least two escape routes at ground level, each of which leads to a final exit and is separated from the other by fire-resisting construction (Figure 11.3)

11.6 Alternatively, the upper storey should be separated from the lower storeys by 30-minute fire-resisting construction, and be provided with its own independent means of escape (Figure 11.4)

11.7 The maximum distance to be travelled within any room, avoiding all obstructions, should be 9m. The maximum distance to be travelled to reach a place of safety (protected shaft or stairway, or a final exit) should be 18m (see [Note](#)).

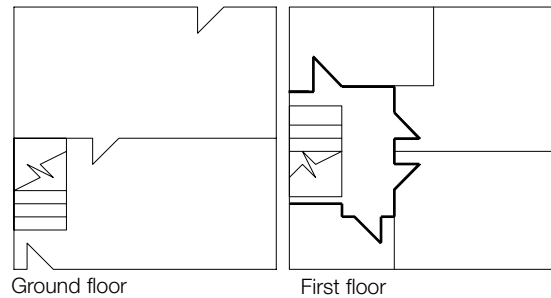


Figure 11.1

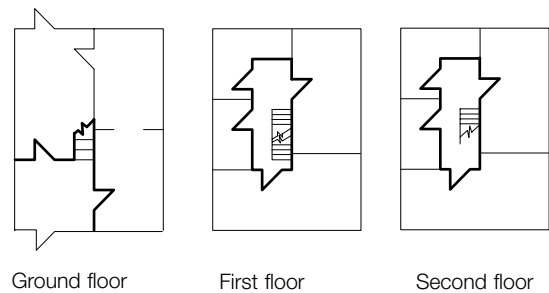


Figure 11.2

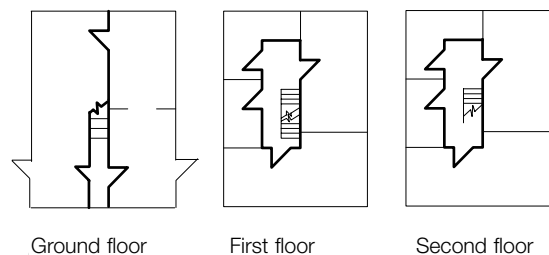


Figure 11.3

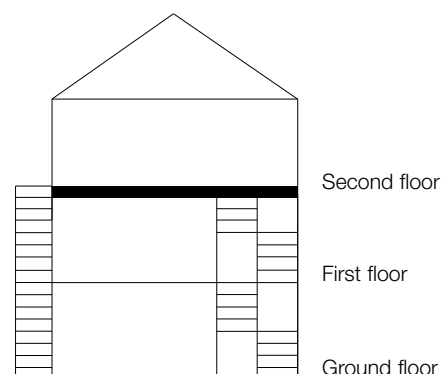


Figure 11.4

Note

11.8 Having undertaken a fire risk assessment, discretion to increase or reduce travel distances rests with the competent person.

11.9 Open plan stairways are not acceptable without the provision of a residential sprinkler system installed throughout the premises. Where the situation already exists within a property currently used for the provision of supported living, remedial action must be taken.

12 Means of escape – stairways

12.1 The design of stairways should be such that it is possible to evacuate residents by the most appropriate method, dependent upon their mobility.

REQUIREMENT

12.2 There is no requirement to enclose stairways where the premises consist of ground and first floor accommodation, and the resident bedrooms are enclosed in 30-minute fire-resisting construction.

12.3 Where the premises provide accommodation on three floors, the stairway should be fully enclosed in 30-minute fire-resisting construction and give direct access to a final exit. Where the requirement for a final exit cannot be achieved there must be access from the stairway to two final exits that are separated from each other by fire-resisting construction.

12.4 There should be no cupboards located within stairways, but where they already exist, they should be enclosed in 30-minute fire-resisting construction.

12.5 Where stairlifts are considered essential, they should only be provided on the basis of a risk assessment taking particular account of: nature of the client group; width of the stairway; and availability of staff.

Notes

12.6 Reference should be made to Building Regulations Approved Document Part K for the requirements for stairway design in new buildings.

12.7 The stairway should be designed in accordance with the requirements for the purpose group (as defined in the Building Regulations Approved Document B) that the premises fall into.

- Purpose group 1(c) – dwelling house which does not contain a habitable storey with a floor level more than 4.5m above ground level⁵.
- Purpose group 2(b) – hotel, boarding house, residential college, hall of residence, hostel and any other residential purpose not described in paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Building Regulations Approved Document B, Table D1. It may be that supported living accommodation falls into this category of purpose group. If this is the case, it may be necessary to consider some relaxation with regard to the requirement for compartment floors. Full discussion should take place between the Trust, building owner and enforcing authorities.

⁵ Building Regulations 1991 – Approved Document B 2000 edition.

13 Means of escape – escape lighting

13.1 Escape lighting is that lighting provided for use when the power supply to the normal lighting fails.

REQUIREMENT

13.2 Emergency lighting should be installed to cover common escape routes and should be installed to comply with the requirements of British Standard 5266: Parts 1 and 7: 1999.

14 Containment – cavity barriers

14.1 To prevent unseen spread of fire and smoke in concealed cavities in roofs, ceilings, or walls, these spaces should be adequately sub-divided.

REQUIREMENT

14.2 Cavity barriers should be provided:

- At the junction between an external cavity wall and a compartment wall that separates buildings; and at the top of such an external cavity wall (14.6).
- In a protected escape route, above and below any fire-resisting construction that is not carried full storey height, or (in the case of a top storey) to the underside of the roof (14.7).

14.3 Where the corridor should be sub-divided to prevent fire or smoke affecting two alternative escape routes simultaneously, above the corridor enclosures that are not carried full storey height, or (in the case of a top storey) to the underside of the roof.

14.4 To sub-divide any cavity (including a roof space but excluding any underfloor service void) so that the distance between cavity barriers does not exceed 20m in any direction.

Notes

14.5 The provisions in paragraph 14.2 do not apply where the cavity wall complies with Figure 14.1.

14.6 The provisions in paragraph 14.3 do not apply where the cavity is enclosed on the lower side by a fire-resisting ceiling that extends throughout the building, compartment or separated part.

14.7 In respect of the fire resistance requirements of cavity barriers, it will be reasonable to accept a 30/20 (integrity/insulation) standard.

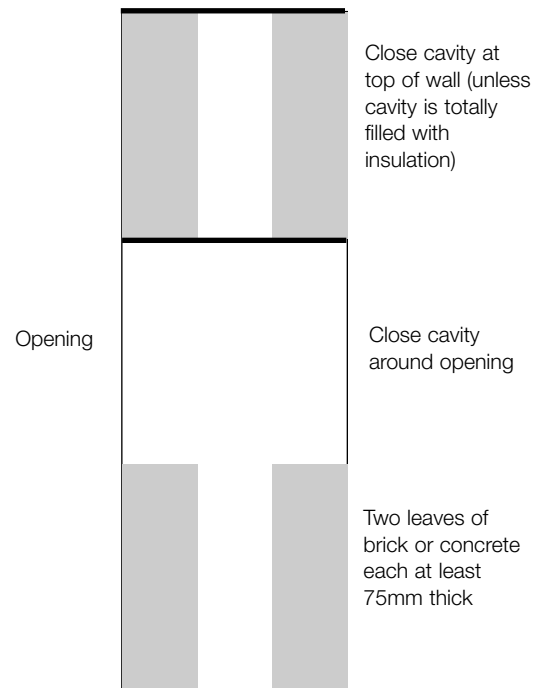


Figure 14.1

15 Containment – compartmentation

15.1 In order to prevent fire and smoke travel between properties or over large areas of a building, it is important to ensure an adequate degree of fire separation. This is achieved through the provision of compartment walls and floors and sub-compartment walls.

15.2 Sub-compartments are areas into which the building can be divided in order to reduce the distance to be travelled to a temporary place of safety. Sub-compartments should provide a minimum period of 30 minutes' fire resistance.

REQUIREMENT

15.3 Any wall separating flats, semi-detached houses or terraced houses should be constructed as a compartment wall.

15.4 Where a garage is attached to a property or forms an integral part of the property, any opening between the garage and the occupied part of the premises must be at least 100mm above the floor level of the garage, and achieve the required standard of fire resistance (30 minutes).

15.5 A compartment wall or floor should form a complete barrier to fire between the compartments they separate.

15.6 Any openings in a compartment wall or floor must achieve the same standard of fire resistance as that required for the compartment wall or floor.

15.7 Where a decision is taken to install a lift in the premises, it must be within a protected shaft providing a minimum period of 30 minutes' fire resistance. This includes a stairway enclosure which is a protected shaft.

Notes

15.8 The maximum number of residents sleeping in any one bedroom should not exceed two.

15.9 Staffing levels fall under the responsibility of the local management, and are not within the responsibility of any enforcing authority.

16 Elements of structure

16.1 The premises should be designed and constructed that, in the event of a fire, its fire resistance will be retained for a reasonable period of time. All elements of structure should therefore be able to resist the effects of heat as appropriate. The purpose of providing the structure with fire resistance is to:

- minimise the risk to the occupants, many of whom may be in a place of temporary safety within the premises awaiting evacuation;
- reduce the risk to fire-fighters;
- reduce the danger to people in the near vicinity of the building.

REQUIREMENT

16.2 Elements of structure should have a minimum of 30 minutes' fire resistance.

Notes

16.3 A wall common to two or more buildings should be so designed and constructed that it provides adequate resistance to the spread of fire between those buildings. If supported living homes are semi-detached or form part of a terrace, the wall between the different occupancies should have 60 minutes' fire resistance.

16.4 The definitions of an element of structure and fire resistance can be found in the glossary of terms.

17 Manual fire-fighting equipment

17.1 The purpose of providing fire-fighting equipment is to allow people in the home to tackle a fire, if it is safe to do so, before it becomes life threatening. It is important that the use of fire-fighting equipment will not result in a delay in calling the fire service. It is also important that those expected to use the equipment are suitably trained to do so.

17.2 Any equipment provided must be of the correct type and of sufficient capacity to be effective.

REQUIREMENT

17.3 A fire blanket complying with the light duty requirements of BS EN 1869:1997 should be provided for the kitchen

17.4 Portable fire extinguishers should be provided at the rate of at least one per floor, with a minimum of two extinguishers of an appropriate type being provided within the premises.

Notes

17.5 Portable fire extinguishers should comply with British Standard 5423/BS EN3.

17.6 Fire-fighting equipment should only be provided in unstaffed or unsupervised accommodation where an assessment of the capability of the residents has identified that it would be appropriate.

Fire precautions in new build premises

18 Fire precautions in new build premises or new extensions to existing premises

18.1 In any new build premises intended for use as supported living accommodation, due regard must be given to the requirements of the Building Regulations prevalent at the time of construction. Premises should not be constructed with an upper floor height above 5m.

18.2 The construction of, and material used to cover, external walls and roofs, combined with the space separation between buildings, directly affect the risk of fire spread between buildings. To limit this risk, the following provisions should be applied.

External Walls

Fire resistance standard

18.3 The external walls of the building should have the fire resistance given in [clause 16.2](#), unless they form an unprotected area permitted by the guidance in [clause 18.5](#) "Space separation".

External surfaces

18.4 The external surfaces of walls should meet the provisions in Figure 18.1.

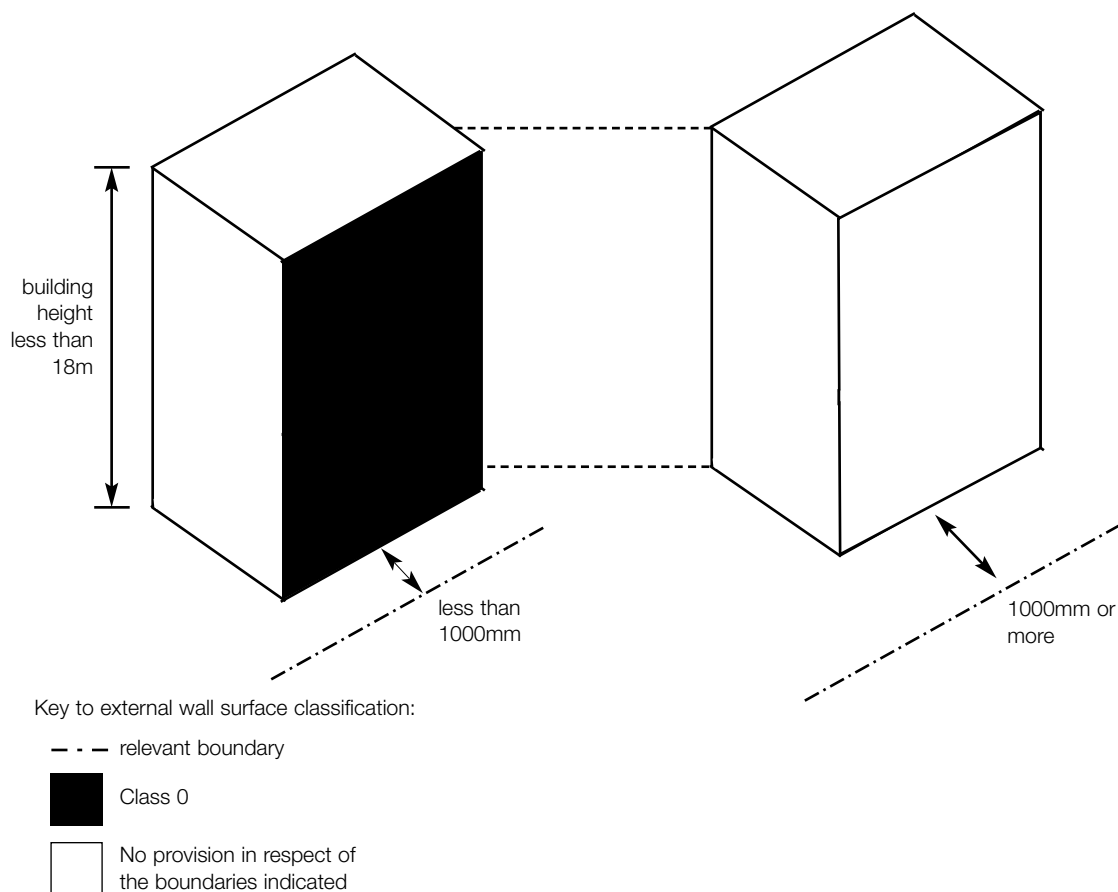
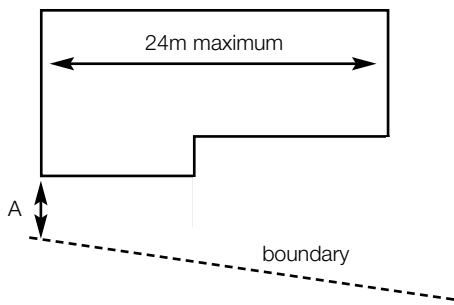


Figure 18.1 Provisions for external surfaces of walls (any building covered by this guidance)



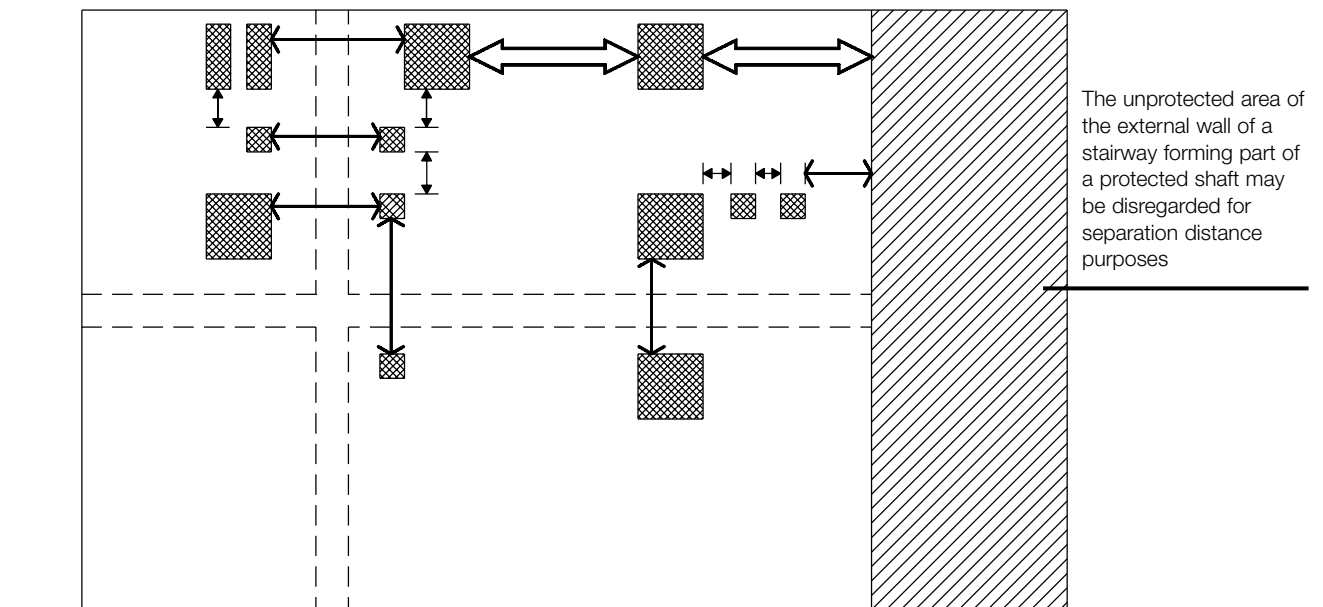
Minimum distance (A) between side of building and relevant boundary (m)	Maximum total area of unprotected areas (sq.m)
1	5.6
2	12
3	18
4	24
5	30
6	no limit

Figure 18.2 Permitted unprotected areas in small residential buildings



Space separation

18.5 Any part of an external wall which has less fire resistance than that specified in clause 16.2 is considered to be an unprotected area. The maximum permissible unprotected area in a wall facing a boundary is determined by the distance which the building is located from the boundary. A wall is treated as facing a boundary if it makes an angle with it of 80° or less.

18.6 Where the dwelling is on the same site as another building, then a notional boundary between the buildings should be assumed for the purpose of this requirement. The maximum permitted unprotected area in a wall for the appropriate distance to the relevant boundary is given in Figure 18.2, or other approved method. Where the distance between the wall and the boundary is less than 1m the maximum area permitted is 1m² with a minimum of 4m between openings. Where the allowance is made up of more than one smaller opening, the minimum distance between openings is 1500mm. Individual openings of not more than 0.1m² can be disregarded when calculating the maximum allowance. See Figure 18.3 for an explanation of these rules.



Unprotected areas which may be disregarded for space separation purposes

-  represents an unprotected area of not more than 1m² which may consist of two or more smaller areas within an area of 1m x 1m
-  represents an area of not more than 0.1m²

Dimensional restrictions

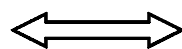


-  4m minimum distance
-  1.5m minimum distance
-  dimension unrestricted

Figure 18.3 Unprotected areas which may be disregarded in relation to space separation

Roof coverings

18.7 The guidance in this clause relates to sections of roofs having a pitch of 70° or less. All roof coverings should meet either an AA, AB or AC performance rating. Examples of notional performance ratings for common roof coverings are given in Table 18.1.

18.8 Plastic rooflights having a Class 1 surface spread of flame rating and unwired glass at least 4mm can be regarded as having an AA designation.

18.9 The performance of roof coverings is designated by reference to the test methods specified in BS 476 Part 3:1958.

TABLE 18.1 NOTIONAL DESIGNATIONS OF ROOF COVERINGS

Covering material	Construction	Supporting structure	Designation
Part 1: Pitched roofs covered with slates or tiles			
1. Natural slates 2. Fibre-reinforced cement slates 3. Clay tiles 4. Concrete tiles		Timber rafters with or without underfelt, sarking, boarding, woodwool slabs, compressed straw slabs, plywood, wood chipboard, or fibre-insulating board	AA
Part 2: Pitched roofs covered with self-supporting sheet			
1. Profiled sheet of galvanised steel, aluminium, fibre-reinforced cement, or pre-painted (coil coated) steel or aluminium with a pvc or pvf2 coating	Single skin without underlay, or with underlay or plasterboard, fibre-insulating board, or woodwool slab	Structure of timber, steel or concrete	AA
2. Profiled sheet of galvanised steel, aluminium, fibre-reinforced cement, or pre-painted (coil coated) steel or aluminium with a pvc or pvf2 coating	Double skin without interlayer, or with interlayer of resin-bonded, glass fibre, mineral wool slab, polystyrene, or polyurethane	Structure of timber, steel or concrete	AA
Part 3: Flat roofs covered with bitumen felt			
A flat roof comprising bitumen felt should (irrespective of the felt specification) be deemed to be of designation AA if the felt is laid on a deck constructed of 6mm plywood, 12.5mm wood chipboard, 16mm (finished) plain-edged timber boarding, compressed straw slab, screeded woodwool slab, profiled fibre-reinforced cement or steel deck (single or double skin) with or without fibre-insulating board overlay, profiled aluminium deck (single or double skin) with or without fibre-insulating board overlay, or concrete or clay pot slab (in-situ or pre-cast), and has a surface finish of:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. bitumen-bedded stone chippings covering the whole surface to a depth of at least 12.5mm; b. bitumen-bedded tiles of a non-combustible material; c. sand and cement screed; or d. macadam. 			
Part 4: Pitched or flat roofs covered with fully supported material			
1. Aluminium sheet 2. Copper sheet 3. Zinc sheet		Timber joists and: tongued and grooved boarding, or plain-edged boarding	AA ¹
4. Lead sheet 5. Mastic asphalt 6. Vitreous-enamelled steel 7. Lead/tin alloy-coated steel sheet 8. Zinc/aluminium alloy-coated steel sheet		Steel or timber joists with deck of: woodwool slabs, compressed straw slab, wood chipboard, fibre-insulating board, or 9.5mm plyboard	AA
9. Pre-painted (coil coated) steel sheet including liquid-applied pvc coatings		Concrete or clay pot slab (in-situ or pre-cast) or non-combustible deck of steel, aluminium, or fibre cement (with or without insulation)	AA

Notes:

Although this Table does not include guidance for roofs covered with bitumen felt, it should be noted that there is a wide range of materials on the market and information on specific products is readily available from manufacturers.

¹ Lead sheet supported by timber joists and plain-edged boarding should be regarded as having a BA designation.

Access for fire appliances

19 Access and facilities for the fire service

19.1 There should be vehicle access for a pump appliance to either 15% of the perimeter or to within 45m of a door giving access to the dwelling, whichever is the less onerous. The access door into the dwelling should be not less than 750mm wide.

19.2 The design of the access route should meet the criteria set out in Table 19.1. Where the access route

is a dead end and is more than 20m long, a turning facility designed on the basis of the criteria in Table 19.1 should be provided.

19.3 Where access for fire appliances is not achievable, consultation should take place with the local fire authority.

TABLE 19.1 TYPICAL FIRE SERVICE VEHICLE ACCESS ROUTE SPECIFICATION

Appliance type	Minimum width of road between kerbs (m)	Minimum width of gateways (m)	Minimum turning circle between kerbs (m)	Minimum turning circle between walls (m)	Minimum clearance height (m)	Minimum carrying capacity (t)
Pump	3.7	3.1	16.8	19.2	3.7	12.5
High reach	3.7	3.1	26.0	29.0	4.0	17.0

Notes:

Fire appliances are not standardised. Some fire services have appliances of greater weight or different size. In consultation with the fire authority, the building control body may adopt other dimensions in such circumstances.

Because the weight of high reach appliances is distributed over a number of axles, it is considered that their infrequent use of a carriageway or route designed to 12.5t should not cause damage. It would therefore be reasonable to design the roadbase to 12.5t, although structures such as bridges should have the full 17t capacity.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Risk assessment record

Premises:

Surveyor:

Date:

Hazards	Acceptable	Inadequate	Unacceptable
Ignition sources			
1 Management issues			
2 Fire hazard rooms			
Combustible materials			
3 Management issues			
4 Surface finishes			
5 Textiles and furniture			
6 Bedding and sleepwear			
Precautions			
7 Prevention – management			
8 Prevention – training			
9 Prevention – signs and notices			
Communications			
10 Alarm and detection systems			
Means of escape			
11 Travel distances			
12 Stairways			
13 Escape lighting			
Containment			
14 Cavity barriers			
15 Compartmentation			
16 Elements of structure			
Extinguishment			
17 Manual fire-fighting equipment			

Acceptable = fully meets requirements

Inadequate = partially meets requirements

Unacceptable = does not meet the requirements

Where any aspect of the requirements are not met, the standard is considered to be inadequate or unacceptable. Where a standard is considered unacceptable, an action plan should be developed to improve the deficiency balancing the cost to improve against the potential benefit (cost/benefit analysis). If a requirement is considered inadequate, the competent person should undertake a documented risk assessment to determine the action to take to improve the inadequacy.

Appendix 2 – Checklist for acquisition of premises

This checklist considers the premises under deliberation, concentrating on the design and structure of the premises. Please tick the box that is most appropriate to the identified element. It is then incumbent upon the competent person to make a professional judgement as to the suitability of the premises.

Heating	Fixed heating	<input type="checkbox"/>	Portable heating required	<input type="checkbox"/>	No provision or open fire	<input type="checkbox"/>
Electricity and/or gas	Rewired within last 15 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	Current test certificate available ^a	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not rewired within last 15 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
External walls	No external cladding	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cladding materials are of limited combustibility	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other cladding materials used	<input type="checkbox"/>
Escape routes	See Note 1 below	<input type="checkbox"/>			One or more requirements of Note 1 are not met	<input type="checkbox"/>
Electrical sockets	See Note 2 below	<input type="checkbox"/>			Minimum number of sockets not met	<input type="checkbox"/>
Height above ground	All bedrooms are on ground level	<input type="checkbox"/>	One or more bedrooms are at first or second floor level	<input type="checkbox"/>	One or more bedrooms are higher than second floor	<input type="checkbox"/>
Building separation	Premises constructed from non-combustible materials (see Note 3)	<input type="checkbox"/>			Premises constructed from combustible materials	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lofts and roof spaces	There is a separating wall to the underside of the roof without penetrations	<input type="checkbox"/>			Lofts/roof spaces are not separated	<input type="checkbox"/>
Storage space	There is adequate general storage in the home	<input type="checkbox"/>			There is inadequate general storage	<input type="checkbox"/>

Notes:

^a A current test certificate indicates that there have been no changes made to the electricity supply circuits since the issue of the certificate.

¹ The home should meet all four of the following requirements: (1) The escape route avoids passing the kitchen door. (2) The cooker is not sited adjacent to any door that might be used for escape purposes. (3) Habitable rooms upstairs open straight onto the landing or staircase. (4) The staircase is separated from all rooms by walls and doors unless a residential sprinkler system is installed as a compensating measure.

² To avoid overloading sockets, the following MINIMUM number of switched double sockets should be provided: kitchen – 6; dining area – 2; living area – 4; bedroom – 2; hall – 2; landing – 1; walk-in storage – 1.

³ The term “non-combustible construction” includes timber-framed buildings with fire-resisting boarding.

Appendix 3 – Use of automatic door release mechanisms

Where the use of automatic door release mechanisms are considered essential, they will only be acceptable when the following conditions are met:

The door release mechanism should conform to British Standard 5839: Part 3: 1989, and be fail-safe (i.e. in the event of a loss of power or a fault on the alarm system, the release mechanism should be triggered automatically).

- i. All doors fitted with automatic door release mechanisms should be linked to an alarm and detection system.
- ii. All automatic door release mechanisms should be triggered by any of the following:
 - The actuation of any automatic fire detector;
 - The actuation of any manual call point;
 - Any fault on the fire alarm and detection system;
 - Any loss of power to the alarm and detection system.
- iii. Each door fitted with an automatic door release mechanism should be closed at a pre-determined time each night and remain closed throughout the night. If, for management reasons this is impractical, it should be the specific responsibility of a nominated competent member of staff to operate the release mechanism at least once a week to ensure:
 - The mechanisms are working effectively;
 - The doors close effectively into their frames.
- iv. The alarm and detection system and the release mechanisms should be subject to an effective maintenance contract with a competent maintenance contractor.

Appendix 4 – References

ACTS AND REGULATIONS

Building Regulations 2000, HMSO, 2000.

SI 1324:1988 The Furniture and Furnishings (Fire)(Safety) Regulations 1988, The Stationery Office, 1988.

SI 2358:1989 The Furniture and Furnishings (Fire)(Safety) (Amendment) Regulations, The Stationery Office, 1989.

SI 207:1993 The Furniture and Furnishings (Fire)(Safety) (Amendment) Regulations, The Stationery Office, 1993.

SI 1985/No. 2043, The Nightwear (Safety) Regulations 1985, The Stationery Office, 1985.

SI 1989/No. 635, The Electricity at Work Regulations 1989, ISBN 011096635X, The Stationery Office, 1989.

SI 1997/No. 1840, The Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations 1997, ISBN 0-11-064738-6, The Stationery Office, 1997.

SI 1999/No. 3242, The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, ISBN 0-11-085625-2, The Stationery Office, 1999.

SI 1999/No. 1877, The Fire Precautions (Workplace) (Amendment) Regulations

The Health & Safety at Work Act 1974, HMSO, 1974.

BRITISH STANDARDS

BS 476 Fire tests on building materials and structures.

Part 7:1997 Method of test to determine the classification of the surface spread of flame of products.

Part 20:1987 Method for determination of the fire resistance of elements of construction (general principles).

Part 21:1987 Methods for determination of the fire resistance of loadbearing elements of construction.

Part 22:1987 Methods for determination of the fire resistance of non-loadbearing elements of construction.

BS 5266-Part 1:1999 Emergency lighting. Code of practice for the emergency lighting of premises other than cinemas and certain other specified premises used for entertainment.

BS EN 1838:1999, BS 5266-7:1999 Lighting applications. Emergency lighting.

BS 5423/BS EN3 Specification for portable fire extinguishers.

BS 5446-Part 1:2000 Fire detection and fire alarm devices for dwellings. Specification for smoke alarms.

BS 5839 Fire detection and alarm systems for buildings.

Part 1: 1988 Code of practice for system design, installation and servicing.

Part 3: 1988 Specification for automatic release mechanisms for certain fire protection equipment.

Part 6: 1995.

BS EN 1869:1997 Fire blankets.

BS 4569:1983 (1990) Method of test for ignitability (surface flash) of pile fabrics and assemblies having pile on the surface.

ISO 10047: 1993 Textiles, determination of surface burning time of fabrics.

MISCELLANEOUS PUBLICATIONS

Approved Document B: Fire Safety, HMSO, 2000.

Designing for health and safety in construction, ISBN 0717608077, HSE Books, 1995.

Low voltage safety policy – model documentation, Specialist Technical & Advisory Services, Welsh Health Estates, 1999.

Fire prevention on construction sites: the joint code of practice on the protection from fire of construction sites, ISBN 0-902167-20-0, Building Employers Confederation, Loss Prevention Council and the National Contractors Group, 1995. Available from BEC, Federation House, 2309 Coventry Road, Sheldon, Birmingham B26 3PL. Tel: 0121 742 0824.

Maintaining portable equipment in offices and other low-risk environments, INDG236, HSE Books, 1999.

The safe use of portable electrical apparatus (electrical safety), Guidance Note PM32, HSE Books.

NOTE

In support of the Construction Products Directive (CPD), European Standards (Ens) are being prepared for all types of construction products and elements. To assess the performance of these products, European fire test methods have been developed. These Standards will co-exist with existing national standards for a currently undetermined time period, following which, national standards will be withdrawn. When considering methods of fire test, the application of European Standards should be borne in mind.

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