

FIRE SAFETY REGULATIONS

Understanding the Fire Safety England Regulations 2022

The Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 came into force on 23rd January 2023.

The new regulation imposes new duties on the Responsible Person of residential building.

Responsible Persons need to ensure that all the Fire Safety procedures are in place at their building or buildings.

People may ask why are these changes being introduced?

Following the Grenfell Tower fire in 2017, the Grenfell Tower inquiry was established.

Phase 1, of the enquiry made several important recommendations in order to prevent such a tragedy from ever happening again.

Examples of why Regulation change is necessary include the following: -

- The Fire & Rescue Service cannot plan an effective response without information on the design and construction methods of the external walls of high-rise buildings and how to recognize it when it occurs.
- The Fire & Rescue Service cannot respond effectively if the floor levels, staircases and flat numbers are not clear and easily identifiable in low visibility or smoky conditions when carrying out their firefighting duties.
- If the Fire & Rescue Service are not able to take control of the lifts in the event of a Fire, residents might use the lifts when it's not safe for them to do so. Fire fighters need to take control of the building lifts in the event of a fire condition.
- If the lifts that are intended for use by firefighters are out of service, and the firefighters do not know in advance they cannot plan accordingly co-ordinate their fire and rescue operations and their effects to fight the fire hampered.

The Government's Fire Safety consultation ran from July 2020 to October 2020.

The consultation included proposals to implement the Grenfell Tower inquiry's recommendations in a practical way, and in some cases to go further on safety measures.

The Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 were then made to bring these changes into force.

The new Fire Safety Regulations sit alongside the Fire Safety Act Amendment to the Fire Safety Order, and the Governments update of supporting guidance to improve Fire Safety outcomes designed to protect the residents and public from the risk of Fire.

What do the new Regulations require Responsible Persons to do?

A list of the Responsible Persons responsibilities can be found on the Governments website.

The Regulations require Responsible Persons of multi-occupied residential buildings to take specific actions: -

These actions depend upon the height of the building.

Occupants of all residential buildings should be, and feel safe from Fire so some provisions apply regardless of the building

height, including residential buildings with two or more domestic premises with common areas.

More requirements are included once residential buildings are over 11 meters, but less than 18 meters in height.

Further requirements are also needed once residential buildings that have a height of 18 meters (or 7 story's) and above in height.

In all multi-occupied residential buildings, that contain two or more sets of domestic premises and have shared common areas, the requirements are: -

- Provision of relevant fire safety information to their residents on how to report a fire and what a resident should do once a fire has occurred.
- Provide residents with information relating to the importance of fire doors.

In multi-occupied residential buildings of over 11 meters in height (typically a building of 5 story's or more) the Responsible Person must also: -

- Carry out routine checks on all the fire doors in their building.
- This includes annual checks of flat entrance doors, and quarterly checks of all the fire doors in the common areas such as doors to staircases etc.

The majority of the new requirements apply to high-rise residential buildings at least 18 meters or 7 story in height.

For these buildings: -

- The Responsible Person must install and maintain a secure information box for their building.
- This box must contain the name and contact details of the Responsible Person and hard copies of the building plans and floor layout plans.
- The Responsible Person must provide an up-to-date record of the design of the external walls of the building including the materials used in their construction.
- The record must also provide information on the level of the risk associated with the external wall and any mitigating steps that have been taken.
- The Responsible Person is required to electronically share a copy of the building record with their local Fire & Rescue Service.
- The Responsible Person must prepare up-to-date floor layout plans and a single page building plan which identifies the Firefighting equipment.
- The plans will be used by the Firefighters during an incident and need to be clear, simple and easy to use.
- Copies of the plans must be shared electronically with the local Fire & Rescue Service, and paper copies of the plans held within the premises secure information box.

There is a 'Code of Practice' for the provision of the premises information boxes in residential buildings which provides guidance and requirements on the secure information boxes, floor plans and building plans etc, and gives examples of best practice.

The Responsible Person must carry out monthly inspections/checks of the building lifts and other essential Fire-Fighting equipment within their building.

Steps should be taken to address all faults, and any faults that cannot be rectified with 24/48 hours must be reported electronically to the local Fire & Rescue Service.

A record and log book of these inspections and checks should also be available to the Fire & Rescue Service and the residents of the building required.

The Regulations provide a clear list of the equipment that the Responsible Person is required to inspect, test and check.

These include: -

- Fire-Fighting and Evacuation lifts.
- Inlet and Outlet of wet and dry rising water mains.
- Smoke control systems.
- Suppression systems such as building sprinkler system.
- Fire Detection and Alarm system.
- Emergency Lighting systems.
- Evacuation Alert systems.
- Automatic MEP Plant control systems linked to the Fire Alarm system.
- Automatic door release mechanisms linked to the Fire Alarm system.

The Responsible Person must also install clear floor identification signs and apartment/flat indicator signs.

This signage is intended to assist responding firefighters and need to be visible in low light and in smoky conditions.

The Responsible Person of high-rise residential buildings must send electronic copies of the following to their local Fire and Rescue Service: -

- Record of the external wall build up and construction materials.
- Building floor layouts and building plans.
- Record of equipment/system fault reports.

This information will allow the Fire and Rescue Service to more effectively plan and respond to an incident in the building.

Templates have been developed and are available from the governments website to assist the Responsible Person with preparing the required information.

They were developed with the support of the Fire and Rescue Services and ensure a consistent approach to the standard of information being shared.

Every Fire and Rescue Service has an information sharing page on their website explaining how, and in what format they prefer to receive the building information.

The Responsible Persons are advised to discuss any queries or any questions they have with their local Fire and Rescue Service directly.

What else do the Responsible Persons need to do?

The commencement of the Fire Safety Act in May 2022 clarified that the building's structure and external wall construction information (including windows, balconies, cladding, insulation and fixings) all fall within the scope of the Fire Safety Order.

Information related to the latter items and any associated risks must also be included within the records and building information box, this is a requirement of the new Regulations.

Responsible Persons should update any Fire Risk Assessment that do not consider their building external wall materials as quickly as practicable.

An on-line tool is available to support Responsible Persons to develop a prioritization strategy for updating their Fire Risk Assessments.

The Fire Risk Assessment prioritization tool is available on the www.gov.uk website.

This approach is designed to ensure that competent professionals who have the required skills to assess external walls and their risks can priorities their resources to the buildings identified as high priority.

The prioritization tool is not a Fire Risk Assessment tool in itself and doesn't remove the requirement, for both Fire and Rescue Services and Responsible Persons to act upon known risks or suspected risks in the premises.

The Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 can be found on the www.gov.uk website.

The government has published new guidance – "Check your Fire Safety Responsibilities under the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022" This guidance is to support Responsible Persons in complying with the new legislation.

There is a series of Factsheets available which provide additional information.

There is also government published guidance to assist Responsible Persons with the requirements to carry out Fire door inspections and checks.

The above is a brief summary of the requirements of the Fire Safety (England) Regulations which came into force on the 23rd January 2023.