

Minimum General Fire Precautions

A fire-detection and warning system

- You must have a suitable fire-detection and warning system. This can range from a shouted warning to an electrical detection and warning system.
- Whatever system you have, it must be able to warn people in all circumstances.

A way of fighting a small fire

- It may be acceptable to have multi-purpose fire extinguishers with a guaranteed shelf life.
- As a rule of thumb you should have one extinguisher for every 200 metre squared of floor space with at least one on each floor.

Main types of portable extinguishers

- **Water**
For wood, paper, textile and solid material fires
Do not use on liquid, electrical or metal fires
- **Powder**
For liquid and electrical fires
Do not use on metal fires
- **Foam**
For use on liquid fires
Do not use on electrical or metal fires
- **Carbon Dioxide (CO₂)**
For liquid and electrical fires
Do not use on metal fires

Note!!

To deal with fires involving metals or powdered metals etc (where water is generally ineffective and / or dangerous) Specialist Dry Powders are required.

To deal with fires involving high temperature ($\geq 360^{\circ}\text{C}$) cooking oils such as those used in large industrial catering kitchens, restaurants and takeaway establishments extinguishers containing a specially formulated wet chemical must be used.

Safe routes for people to leave the premises

- The ideal situation is when there is more than one escape route from all parts of the premises, although this is not always possible
- If only one route is available, you may need to make it fire resisting (protected) or install an automatic fire-detection system
- The distance people need to go to escape (the travel distance) should be as short as possible. The travel distance should be measured from the farthest point in a room to the door to a protected stairway or, if there is no protected stairway, to the final exit from the building
- If there is only one escape route, the travel distance should not normally be more than 18 metres. This distance should be shorter (12 metres or less) in any parts of the premises where there is a high chance of a fire starting or spreading quickly. The distance can be longer (up to about 25 metre) where the chance of a fire starting or spreading quickly is very low
- If there is more than one escape route, the travel distance should not normally be more than 45 metres (around 25 metres in areas where the risk of fire is high and about 60 metres in areas where the risk of fire is very low)
- Stairways, corridors and areas near the fire exits should be kept clear of obstructions and material, which can catch fire
- The escape route should lead to a final exit and a safe place
- If the stairway is not protected, the travel distance should be in line with those suggested above for single escape routes and the final exit should be easy to see and get to from the stairway at ground-floor level
- High-risk rooms should not generally open directly into a fire-protected stairway
- If your fire-risk assessment shows that people using any floor would not be aware of a fire, you may need other fire-protection measures, for example, an automatic fire-detection and warning system
- You should follow the above guidelines with caution. You must look at each part of the premises and decide how quickly people would react to a warning of fire. If you are in any doubt or your premises provide care or sleeping facilities, you should contact the Safety Section on (020) 8545 3384. Some factories and warehouses can have longer distances to travel to escape the fire.

Suitable fire exit doors

- You should be able to use fire exit doors and any doors on the escape routes without a key and without any specialist knowledge.
- In premises used by the public or large numbers of people, you may need push (panic) bars or push pads.

Other things to consider

- Whether you need emergency lighting
- Suitable fire-safety signs in all but the smallest premises
- Training for your staff or anyone else you may reasonably expect to help in a fire
- A management system to make sure that you maintain your fire safety systems

Some very small and simple premises may be able to satisfy all these steps without difficulty. However, you should still be able to show that you have carried out all the steps.