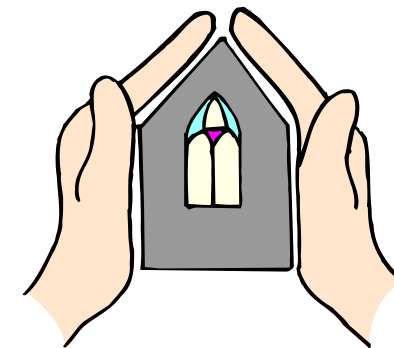


## Thames North Synod

### Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

### Emergency Procedures and Emergency Evacuation (2017)



**!**

# Fire Action

-  **Raise the alarm**
-  **Leave the building by the nearest exit**
-  **Report to assembly point**
-  **Do not return to the building until authorised to do so**
-  **Do not take any risks**

## **Introduction**

Fire is the single-most hazard in many walks of life and accounts for millions of pounds of damage and many lives each year. The horror of being scarred for life can become a reality by an absent-minded action or not knowing what to do when you see a fire or hear the fire alarm.

The new Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 came into force on 1st October 2006 with a number of changes to fire safety that affect non-domestic premises, including churches.

## **What does this mean for our church?**

The main effect of the changes is a move towards greater emphasis on fire prevention in all non-domestic premises, including the voluntary sector.

Fire certificates have been abolished and cease to have legal status.

The Fire Safety Order applies in England and Wales. It covers 'general fire precautions' and other fire safety duties which are needed to protect 'relevant persons' in case of fire in and around most 'premises'. The Order requires fire precautions to be put in place "where necessary" and to the extent that it is reasonable and practicable in the circumstances of the case.

Responsibility for complying with the Fire Safety Order rests with the 'responsible person'. In a workplace, this is the employer and any other person who may have control of any part of the premises, eg the occupier or owner. In all other premises the person or persons in control of the premises will be responsible. If there is more than one responsible person in any type of premises, all must take all reasonable steps to work with each other. For the United Reformed Church this would be the trustees (usually elders).

It is also necessary for the responsible person to pay particular attention to those at special risk, such as the disabled and those with special needs, and must include consideration of any dangerous substance likely to be on the premises.

If you employ five or more people you must record the significant findings of the assessment.

A large print version of this document is available upon request. Contact Synod Office: 020 7799 5000

premises should be 'smoke-free' and notices displayed in accordance with legislation.

As intruders cause many fires, the importance of external security measures should be explored

## Conclusion

Common sense and knowledge of your buildings and activities should enable your church officers to take sensible and appropriate fire safety measures as required. It is suggested that a statement along the lines of the following is located in the buildings at various locations, and that 'Fire Action' notices are displayed in appropriate positions within the building, and details passed to each organisation using the premises.

## Further help and information

A series of guides have been produced by the government in order to assist those preparing fire risk assessments; these give detailed information on risk assessments and other issues. In particular see 'A short guide to making your premises safe from fire'; 'Small and medium places of assembly', See: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-risk-assessment-small-and-medium-places-of-assembly](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-risk-assessment-small-and-medium-places-of-assembly)

'Large places of assembly', See: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-risk-assessment-large-places-of-assembly](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-risk-assessment-large-places-of-assembly)

NOTE: It is a legislative requirement to have one working (regularly tested) Smoke Alarm installed on every floor of a rental property used as living accommodation.

In addition, Carbon Monoxide alarms may need to be fitted in manses and rented residential property, and is a legislative requirement within and room used as living accommodation where solid fuel is used.

A fire risk assessment must be carried out. This will help churches identify risks that can be removed or reduced and to decide the nature and extent of the general fire precautions that need to be taken to protect people against the fire risks that remain.

## Practical Steps

This document should be read and absorbed by all the elders and employees so that you can safeguard yourself and the many people who pass through our churches week by week. It is also recommended that a copy of these procedures are passed to all users of your buildings.

These are general procedures that will require individual interpretation for your own situation. It may be necessary for you to make contact with a professional fire prevention company who will be able to give you advice regarding your buildings.

Your local Fire Officer may also be able to provide advice and guidance.

Many churches already take precautions against fire by attention to means of escape, the provision of fire extinguishers, and the use of a regularly maintained and tested alarm system.

In order to comply with the new legislation it will be necessary to carry out a risk assessment based upon the following criteria:

- Identify the fire hazards and calculate the risks
- Check that a fire can be detected in a reasonable time and that people can be warned
- Check that people can get out of the building/s safely
- Regularly check fire fighting equipment
- Check that people know what to do in the event of an emergency
- Check and maintain fire safety measures
- Ensure you have a method for calling the Emergency Services

The above risk assessment will allow you to do the following:

- Identify Fire Hazards
- Identify People at Risk
- Evaluate, Remove, Reduce and Protect from Risk
- Record, Plan, Inform, Instruct & Train
- Review

It is recommended that the Fire Risk Assessment is completed by a specialist independent Fire Risk Assessor and then reviewed on an annual basis and a record made in your Church Property Log.

It may also be necessary to carry out weekly, monthly, 3 monthly and 6 monthly checks. See details for the short guide to making your premises safe from fire noted on page 6 of this guidance note.

Voluntary organisations are no longer exempt from this legislation and local fire authorities will have powers to serve notice upon managing trustees (usually elders) to comply with the legislation. At worst this could mean the installation of alarm systems, emergency lighting, further provision of emergency escape routes or any other measure highlighted by the risk assessment.

Each church needs to ensure that it complies fully with this legislation. This includes assessment of the risks to **ALL** who come on your premises, including groups who use the premises, and not forgetting children and people with a disability.

On church premises fire hazards may include the use of lighted candles, unsafe electrical wiring and extension leads, unguarded heaters, furniture upholstery, rubbish, etc.

Loose chairs in churches should be clipped together when used in rows of four or more chairs with a maximum of twelve chairs in a row. With large assembly spaces, of 250 chairs or more, consult your local Fire Safety Officer regarding the fixing of chairs to the floor.

Doors on escape routes should be fastened for security in such a way that they can be readily opened without a key and should open out in the direction of escape.

Doors that open inwards can be fixed back (tied not wedged) to leave

the route of egress open, but this method should only be adopted where churches are used occasionally for assemblies such as concerts or public meetings.

Boiler houses should not be used for storage of combustible materials. The door to the boiler room should be a fire door and should be kept locked. A suitable fire extinguisher should be provided outside or just inside the door. A Gas Safe registered engineer who will provide a test certificate if all is in good order should inspect any gas appliances on an annual basis.

Kitchens should not have cooking apparatus sited where, should it catch fire, it would obstruct the exit route. Cooking equipment and refrigerators should be regularly serviced.

Electrical wiring and equipment should be installed and maintained in good condition by a competent electrical engineer registered with the National Inspection Council of Electrical Installation Contracting (NICEIC), or the Electrical Contractors Association (ECA). It is recommended that the entire electrical system should be tested every five years by a qualified electrical engineer.

Portable electrical appliances should be tested by a suitably qualified person in accordance with the Health and Safety Executive recommendations.

Fire fighting equipment shall be provided in all areas. In simple premises, having one or two portable extinguishers of the appropriate type, readily available for use, may be all that is necessary. In more complex buildings, such as multi-roomed community centres, where it is considered that a number of portable extinguishers are required, they should be sited in suitable locations, such as on escape routes at each floor level. Extinguishers should be located in areas where they are easily accessed but should only be used in the event of a fire by those competent to do so, and should not be left in areas open to misuse or vandalism. Extinguishers and other fire fighting equipment must be properly maintained.

With the Smoke Free law introduced on 1st July 2007 all church