

London Borough of Enfield

Fire safety in Houses in multiple occupation (HMO's)

Foreword

Enfield Council works jointly with the London Fire Brigade (LFB) in identifying fire hazards in HMO's and sharing information. We educate landlords/agents and owners how to comply with the Local Authorities Coordinators of Regulatory Services (Lacors) - Housing Fire Guidance.

This document has been produced to provide owners, managers and letting agents with a guide to fire precautions necessary in their properties. It is not recommended that you undertake an upgrade of the property based only on the information in this document. Many factors affect the assessment of risk in a house and this document cannot allow for all the possible variations in layout, mode of occupation and standard of construction etc. When necessary joint inspections will be carried out with the Council and the (LFB).

It is be noted that the Fire Detection & Warning Systems referred to within the current LACORs , “*guidance on fire safety provisions for certain types of housing*“ are to an historical version of the British Standard, BS 5839 pt6 2004.

Fire detection & warning systems referred to in this document are to the current BS 5839 pt6 2019 & represent the current compliance standard required.

If you decide to change the use or layout of the property you may need to obtain permission from Planning and/or Building Control. If you do it is important to note that meeting their requirements/regulations may not satisfy all the requirements under the Housing Act 2004 so you should still also seek the advice from a Licence Inspection and Enforcement Officer.

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What is a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO)?

An HMO is a building or part of a building (such as a flat) which is:

- occupied by 3 or more unrelated tenants who share facilities, such as the bathroom or kitchen, e.g. lodgers, house shares (including student houses) or houses arranged as bedsits (also applies to mixed use with some self-contained flats)
- divided into self-contained flats but does not meet as a minimum standard the requirements of the 1991 Building Regulations, and at least one third of flats are occupied under short tenancies.

The full extent of the fire precautions required for both licensable and non-licensable HMOs will be assessed on an individual basis following an inspection using the Housing Health and Safety Rating System. The owner/manager will then be required to complete any works deemed necessary by a specified date.

Why is fire more of a risk in a HMO?

HMO accommodation has often been created by sub division of larger properties into smaller units and this often increases the risks that a fire will occur. In addition, the means of escape may have been compromised in the process of redevelopment making it less likely that occupants will get out of the building safely should a fire occur. A good standard of fire safety is extremely important to protect them. This applies to all types of HMOs whether or not a licence is required. Deaths and injuries from fires in HMOs are more likely than in single family homes. Some of the reasons for this are;

- portable heating/cooking appliances may be used in bedrooms.
- there may be more than one kitchen in the building.
- electrical circuits can become overloaded
- there are more people in the house who are living independently of, and having no control over, each other's behaviour.
- If a fire should break out in a large HMO, escape can be difficult because of the distance of travel and height above ground level. The risk of serious injury or death can therefore be increased. In addition, if a fire breaks out, the person who discovers it may not know who else is in the house and is less likely to know if everyone has escaped

Informing tenants about Fire Protection.

Existing tenants should be informed about the fire protection system as soon as it is installed, and new tenants should be informed as soon as they move in.

All tenants must be informed;

- what the fire alarm is for and how to recognise the sound.
- what to do in the event of a fire, leaving the building, calling 999.
- what the escape route is; a practice fire drill is a good idea.
- the importance of not propping open fire doors.
- the importance of not interfering with the alarm system, not covering or removing detectors.
- the importance of not blocking escape routes with furniture, bicycles or rubbish etc.
- who to report any problems to.

Fire Safety in HMOs and the Law.

The following is a brief overview of the law relating to fire safety in HMOs.

Housing Act 2004, Part 1

This Act requires the Council to inspect premises under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System and fire safety is one of the 29 hazards taken in to consideration. The Council may and in certain cases must take action in relation to fire safety in HMOs. Amongst other forms of action, the Council can serve statutory notices requiring improvements or repairs.

Housing Act 2004, Part 2 and Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation

This requires that a license is held in relation to certain types of HMO. Such licenses apply to HMOs with 3 or more stories occupied by 5 or more people who share some amenities. The conditions attached to a license require that smoke alarms are kept in working order and that electrical appliances and furniture are kept in a safe condition.

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

This Order requires fire precautions to be put in place where necessary. It is enforced by the Fire Authority who can also require that risk assessments of the common areas of an HMO (halls, stairs and landings for example) are carried out by responsible persons.

The Management of HMOs (England) Regulations 2006

The Management of HMOs (England) Regulations 2006 places duties on the Manager or person having control of the house to maintain the property including those things provided to give an adequate means of escape from fire and adequate other fire precautions (safety measures). This means that once the fire precautions have been installed you and/or your appointed manager will have an ongoing duty to see that:

- The fire alarm and escape lighting have appropriate maintenance checks and is always in working order.
- A log or record is kept of such checks and is available for inspection.
- The stairway lighting is in full working order at all times (including provision of working light bulbs).
- All fire doors/closers/smoke seals etc are in good condition and working order.
- The protected route is maintained in good order (including condition of the stairs, stair coverings etc) and kept clear of all obstructions and flammable items.

Fire Prevention.

The most important action you can take as an owner or property manager of a HMO is to try and minimise the risk of a fire. By providing a fire alarm system is a method of warning occupants of a fire and preventing the spread of the smoke and fire to enable them to escape safely.

<p>Electrical installations</p>	<p>The Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation (England) Regulations 2006, fixed electrical installations in houses in multiple occupation must be inspected and tested at least every 5 years by a qualified and competent person and a certificate obtained. Electrical wiring of more than 25 years old will most likely need to be inspected every year. You should obtain a certificate from your electrician and keep this for your records. You must ensure that electricians used are registered with a competent person scheme. i.e. NICEIC.</p>
<p>Gas</p>	<p>The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 places a duty on landlords to have a safety check carried out each year by a Gas Safe registered engineer on gas installations and appliances. A gas safety check and certificate can also be required by the Council under The Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation (England) Regulations 2006 and as part of the conditions of the licence for a house in multiple occupation under the mandatory licensing scheme. This will help to reduce the fire risk associated with gas installations and is also important to prevent potentially life threatening carbon monoxide poisoning.</p>
<p>Furniture</p>	<p>Furniture and furnishings provided must comply with the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988 (as amended in 1989 & 1993). This will include any upholstered furniture such as chairs, sofas, children's furniture, beds, upholstered headboards, mattresses, scatter cushions, seat pads, pillows and upholstered garden furniture.</p>
<p>Electrical Appliances</p>	<p>The Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations 1994, places a duty on landlords and letting agents to ensure that any electrical equipment supplied as part of a letting is maintained in a safe condition. This includes microwaves, kettles, fridges and freezers, ovens and vacuum cleaners. In order to help demonstrate that the landlord/letting agent has taken reasonable steps to ensure compliance with these regulations, all such appliances should have a safety check carried out annually or at a change of tenancy, by a competent electrician. A record of these should be made in a logbook and it is good practice for a label to be attached to the appliance. Should the inspection reveal that there is a safety hazard, then the appliance should be removed immediately or repaired at the property. Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) Certificate (required for appliances over 12 months old) which have been supplied by the landlord/agent.</p>

General Principles for Fire Precaution.

The HMO's design, construction and condition must limit the spread of fire, smoke and provide a safe and protected means of escape. There must be an appropriate detection and alarm systems provided. Emergency lighting and fire blankets must be provided where necessary.

1. Every risk room (bedroom, living room, kitchen) must have a mains wired detector/alarm. These will detect fires at the earliest opportunity and ensure that warning is sounded.
2. The detectors need to be linked so that everyone in the house is alerted when the alarm sounds.
3. Emergency lighting illuminates the escape route to show persons the way out if the electricity supply is interrupted.
4. The protected escape route must always be kept clear of obstructions.
5. As an owner or property manager of a HMO you must minimise the risk of a fire by carrying out a risk assessment. This must be carried out by a competent person or a third party. Any significant findings must be rectified.
6. All bedroom & exit doors, if fitted with a lock is must be openable from the inside without the use of a key.
7. Fire blankets and fire extinguishers can be useful in tackling small fires, and preventing their uncontrolled spread, but on balance it is best to encourage people to leave the house quickly and call the Fire Service. There are injuries every year as a result of ineffective or inappropriate use of equipment. Where equipment is provided, all residents must receive proper instruction in the use of it. Fire blankets must be provided in all room that have cooking facilities.
8. Where a basement or commercial premises are present, these shall be separated from the residential area by structure including doors providing 60 minutes fire protection.

Automatic Fire Detection (AFD)& warning systems.

There should be an automatic fire detection and alarm system (AFD). The type required will depend upon the size and layout of your property, as well as the nature of occupation. The system should be such that when one detector is activated the alarm sounds around the building to alert all the occupants. It is recommended that you should obtain a fire risk assessment or discuss with a Housing Enforcement Officer before proceeding with works to install or upgrade the alarm system.

The following are summaries of the likely requirements for two and three storey HMOs. Please note additional works may be identified when the property is inspected by a Housing Enforcement Officer.

Two storey (bedsit) HMO with Shared Cooking Facilities (LD2 Grade D1).

<p>Heat and smoke warning system requirements.</p>	<p>The fire detection and warning system must be fitted, maintained and tested in accordance with BS 5839-6:2019</p> <p>The minimum requirement is a Grade D1, LD2 system.</p> <p>LD2 - A system incorporating detectors (linked) in all circulation areas that form part of the escape routes from the premises, and in all specified rooms and areas that present a high risk to occupants, including a heat alarm in any kitchen and linked smoke alarms in principle habitable room(s).</p> <p>Grade D1 - A system of one or more mains powered detectors, each with a tamper proof standby supply consisting of a battery or batteries</p> <p>It is recommended the smoke detection in principle habitable rooms have a hush facility.</p>
<p>Call Points</p>	<p>Not required.</p>
<p>Control Panel</p>	<p>Not required.</p>
<p>Emergency Lighting</p>	<p>Depending on the layout and design of the property one may be required at each level to illuminate the means of escape. The equipment provided shall be in accordance with the current BS 5266.</p>
<p>Protected Route</p>	<p>The protected escape route is designed to allow for residents from all parts of the building to reach the outside without passing through a higher fire risk area. The protected route MUST be kept clear of obstructions and combustible materials. The walls and ceilings to all parts of the protected route MUST be free of highly flammable materials i.e. polystyrene tiles or heavy flock wallpaper.</p> <p>30 minute fire resistance must be provided;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to all standard risk rooms within dwellings (including ceilings beneath attics – including the loft hatch) • between dwellings (ceilings and walls) • bordering the protected route including cupboards on the landing or under the stairs. • Electric and gas meters within the protected route must be housed within a fire-resisting cupboard.
<p>Fire Doors FD30s</p>	<p>A 30 minute self-closing fire resistant door, fitted with intumescent strips and smoke seals, must be installed to each room leading onto the protected escape route except the bathroom/WC. See section on 'Fire doors' for full specifications.</p>
<p>Fire Blankets</p>	<p>A fire blanket to BS 6575 (or equivalent) is to be provided in the kitchen. The blanket must be mounted on the wall 1.5m high adjacent to an exit door away from the cooking facility.</p>
<p>Extinguishers</p>	<p>Not required. If provided must be maintained in working order and residents instructed on use.</p>
<p>Other</p>	<p>Polystyrene ceiling tiles should not be used within the premises. The use of portable heaters or hobs is prohibited. Gas cylinders or flammable liquids should not be used or stored in the premises.</p>

Two storey (bedsit) HMO with cooking in lets (LD2 Grade D1).

Heat and smoke warning system requirements.	<p>The fire detection and warning system must be fitted, maintained and tested in accordance with BS 5839-6:2019</p> <p>The minimum requirement is a Grade D1, LD2 system.</p> <p>LD2 - A system incorporating detectors (linked) in all circulation areas that form part of the escape routes from the premises, and in all specified rooms and areas that present a high risk to occupants, including a heat alarm in any kitchen and linked smoke alarms in principle habitable room(s).</p> <p>Grade D1 - A system of one or more mains powered detectors, each with a tamper proof standby supply consisting of a battery or batteries</p> <p>It is recommended the smoke detection in principle habitable rooms have a hush facility.</p>
Call Points	<p>Not required.</p>
Control Panel	<p>Not required.</p>
Emergency Lighting	<p>Depending on the layout and design of the property one may be required at each level to illuminate the means of escape. The equipment provided shall be in accordance with the current BS 5266</p>
Protected Route	<p>The protected escape route is designed to allow for residents from all parts of the building to reach the outside without passing through a higher fire risk area. The protected route MUST be kept clear of obstructions and combustible materials. The walls and ceilings to all parts of the protected route MUST be free of highly flammable materials i.e. polystyrene tiles or heavy flock wallpaper.</p> <p>30 minute fire resistance must be provided;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to all standard risk rooms within dwellings (including ceilings beneath attics – including the loft hatch) • between dwellings (ceilings and walls) • bordering the protected route including cupboards on the landing or under the stairs. • Electric and gas meters within the protected route must be housed within a 30 fire resisting cupboard.
Fire Doors FD30s	<p>A 30 minute self closing fire resistant door, fitted with intumescent strips and smoke seals, must be installed to each room leading onto the protected escape route except the bathroom/WC. See section on 'Fire doors' for full specifications.</p>
Fire Blankets	<p>A fire blanket to BS 6575 (or equivalent) is to be provided to all rooms with cooking facilities. The blanket must be mounted on the wall 1.5m high adjacent to an exit door away from the cooking facility.</p>
Extinguishers	<p>Not required. If provided must be maintained in working order and residents instructed on use.</p>
Other	<p>Polystyrene ceiling tiles should not be used within the premises. The use of portable heaters or hobs is prohibited. Gas cylinders or flammable liquids should not be used or stored in the premises.</p>

Three storey (or above) (bedsit) HMO with cooking in each of the lets (LD2 Grade A).

<p>Heat and smoke warning system requirements.</p>	<p>The fire detection and warning system must be fitted, maintained and tested in accordance with <u>BS 5839-6:2019</u> The minimum requirement is a Grade A, LD2 system.</p> <p>LD2 - A system incorporating detectors (mains linked) in all circulation areas that form part of the escape routes from the premises, and in all specified rooms and areas that present a high risk to occupants, including a heat alarm in any kitchen and linked smoke alarms in principle habitable room(s).</p> <p>Grade A - Separate detectors, sounders and central control and indicating equipment with back-up power supply that conforms to British Standards BS EN 54</p> <p>It is recommended the smoke detection in principle habitable rooms have a hush facility.</p>
<p>Call Points</p>	<p>Manual break glass call points located at each landing and at the final exit from the property.</p>
<p>Control Panel</p>	<p>Must conform to BS EN 54: Part 2. To be located in the ground floor entrance area or a communal area which is accessible at all times.</p>
<p>Emergency Lighting</p>	<p>To be provided in accordance with the current BS 5266 Part 1 to cover the protected escape route. Location of light fittings to be determined by the design/installing engineer.</p>
<p>Protected Route</p>	<p>The protected escape route is designed to allow for residents from all parts of the building to reach the outside without passing through a higher fire risk area. The protected route MUST be kept clear of obstructions and combustible materials. The walls and ceilings to all parts of the protected route MUST be free of highly flammable materials i.e. polystyrene tiles or heavy flock wallpaper. 30 minute fire resistance must be provided;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to all standard risk rooms within dwellings (including ceilings beneath attics – including the loft hatch) • between dwellings (ceilings and walls) • bordering the protected route including cupboards on the landing or under the stairs. • Electric and gas meters within the protected route must be housed within a fire-resisting cupboard.
<p>Fire Doors FD30s</p>	<p>A 30 minute self closing fire resistant door, fitted with intumescent strips and smoke seals, must be installed to each room leading onto the protected escape route except the bathroom/WC. See section on 'Fire doors' for full specifications.</p>
<p>Fire Blankets</p>	<p>A fire blanket to BS 6575 (or equivalent) is to be provided to all rooms with cooking facilities. The blanket must be mounted on the wall 1.5m high adjacent to an exit door away from the cooking facility.</p>
<p>Extinguishers</p>	<p>Not required. If provided must be maintained in working order and residents instructed on use.</p>
<p>Other</p>	<p>Polystyrene ceiling tiles should not be used within the premises. The use of portable heaters or hobs is prohibited. Gas cylinders or flammable liquids should not be used or stored in the premises.</p>

Three storey (or above) bedsit HMO with shared cooking facilities (LD2 Grade A).

Heat and smoke warning system requirements.	<p>The fire detection and warning system must be fitted, maintained and tested in accordance with <u>BS 5839-6:2019</u></p> <p>The minimum requirement is a Grade A, LD2 system.</p> <p>LD2 - A system incorporating detectors (linked) in all circulation areas that form part of the escape routes from the premises, and in all specified rooms and areas that present a high risk to occupants, including a heat alarm in any kitchen and linked smoke alarms in principle habitable room(s).</p> <p>Grade A - Separate detectors, sounders and central control and indicating equipment with back-up power supply that conforms to British Standards BS EN 54</p> <p>It is recommended the smoke detection in principle habitable rooms have a hush facility.</p>
Call Points	<p>Manual break glass call points located at each landing and at the final exit from the property.</p>
Control Panel	<p>Must conform to BS EN 54: Part 2. Located in the ground floor entrance area or a communal area which is accessible at all times.</p>
Emergency Lighting	<p>To be provided in accordance with the current BS 5266 Part 1 to cover the protected escape route.</p> <p>Location of light fittings to be determined by the design/installing engineer.</p>
Protected Route	<p>The protected escape route is designed to allow for residents from all parts of the building to reach the outside without passing through a higher fire risk area. The protected route MUST be kept clear of obstructions and combustible materials. The walls and ceilings to all parts of the protected route MUST be free of highly flammable materials i.e. polystyrene tiles or heavy flock wallpaper.</p> <p>30 minute fire resistance must be provided;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to all standard risk rooms within dwellings (including ceilings beneath attics – including the loft hatch) • between dwellings (ceilings and walls) • bordering the protected route including cupboards on the landing or under the stairs. • Electric and gas meters within the protected route must be housed within a fire-resisting cupboard.
Fire Doors FD30s	<p>A 30 minute self closing fire resistant door, fitted with intumescent strips and smoke seals, must be installed to each room leading onto the protected escape route except the bathroom/WC. See section on 'Fire doors' for full specifications.</p>
Fire Blankets	<p>A fire blanket to BS 6575 is to be provided to all rooms with cooking facilities. The blanket must be mounted on the wall 1.5m high adjacent to an exit door away from the cooking facility.</p>
Extinguishers	<p>Not required. If provided must be maintained in working order and residents instructed on use.</p>
Other	<p>Polystyrene ceiling tiles should not be used within the premises.</p> <p>The use of portable heaters or hobs is prohibited. Gas cylinders or flammable liquids should not be used or stored in the premises.</p>

Flat in multiple occupation. (FMO)

A flat, converted or is purpose built which is occupied by three or more unrelated tenants who share facilities such as the bathroom or kitchen.

Shared houses

Houses where there is evidence that the occupiers are living more like a single household and are comfortable using shared communal space, rather than individuals who have very little interaction with each other. Examples of this type of occupation are shared houses where the occupiers came together as a group or have a common shared interest i.e. students or employees from the same college or employer. Typically, they would cook and eat meals together and would choose to spend time together in a dining area or lounge.

Standards for shared houses/ FMO

Heat and smoke warning system requirements.	<p>The fire detection and warning system must be fitted, maintained and tested in accordance with BS 5839-6:2019</p> <p>The minimum requirement is a Grade D1, LD2 system.</p> <p>LD2 - A system incorporating detectors (linked) in all circulation areas that form part of the escape routes from the premises, and in all specified rooms or areas that present a high fire risk to occupants, including a heat alarm in any kitchen and linked smoke alarms in principle habitable room(s).</p> <p>Grade D1 - A system of one or more mains powered detectors, each with a tamper proof standby supply consisting of a battery or batteries To conform to BS 5839-6:2019.</p> <p>It is recommended the smoke detection in principle habitable rooms have a hush facility.</p>
Protected Route	<p>The protected escape route is designed to allow for residents from all parts of the building to reach the outside without passing through a higher fire risk area. The protected route MUST be kept clear of obstructions and combustible materials. The walls and ceilings to all parts of the protected route MUST be free of highly flammable materials i.e. polystyrene tiles or heavy flock wallpaper.</p> <p>30 minute fire resistance must be provided;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• to all standard risk rooms within dwellings (including ceilings beneath attics – including the loft hatch)• between dwellings (ceilings and walls)• bordering the protected route including cupboards on the landing or under the stairs.• Electric and gas meters within the protected route must be housed within a fire-resisting cupboard.
Fire Doors FD30s	<p>A 30 minute self closing fire resistant door, fitted with intumescent strips and smoke seals, must be installed to each room leading onto the protected escape route except the bathroom/WC. See section on 'Fire doors' for full specifications.</p>
Fire Blankets	<p>A fire blanket to BS 6575 (or equivalent) is to be provided to all rooms with cooking facilities. The blanket must be mounted on the wall 1.5m high adjacent to an exit door away from the cooking facility.</p>
Extinguishers	<p>Not required. If provided must be maintained in working order and residents instructed on use.</p>
Other	<p>Polystyrene ceiling tiles should not be used within the premises. The use of portable heaters or hobs is prohibited. Gas cylinders or flammable liquids should not be used or stored in the premises.</p>

Certification.

Fire alarm systems must be installed by a suitably qualified electrical contractor. Upon completion, the contractor must provide an installation, commissioning and test certificate

The system must be checked and serviced regularly by a qualified electrician or alarm engineer. The British Standard also calls for regular tests of different call points. Records of the checks carried out should be kept for future reference in the book provided by the installer or similar.

Radio-Linked System.

Radio-linked systems (also called wireless systems) are considered in both BS 5839 - part 1:2002 and BS 5839 - part 6:2004. A specialist fire alarm contractor will need to be consulted to confirm whether or not they can provide a system that meets the recommendations of the British Standards above.

Maintenance of Fire Protection.

The owner or manager must be familiar with how the fire alarm system operates. It is very important that faults are reported and remedied immediately. Regular checks should be carried out and recorded in the log book.

What is a 'protected escape route'?

The protected escape route is the normal route the occupants take to the final exit (usually the front door). This means that all the walls, floors and ceilings separating bedrooms, living rooms and kitchens must be of 30 minutes fire resistant construction. The route must have adequate lighting and fire resisting construction horizontally and vertically between units of accommodation and must not pass through a high-risk room i.e. Kitchen.

Free standing furniture must be removed from the protected route. It must be kept clear from obstruction and free from combustible materials. There should be no trip or slip hazards, such as loose carpet. Tenants must not be permitted to store items in the protected route, for example shoes/pushchairs.

The escape route to the final exit door must never pass through areas used for sleeping, general living, cooking, or storage without being separated from them by fire resisting walls or partitions and fire doors. All glazing on escape routes should be a minimum of 30mins fire resistance and no lower than 1100mm above the floor

Loft Hatch.

Loft hatches must provide at least 30-minute fire resistance to the ceiling structure along the means of escape for the property. This can be achieved fixing a 6mm minimum fire protective board and all joints to be filled with a fire resisting compound.

Under stairs cupboard.

The soffit and spandrel partition to the staircase is to be upgraded to provide 30 fire resistance. The cupboard should not have any combustible materials stored. It must be kept locked.

Fire doors.

Fire doors are an integral part of a protected escape route but are explained here separately because they are so important. They are manufactured to certain standards and function to prevent the spread of both fire and smoke onto the escape route. It is recommended that they are fitted by an approved fire door contractor. Fire doors must be fitted to all rooms opening directly onto the protected escape route, except for bathrooms or toilet compartments (except where these pose a higher fire risk, for example where they contain electric water heaters or gas boilers).

In some special cases, 60 minute fire resistant doors may be required. Where 60-minute fire doors are required the frame may have to be replaced. The rating of the frame must equal that of the door and must be able to support the weight of the door. Therefore, a purpose manufactured 60-minute fire door and frame set should be installed.

Fire doors must be fitted and maintained in accordance with BS 8214:1990. They must be hung on three fire rated standard hinges and must have a fire rated self-closing device conforming to BS EN 1154. The closing device must be capable of closing the door fully into the frame, unaided from any angle and self-latching. All ironmongery used must fire rated to the same level as the door. In order to prevent smoke passing between the gap between the door itself and the door frame or lining, fire doors must be fitted with smoke seals. The smoke seals required are those which combine a cold seal to the gap and a hot smoke seal comprised of intumescent material, which expands when subject to the high temperatures reached during the course of a fire. Smoke seals minimise the risk of smoke spreading into the escape route.

The gap between the door and frame as a guide it should not be more than 3mm. A larger gap may render the intumescent strip ineffective in a fire. In addition, you must ensure that if a door edge mounted smoke seal is being used it brushes right up against the door lining. It is important that you do not paint or varnish over the smoke seal when decorating the door as this will render them ineffective. Solid fire doors must only be cut down in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and the hardwood lipping must always be replaced on all edges.

Locks to fire doors (including the final exit doors) must be operable from the inside of a room without the use of a key.

Regular checks should be carried out to ensure that the doors and frames are undamaged and that self-closing devices work properly. The smoke seals to the doors must be undamaged and form a good seal between the door and frame.

Door Frames

In all openings where a fire door is fitted, or is to be fitted, the existing linings and architraves must be thoroughly checked to determine if they provide sufficient fire resistance.

If the existing frame is in poor condition or warped so that it will be difficult to achieve a proper, close fit and good smoke seal for the fire door a new door set should be considered. The installation of fire door sets is a specialist field and should only be undertaken by a competent person with qualification or experience, 3rd party accreditation is recommended.

Glazing can only be fitted to fire doors which are designed for the purpose and tested to the relevant BS. The doors are often sold without the glazing panel and glazing must be fitted in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. If you install a door with glazing, you will be required to demonstrate that it has been installed in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

Fire Stopping.

Often central heating and other services must pass through a fire-resistant structure and this represents a point at which smoke and/or flame can spread. The treatment of these areas to maintain the fire-resistant integrity of the structure be it a wall, ceiling or a floor is known as fire stopping. There are some purpose made fire stopping and sealing systems on the market. Fire stopping materials include cement mortar, gypsum based plasters, cement or gypsum based vermiculite/perlite mixes and intumescent mastics. These may be used in situations appropriate to the material. Not all of them will be suitable for every situation.

For more information on fire stopping, you can refer to Section 11 of Approved Document B to the Building Regulations 2000 (as amended in 2002).

Properties with mixed Commercial and Residential Use.

Where a property has both commercial and residential occupation, for example, flats above a ground floor shop, a greater degree of separation is required between the two different parts of the building. 60 minutes of fire resistance is usually required in this case and this will mean a higher specification for upgrading of ceilings and partitions. There will also need to be separate entrances for the commercial and residential parts of the building, access to the residential part will not be permitted through the commercial unit.

Having the works carried out.

It is important to have fire safety works carried out by competent persons. As well as the quality of products used, fire precautions depend heavily upon the quality of workmanship. This can make the difference between fire safety measures that work and those that fail. Fire proofing works can be carried out by a competent general builder and /or carpenter using approved materials and by following the manufacturer's instructions. Some specialist products such as fire doors can be fitted by approved contractors registered under various schemes. The certificate issued validates a product's suitability.

Information about fire doors can be obtained from the British Woodworking Federation (BWF) who, list approved fire door centres and suppliers on their website www.bwf.org.uk

Information about fire resistant glazing systems can be obtained from the Glass and Glazing Federation on their website.

For fire alarm systems, there are a number of specialist contractors some of which also carry out security installations. Some of these contractors are approved by BAFE (British Approvals for Fire Equipment) through their certification scheme (SP 203), for the design, installation, commissioning and maintenance of fire detection, alarm and suppression systems. A full list of their certified contractors can be found on their website. These contractors may also carry out emergency lighting installations

Contact information:

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