

Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service

Fire Safety Guidance for Self-Catering Holiday Lets



Self-Catering Holiday Lets

Introduction

This leaflet is intended to give those responsible for self-catering holiday lets, information and guidance to help them reduce the risk of fire and to comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 ('Fire Safety Order').

Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service is responsible for enforcing the Fire Safety Order in these types of premises and will refer to the guidance provided in HM Government 'Do you have paying guests?' booklet for small premises.

This leaflet has been designed to cover a wide variety of holiday let premises and therefore the information is broad in its scope.

Does fire safety law apply to me?

- Yes, fire safety law applies to you if anyone pays to stay in your property, other than to live there as a permanent home.
- Any flat, house, cottage or caravan you rent out to others on a short-term arrangement or for a holiday is covered under the Fire Safety Order.
- The Fire Safety Order makes you responsible for taking steps to protect all relevant people using your premises from the risk of fire.

Why should I do anything?

- It is a legal requirement.
- Failure to act may lead to enforcement action, prosecution, fines and/or imprisonment.
- You have a moral duty of care to ensure the safety of your guests and visitors.
- To provide business continuity, and prevent the risk of damage to your business, and to your reputation.



What must I do?

- You must carry out a fire risk assessment to identify the fire safety measures which you need to have in place to keep people safe from fire.
- You must act on the outcomes of your fire risk assessment, and if necessary improve your fire safety measures.
- You must keep the risks and your fire safety measures under review.
- You should ensure equipment (e.g. fire alarm systems, gas appliances, electrical appliances, emergency lighting) is subject to regular servicing and periodic testing/inspections. A record of the testing and maintenance should be held.

Consider vulnerable guests (young, elderly, disabled)

- You will need to think about vulnerable guests that may stay in your property when carrying out your fire risk assessment.
- Does your booking procedure take into consideration any specific needs your guests may have? How would you know if someone has a hearing impairment and how would they be alerted in the event of a fire?
- It is important that your emergency plan (what your guests do in the event of a fire) is suitable for all persons staying at your premises. It must not rely on the Fire and Rescue Service to evacuate people from your premises.
- NOTE: If your premises' Fire Risk Assessment has a reliance upon escape windows as a means of escape, they must meet all the following criteria to be accepted by Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service:
 - The window(s) are installed in compliance to current Building Regulations with approval from a building control body, OR, have been assessed by a competent Fire Risk Assessor that ensures compliance to required standards.
 - The premises are a maximum of one story above ground level, with length of travel distance within the premises in accordance with the appropriate guidance, with no unusual or complicated routes to a final exit on the ground floor. No floor greater than 200m².

- Appropriate controls are implemented to ensure that the premises only cater for occupants who are capable of using the window escape; including first floor escape windows where the 'hang and drop' method would be required. These escape arrangements should be identified to guests and contained within the premises' Fire Risk Assessment.

Do I need automatic fire detection (smoke alarms)?

- Yes, all premises used as self-catering holiday lets are likely to need an interlinked automatic detection and fire warning system
- In the smallest of premises (ground and first floor with only 2/3 guest bedrooms and short travel distances to a place outside) radio interlinked detectors with a 10-year battery may be good enough which you may be able to fit yourself. Smoke detection should be provided in the staircase, corridors (along with any rooms that lead onto these) and bedrooms with a heat detector in the kitchen (complying with BS5839 Part 6 - 2019).
- For small premises similar in size to a family home (ground, first and second floor with a simple route, no more than 12m travel distance, to a place outside) an interlinked mains wired with integral battery back-up system of detectors is needed. Smoke detectors should be provided in the staircase, corridors and bedrooms with a heat detector in the kitchen (complying with BS5839 Part 6).
- In larger premises a more comprehensive fire alarm system consisting of manual call points and a control panel should be installed (complying with BS5839 Part 1).
- It must be tested regularly and must be loud enough to wake anyone sleeping on the premises.
- Your guests should be given information on the system installed and what to do in the event of a false alarm.
- Note: A properly conducted fire risk assessment may show a variation to the standard described above due to, for example, the construction of the premises or the level of risk within other rooms (e.g. rooms which are provided with TVs, coffee making facilities and sockets which may be used for charging personal electronic devices etc).

Do I need to provide emergency lighting?

- If a fire knocks out the normal inside lighting, you should think about whether any 'borrowed lighting', for example from nearby street lamps, would be enough to allow people within the premises to find their way out.
- If not, it may be acceptable in small premises to rely on rechargeable torches which come on automatically if the main supply fails.
- If required, you should have one in each room with a sign that says what they have been provided for.
- Large premises will need more sophisticated automatic emergency lighting systems.

What are we looking for?

When we carry out an inspection on a self-catering or holiday let, we will assess the adequacy of fire safety standards by taking a risk based approach. We will consider the size, layout, construction and use of the premises. In general, we will expect to see:

- A system of interlinked automatic fire detection and warning system.
- Measures to ensure people can see their way out should the mains lighting fail.
- Doors on escape routes, including bedroom doors, and final exit doors should be simple to open without the use of a key.
- Clearly defined escape routes, kept free of storage and items which may increase the risk to those escaping.
- Self-closing solid fitting timber internal doors, to protect escape routes (and to separate high fire risk rooms) where travel distances are no more than 12m. For longer travel distances, fire doors will be required to protect escape routes.
- Information to guests on what to do if they discover a fire or hear the alarm.
- Evidence of regular testing and maintenance of equipment.
- A single multi-purpose fire extinguisher on the ground floor and a fire blanket in the kitchen with any additional provision identified through fire risk assessment where for example further coverage is needed for larger premises or specific fire risks.
- Fire exit signage showing alternative fire exits.
- Chimneys, wood burners well maintained.

In addition to the previous page, you should also consider:

- Furniture compliant with the Furniture and Furnishing Regulations 1998
- Carbon Monoxide detection (if hazards have been identified)
- Barbecue fire safety and carbon monoxide advice for visitors
- For accommodation which is part of a complex/site other guidance and legislation may also apply.

If your property is listed or considered a building of significant heritage value then you should consider the impact of fire to both the life risk within the property and also the cultural and potential business impact a fire could have. Before making any changes you should contact the conservation officer at your local authority planning department.

Where can I find further information?

Information can be found on our website:

cumbria.gov.uk/cumbriafire/services/safetywork

- Fire safety guidance: For small premises, the guidance contained within the “Do you have paying guests?” booklet should be sufficient. For larger premises the fire safety provisions will need to be more comprehensive and the guidance contained in the ‘Fire Safety Risk Assessment - sleeping accommodation’ guide may be more appropriate.
- Risk assessments: If you do not feel confident to carry out the fire risk assessment you may appoint someone to do it for you. We advise you to follow the guidance given on our ‘Register of risk assessors’ page.
- Heritage buildings: Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service provides guidance on some of the main hazards and considerations that you can identify to help keep yourself, visitors and the heritage value of your property safe from fire.

For the most up-to-date information and guidance, please refer to **gov.uk** ‘Fire safety in the workplace’ and ‘Fire safety: guidance for the hospitality industry’.

What do you mean by a small premises?

There is no absolute definition but generally, it would mean:

- No more than 2/3 floors
- Limited to two/three guest rooms per floor
- Bedrooms lead directly onto a staircase with a simple and short route to a final exit
- No long (more than 12m), unusual or complicated routes to a final exit
- No floor greater than 200m².



For further advice



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