



## Introduction

The requirements relating to general fire safety are covered by the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005, supported by the Fire Safety (Scotland) Regulations 2006.

They require the responsible person (having control of the premises and or the employer - in most instances the Congregational Board) to ensure adequate and appropriate fire safety measures are in place to minimise the risk of injury or loss of life in the event of a fire.

These measures include the provision of the following:

- Fire Safety Policy;
- Emergency Fire Plan;
- Fire Safety Information and Training;
- Fire drills;
- Fire Risk Assessment and maintenance of fire safety measures; and
- Keeping records.



Figure 1 Examples of fire safety equipment and signage.

## Fire Safety Policy

A Fire Safety Policy deals with the planning, organisation, control, monitoring and review of fire safety measures.

This need not be a lengthy document and an example of what this might look like is provided in template form in Appendix 1.

## Emergency Fire Action Plan

The purpose of the plan is to ensure that people in the premises know what to do in the event of a fire and know what to do to safely evacuate the premises. The plan should be kept on the premises and communicated to church officials, stewards, staff, tenants and community groups using the premises. It should also form part of the training and instruction for church officials, stewards, and staff.

The plan(s) should set out details of the procedures to be followed by staff in the event of fire and by any other persons present. It should be specific to the premises and should include as a minimum:

- the action to be taken on discovery of a fire;
- how people will be warned if there is a fire;
- the fire fighting equipment provided and who should use it;
- how the evacuation should be carried out, including specific action for the disabled and children;
- where people should assemble and the procedure for checking the building has been evacuated;
- identification of escape routes and the method for using them, a plan is often useful;
- duties of staff/volunteers/church officers responsible for various groups;
- the method and responsibility for calling the fire brigade and other emergency services;



- procedure for meeting with and liaising with the fire brigade; and
- what training staff/volunteers/church officers and other parties need.

The more complex and larger the premises the more detail and co-ordination of arrangements that will be required. In a very small premises the emergency plan may consist of little more than the fire action notice. See Appendix 2 for examples of these notices.

### Fire Safety Training and Information

You should provide adequate information and training for church officers and volunteers regarding fire safety. The training and information provide should be specific to the premises and should include consideration of the following:

- The action to take on discovering a fire and how to raise the alarm;
- the action to take upon hearing the fire alarm and the assembly point;
- the significant findings of the fire safety risk assessment and the measures that have been put in place to reduce the risk from fire;
- the names of those officer(s) nominated with responsibilities for fire safety;
- the procedures for alerting visitors and members of the public including, clubs, and those letting the premises and where appropriate, directing them to exits;
- the arrangements for calling the Fire and Rescue Service;
- the measures in place to ensure a safe escape from the premises and how they will operate including any specific arrangements for disabled and young persons;
- the evacuation procedures for everyone in the building or on site to reach an assembly point at a safe place;
- the location and, where appropriate, the use of fire-fighting equipment;
- the location of the escape routes, especially those not in regular use;
- how to open all doors on escape routes, including the use of any emergency fastenings (and locks where appropriate);
- the importance of keeping fire doors closed to prevent the spread of fire, heat and smoke;
- the importance of good housekeeping;
- the risks from any flammable or hazardous materials used or stored on the premises;
- the precautions to be taken to minimise and control the risks, with particular attention to their role in reducing and controlling potential ignition sources.

Training should be repeated periodically (annually) to ensure awareness is maintained and when any new officers are appointed or when circumstances within the congregation or its premises change. The public must also be made aware through the provision of Fire Action Notices.



## Fire Safety Drills

Fire drills should be carried out to check that staff and other relevant persons understand the emergency fire action plan and that it works effectively.

It is necessary to hold drills periodically (recommended twice per annum) by asking congregations and others using the facilities to leave premises by emergency exits. It is advisable to let the congregation /tenants /community groups know about the drill in advance.

For premises with more than one emergency exit different scenarios should be used for different drills. Once a check has been made to account for everybody people can be allowed to return to the building.

Throughout the drill the responsible person(s) should seek to observe any potential difficulties with the arrangements and make whatever amendments to the emergency evacuation plan that are necessary. A copy of the revised plan should then be provided to all tenants and community groups to ensure they are aware of the changes.

## Fire Risk Assessment

The fire safety risk assessment process involves evaluating and keeping under review, the existing fire safety measures to establish whether they are adequate or if more requires to be done. It is essentially a matter of applying common sense in consideration of the premises for which you have responsibility and identification of anything which could cause harm from fire.

There are 5 Steps in the Process and this form takes you through each of them: 1) identify the people at risk; 2) Identify the fire hazards; 3) evaluate the risk and decide if the existing fires safety measures are adequate; 4) record the fire safety risk assessment actions and information; 5) review the fire safety risk assessment regularly.

Fire safety law requires information to be recorded where five or more employees are employed; or the premises are subject to licensing or registration; or an alteration notice has been issued by an enforcing authority requiring this. We would however always recommend it is recorded in writing and we have provided a form for this purpose which can be accessed by clicking on the link below.

### [Fire Risk Assessment Form](#)

The assessment should not be considered a one-off procedure, it should be reviewed regularly and the form makes provision for this.

If however you do not feel sufficiently confident/competent to undertake the fire safety risk assessment you may wish to commission a fire safety specialist to assist you.

A competent person is someone who has sufficient training and experience or knowledge and other qualities that allow them to assist you properly. The level of competence required will depend on the complexity of the situation and the particular help you need.



## Appendix 1: Example of a Fire Safety Policy

This fire safety policy has been prepared by *(insert Congregational Board/ Church official)*.....as the responsible person for the premises known as *(insert Church)* ..... to comply with The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the safety from fire of all relevant persons on, in or in the vicinity of the premises by effective planning, organisation, control, monitoring and review of the preventive and protective measures.

This policy will be used to ensure the provision of suitable and sufficient general fire precautions, assessment of risk and management of necessary fire safety arrangements.

As such the following will be provided;

- The position of *(insert name(s)/officer(s) responsible)* ..... will be responsible for the provision of safety assistance to assist the responsible person in carrying out their duties under the regulations.
- A suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment will be prepared, regularly reviewed, and its significant findings acted upon.
- A suitable and sufficient fire emergency plan will be prepared, regularly reviewed, and practised by carrying out fire drills.
- All staff, church stewards/volunteers will be trained to satisfactorily carry out the fire emergency plan, regular fire drills and any other necessary actions to comply with the regulations.
- All staff, church stewards/volunteers, will be provided with comprehensible and relevant information regarding the risks identified from the risk assessment and protective measures, the fire emergency plan, and the identities of persons nominated to carry out the duties of the responsible person.
- Tenants and other community groups who use or to which the premises are let and any contractors working in the premises will be provided with information regarding the emergency fire evacuation plan and a nominated church officer to whom they can raise any concerns.
- All necessary systems required as part of the general fire precautions (or other general systems or appliances required to be satisfactorily maintained to prevent the likelihood of fire) will be tested and maintained in accordance with the relevant code of practice and or statutory regulations.

Full records of these measures will be kept and made available for audit by the relevant authorities.



Appendix 2: Fire Action Notices

Example 1



Example 2





## References:

1. Practical Fire Safety Guidance for places of Entertainment & Assembly (there is no specific guide available for churches)

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Justice/public-safety/Fire-Rescue/FireLaw/FireLaw/SectorSpecificGuidance/PlacesEntertainment/EntertainmentPremises>

2. Health & Safety Executive Fire Safety

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/fire.htm>

3. Fire Scotland Act

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2005/5/contents>

4. Church of Scotland Insurance Services Ltd

<http://www.cosic.co.uk/guidelines>

## CHURCH OF SCOTLAND INSURANCE SERVICES CONTACT INFORMATION

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION REGARDING THESE GUIDELINES  
OR ANY OTHER MATTERS RELATING TO YOUR CHURCH  
INSURANCE SCHEME POLICY PLEASE CONTACT US.

TELEPHONE: 0131 220 4119.

IF YOU PREFER YOU CAN E-MAIL US AT:

[ENQUIRIES@COSIC.CO.UK](mailto:ENQUIRIES@COSIC.CO.UK)

OR VISIT OUR WEB SITE AT:

[WWW.COSIC.CO.UK](http://WWW.COSIC.CO.UK)

The guidelines provided are based on our understanding of current law and practice. The Church of Scotland Insurance Services Ltd cannot accept any liability whatsoever for any errors or omissions which may result in injury, loss or damage, including consequential or financial loss.

It is the responsibility of the congregation or any other person to ensure that they comply with their statutory obligations and any interpretation or implementation of the above is at the sole discretion of the congregation or other party who may read these guidelines.

**Church of Scotland Insurance Services Ltd** | Authorised regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority