



FIRE SAFETY (ENGLAND) REGULATIONS



What is the purpose of the Fire Safety Regulations?

The Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 were introduced as a way of implementing some of the recommendations from the first phase of the Grenfell Inquiry. These regulations came into force on the 23rd January 2023.

It follows the commencement of the *Fire Safety Act 2021 which is designed to protect the public from risk of fire, by better supporting compliance and effective enforcement in all multi-occupied premises.

*The Fire Safety Act 2021 was introduced in response to the Grenfell Tower tragedy and subsequent investigations which highlighted significant flaws in the regulatory framework governing building safety. The Act extends the scope of the Fire Safety Order 2005 to include, in fire risk assessments, the building structure, external walls (such as cladding and balconies), and individual flat entrance doors that open into common areas in multi-occupied residential buildings. This legislative change aims to enhance fire safety measures, by extending responsibility and improving the management of fire risks in multi-occupied residential buildings.

Further safety measures

The Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 further supports the Fire Safety Order and Fire Safety Act by clarifying how the responsible person(s) of residential buildings will assist the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS), by providing the FRS with information that can help plan and, if needed, provide an effective operational response in the event of a fire.

It also stipulates additional safety measures that need to be undertaken by responsible person(s) which includes providing residents with fire safety instructions and information on the importance of fire doors.

What is required of all high-rise buildings over 18m?

Floor plans and building plans

These plans assist quick and critical decisions taken by operational fire fighters during a fire incident. They need to be kept up-to-date and supplied to the local Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) electronically. A hard copy format alongside a single page building plan which identifies key firefighting equipment, such as dry risers and emergency gas shut off valves, also needs to be kept in a secure information box on site.

Information boxes

These secure information boxes are required at all existing high-rise buildings. These boxes present identifiable repositories for documents intended for use by FRS during a fire incident, made accessible by key or key code.

Whilst the regulations require responsible person(s) to proactively send the FRS relevant information electronically, there is still a practical use for the FRS to have this information available in hard copy. This allows the first attending crews to be able to understand the layout of the building and to respond effectively by being able to access these plans, as an actual fire is taking place, without having to rely on technology.

An information box can be installed internally or externally on-site and there are a number of options on the market that can be adapted to the specifications of a residential property.

Lifts and other key fire-fighting equipment

Any lifts (including evacuation lifts) within a building that are designed to be used by fire fighters, as well as the mechanism which allows fire fighters to take control of lifts, must be checked on a monthly basis. This also incorporates key fire-fighting equipment.

Where faults have been identified, signs must be placed on or by defective lifts and fire-fighting equipment. If the issue takes more than 24 hours to resolve, it has to be electronically reported to the local Fire and Rescue Service and detailed within the Secure Information Box. This will then allow the FRS to plan accordingly, before arriving at a fire incident. These outcomes must also be made available to residents in an open and transparent way.

Design and materials of external walls

For buildings over 18m or 7 storeys, FRAEW's are quite often needed. This is in order to satisfy regulation 5 of The Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022, which requires all high-rise buildings to prepare a record of the design and materials used in the external wall system. Please see our guidance document 'PAS 9980:2022' for more information about the design and materials of external walls.

Wayfinding signage

As a legal requirement for all new buildings over 11m and all existing buildings over 18m, visible wayfinding signage is intended to support responding FRS in all multi-occupied buildings, particularly those with dim light or smoky conditions. With wayfinding signage in place, such as floor identification signs and flat indicator signs, the FRS are able to quickly and easily understand the layout and location of flats and additional key areas of the building.

Floor identification signs should meet all of the following conditions:

- Located across all landings with a protected stairway and all protected corridors/lobbies (or open access balconies) where a firefighting lift opens into
- Visible from the top step of a firefighting stair and, where possible, from inside a firefighting lift when the lift car doors open
- Positioned between 1.7m and 2m above floor level and if possible, all signs should be the same height
- Text should be in sans serif typeface with a minimum letter height of 50mm, and floor number should be at least 75mm. Text should have a contrasting background, easily legible and readable in low light or when illuminated with a torch

Each floor identification sign should read as Floor X, with X being the storey number, so that residents can refer to it. Floor number designations should meet all of the following conditions:

- The floor closest to the ground level should be designated as either Floor 0 or Ground Floor
- Each floor above or below the ground floor should be numbered in sequence, beginning with Floor 1 or Basement 1
- A lower ground floor should be designated as either Floor 1 or Lower Ground Floor

Flat indicator signs, which provide details about all flats accessed on each floor, should be included with all floor identification signs. Flat indicator signs should meet all of the following conditions:

- Immediately visible below the floor identification signs. The top edge of the sign must be no more than 50mm below the bottom edge of the floor identification sign
- Wording should be Flats X-Y, with the lowest flat number first
- Wording should have arrows when flats are in more than one direction
- Text should be in sans serif typeface with a letter height of at least half of the floor indicator sign
- Text and arrows have a contrasting background, easily legible and readable in low light or when illuminated with a torch

Note:

If a multi-storey flat has two or more entrances, the flat number should only be indicated on the normal access storey.

What is required for residential buildings with storeys over 11m in height?

Flat entrance doors

The Fire Safety Act 2021 has removed the legal ambiguity and confirms that flat entrance doors are in scope of the Fire Safety Order. It is necessary for responsible person(s) to undertake annual checks of flat entrance doors and quarterly checks of communal doors in multi-occupied residential buildings above and below 11m.

Although residential blocks below 11m are not specifically referenced in the regulations, there is still an onus on the responsible person(s) to ensure that all fire doors within a multi-occupied block are adequate and there are no signs of any obvious damage or issues, and to also ensure that the doors are able to provide adequate protection. Realistically, this can only be achieved through routine inspections undertaken by a competent person and a specialist may need to be engaged with. This has since been supported by the Home Office's guide to fire safety in small blocks of flats 6.8253 - PSG - Small block of flats - Guides & checklist (publishing.service.gov.uk).

What is required of all multi-occupied residential buildings?

Fire door information

Once regular checks of the doors to flat entrances and communal areas have been assessed, it is then required for responsible person(s) to provide this information to residents, as well as information on the importance of fire doors in relation to a building's fire safety. This information should deepen residents' understanding on how they can keep their building safe from fire, thus encouraging them to allow responsible person(s) access to check their flat entrance doors.

Residents should receive this information when they move into a multi-occupied residential building and then on an annual basis.

Fire Safety Instructions

This requirement provides residents in all multi-occupied residential buildings with fire safety instructions annually or when there is a change. The instructions inform residents on how to report a fire, the building's evacuation strategy e.g., 'stay put' or 'simultaneous' and any other instructions required once a fire has occurred.

Responsible person(s) is required to communicate with residents and consideration should be given with how best to provide these instructions in a way that can be understood. This consideration could be made alongside any existing or future resident engagement strategy. Pictorial information could be used, as well as face to face engagement to assist residents in their understanding.

These instructions should be displayed in a communal or conspicuous area, where visitors and other relevant persons will also have access to this information.