

Commercial Building Fire Safety.

Your return to work guide

Contents.

Introduction	03
Fire risk assessment & fire safety arrangements	04
What a fire risk assessment involves	05
Escape routes and fire exits	06
Fire doors	07
Fire alarm systems & maintenance	08
Fire extinguishers	09
General fire precautions & other fire protection systems	10
Training	11
About Tecserv UK	12

Introduction.

The lockdown and workplace closures caused by the coronavirus pandemic are beginning to ease and more commercial buildings such as offices, industrial premises, retail outlets and leisure facilities are beginning to re-open.

As these buildings have potentially been unused for many weeks, Tecserv UK is taking the opportunity to remind Directors and the Responsible Individual(s) to be vigilant about fire safety within their premises as employees begin a staged return to work.

This guide is based on a document issued by The Fire Service and is intended to refresh your mind about fire safety regulation. It provides some top tips for key areas to assess in order that business owners are reminded of their responsibilities in respect of fire safety in the workplace and are able to ensure their people, property and processes remain protected when business resumes.

It provides some useful top tips on everything from conducting a fire risk assessment, keeping fire exits and escape routes clear, to your responsibilities for regular testing of fire alarm systems and ensuring maintenance inspections up to date.

We hope you find the guide useful. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Colin Milligan
Sales Director

colin.milligan@tecservuk.com
Tel: 07747 533528

Fire risk assessment & fire safety arrangements.

Although there are no specific time periods in law for how often fire risk assessments must be done or reviewed, we highly recommend that one of your first actions is to conduct a fire risk assessment.

The law simply says that the person responsible for the assessment in your building must review it 'regularly' to make sure it's up to date.

Having been away from the building there may have been changes that may affect your risk profile related to both internal and external factors. These may include different tenants in a shared building, building refurbishments and construction works internally and externally in the adjacent areas. You should consider these as part of your return to work fire risk assessment.

The Responsible Individual(s) must also make sure that the fire safety arrangements are appropriate. These arrangements will range from something very simplistic, i.e. weekly testing of the fire alarm, through to complex arrangements requiring the provision of trained fire wardens.

The responsible person must ensure that there are sufficient available employees present at the premises to perform and carry out these arrangements. This is an extremely important consideration because a significant number of employees maybe unavailable due to homeworking.

“ Conduct a fire assessment as soon as possible after your return from lockdown.”

What a fire risk assessment involves:



01

A qualified Fire Risk Assessor will identify any potential fire hazards including combustible materials, sources of heat, unsafe practices and potentially dangerous conditions.



02

This will also include identifying any particular locations or individuals at risk.



03

Reducing risk. This can be achieved by removal or separation; and by putting measures in place to encourage a culture of risk prevention.



04

Evaluating the level of risk and if current fire alarm systems meet the required category. Check if appropriate detection and fire fighting equipment is installed and located in the right places. This includes reviewing escape routes and signage.



05

A regular programme of maintenance and inspections is required to ensure your systems meet compliance legislation, and more importantly, will work should the need arise.

Escape routes and exits.

All fire exit doors should be checked to ensure they are capable of being opened easily and immediately from the inside when required.

Any additional security devices used during the lockdown should be removed from all fire exit doors. If you share an escape route remember that those other businesses may not be open so it is wise to check with them what measures they are planning to safely re-open their buildings.

All exits, passages, landings and stairways should be checked to ensure they are available and free from obstruction. A clear and unobstructed route leading from each fire exit to a place of safety outside the premises should be provided and maintained available for use.

Fire resisting doors should be effectively self-closing (except those serving storerooms, plant rooms etc. which should be kept locked shut). Door closers need to be fitted and set correctly to ensure fire doors fully close into the frame.

If emergency lighting is installed it should be operated prior to the readmission of people to ensure that it is in efficient working order. Lamps in emergency lighting units should be visually examined/checked for operation by walking all the escape routes.

During this check it should be possible to see all fire extinguishers and fire alarm call-points. The lighting level provided should be sufficient in order to safely find your way out of the building and operate any devices found on exit doors.

Arrangements should be made to ensure the system is inspected and serviced in accordance with the maintenance recommendations described in British Standard 5266-1.

“ All fire doors should be checked and access routes kept clear.”

Fire doors.

Many people will be worried about returning to work therefore may will look for ways to limit the surfaces they touch to reduce transmission of the virus. However, we cannot stress enough how important it is not to wedge fire doors open.

Fire doors are a critical element in the fire safety of a building and are there to protect people and property should a fire occur and need to remain closed. As an alternative we suggest that you focus on regular cleaning of door handles and push plates or install foot operated mechanised to open and close doors.

“ Wash hands and sanitise door plates and pull handles regularly.”

“ Do not wedge open fire doors.”

Fire alarm systems & maintenance.

Maintenance

Immediately after the lock down was announced Tecserv UK issued a reminder to all of its clients that all unoccupied buildings must have their fire safety equipment maintained as it is classed as life safety essential equipment.

Furthermore, we received notifications from insurers that insurance cover could also be invalidated if regular maintenance inspections have not been carried out. Hopefully arrangements were made with your fire alarm maintenance provider to ensure access was granted to carry out any inspections that were due have taken place.

If you have missed a routine inspection we strongly advise you to arrange this as soon as possible.

Fire Alarm Systems

Prior to the return of occupants to your building we recommend that the Responsible Individual(s) operate at least one manual call point to test the audibility and function of the fire alarm system.

If appropriate, remember to inform your alarm receiving centre (ARC) before carrying out this test to prevent your local fire service from being falsely called to your premises. Fire doors fitted with automatic releases and any other active fire measures triggered by the alarm system should be checked to ensure that they are operating correctly.

As above, if a recent maintenance inspection has not been completed, we advise that arrangements are made to ensure the whole system is inspected and serviced in accordance with the maintenance recommendations described in British Standard 5839 Part 1.

“ Check all fire doors fitted with alarms are working correctly.”

“ Test your fire alarm regularly.”

Fire extinguishers.

One of the most important and easily available item of fire safety equipment is the fire extinguisher.

They are usually the first line of defence in the event of a fire for those who find their only fire escape route obstructed by fire.

You should ensure that your fire extinguishers remain in full working order and are legally compliant. It would also be prudent to remind staff when and how to use them safely should a fire emergency occur.

Fire extinguishers should be regularly serviced to ensure they remain in good working order and function correctly should they be needed. Legally, it is the responsibility of a business owner and part of the role of the responsible individual for a building to ensure that extinguishers are serviced in accordance to the BS 5306-3:2017. This does not apply to maintenance-free P50 fire extinguishers.

It is important to ensure that the right fire extinguisher is used according to the accelerant that caused the fire. Rather than extinguishing the fire, using the wrong fire extinguisher can make a fire worse. On returning to your building it would be wise to check the right fire extinguishers are in still in the right locations and working effectively.

The recommendation is that all fire extinguishers should be inspected on a monthly basis and documented in a log book. Furthermore, the fire extinguisher should be inspected and certified annually by a BAFE Approved fire protection equipment company like Tecserv UK.

The Tecserv UK “GOLD service agreement for fire Extinguishers” is a fixed price truly ‘all inclusive’ fire extinguisher service package which means Tecserv UK takes over responsibility of ensuring that all the extinguishers serviced by us comply with current British Standards.

“ Are your fire extinguishers in full working order and legally compliant?”

General fire precautions & other fire protection systems.

Any element of fire safety provided on your premises should be maintained and serviced to ensure it is in working order. It is essential to carry out these to protect the wellbeing of your employees and visitors too.

It is best to keep all equipment regularly serviced rather than leave it until it is too late, which can generate more costs in repairs and replacements.

You must provide appropriate information, instruction and training to your employees about the fire precautions in your workplace. This is particularly important to all new employees. The training to be provided will depend upon the significant findings of your fire risk assessment.



Training.

As people may have been away from the workplace for some time, it might be prudent to arrange for refresher training and also hold a practice fire drill to remind staff of the process.

If you haven't undertaken staff training for some time, on their return to work you should ensure that all staff know what to do in a fire situation. If those people with specific tasks have not returned to work, ensure that other suitably trained staff are available.

Similarly, this will include ensuring there are sufficient trained Responsible Individuals on site.

“ Hold refresher training so employee know what to do in a fire situation.”

“ Ensure that all staff fire safety training & record keeping is up to date immediately after the return to work.”

About Tecserv UK.

We're dedicated to protecting what matters.

Tecserv UK Ltd was founded in 2001 by our CEO Grahame Tilley based on a passion to provide expert advice on fire prevention and building security.

Our services include the installation and maintenance of fire systems, intruder alarms, access control solutions and CCTV surveillance equipment for commercial, industrial and prestige buildings located across the UK.

We are a quality assured and BAFE approved company with a network of experienced and fully trained field engineers who you can trust to ensure your systems are maintained and supported on a nationwide basis, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Our approachable team of industry experts always deliver on their promises with bespoke and innovative solutions. Our company is built on care, dedication and a passion for delivering honest advice, great results and excellent customer service.

This wealth of technical knowledge and experience along with holding distributor agreements with most of the leading manufacturers of fire, intruder alarm, access control, and CCTV surveillance equipment allows us to provide the best solutions.

As well as a wide range of owner managed businesses, many of the UK's leading retailers, hotels, schools, industrial buildings, offices, museums and heritage sites trust Tecserv UK to protect their people, processes and property. These include: Marks & Spencer, Harvey Nichols, The Ritz, The Bulgari Hotel, Pinewood Studios, The National Trust and St Paul's Cathedral to name but a few.

Sectors where we have specialist expertise:

Hotels

Education

Museums

Offices

Retail

Healthcare

Warehousing

Industrial

Heritage and listed buildings

Contact

Tecserv UK Ltd
Apex House
1 Mansfield Road
Underwood
Nottinghamshire
NG16 5FF

01773 764626

www.tecservuk.com

sales@tecservuk.com