Guide to Fire Safety in Houses in Multiple Occupation

This guide outlines the fire safety provisions recommended for HMOs in Oadby and Wigston Borough Councils Area and is based upon the national guidance produced by LACORS.

Guide for Owners, Agents and Managers of HMO's

Foreword

Oadby and Wigston Borough Council have produced this document to provide owners, managers, letting agents, and contractors with user friendly, accessible information to help ensure tenants of houses in multiple occupation are housed in safe and high quality accommodation.

This document contains general advice and suggested specifications; and whilst the examples and advice given is based on the national fire safety guidance produced by LACORS
(Housing – Fire Safety available at www.lacors.gov.uk/lacors/upload/19175.pdf), both the national guide and this document are only guidance and the requirements in individual properties may vary dependent on the risks presented. If you have any questions or believe your property does not fit comfortably within one of the examples given in this document you should contact your Local Authority for further advice. It will probably be necessary to carry out a risk assessment to determine what fire precautions are necessary and additional advice on how to do this is provided in Part 7 on page 42.

The Government believes that safe and properly managed Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) fulfil an important function in the private rented housing market. HMOs have a particular role in providing affordable accommodation in areas of high housing demand where other rents

We aim to encourage the supply of good quality private rented homes, and provide, and facilitate, information and training for landlords.

We would like to acknowledge the assistance of "Homestamp", a partnership consortium in the West Midlands in the preparation of this document. Their website is:
www.homestamp.com

For further information or assistance on HMOs please contact your local Environmental Health department. You may also wish to study the national fire safety guide available to download at: http://www.lacors.gov.uk/lacors/upload/19175.pdf

The information contained in this guide is based on that provided by LACORS in "Housing – Fire Safety. Guidance on fire safety provisions for certain types of existing housing", and was correct at the time of publication. However legislation may change over time and guidance is subject to revision. This guidance is intended to illustrate good practice. It is not to be seen as a definitive interpretation of statutory legislation, which can only be done by the Courts or Tribunals.

Contents

Part 1 - What is an HMO and why is fire safety important?

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

Definition of an HMO:
A House in Multiple Occupation is a building or part of a building (e.g. a flat) that is:

a) **occupied by more than one household who share an amenity such as a bathroom, toilet or cooking facilities; or**
b) **building converted into self contained flats that do not meet the 1991 Building Regulations, where at least one third of the flats are occupied under short tenancies.**

The term *occupied* means that it is the occupants' only or main residence, but it does also include properties where students live in term time only. People are classed as separate households if they are not family members or co-habiting couples. There are exemptions to these rules and further information can be obtained from your Environmental Health department.

This document does not detail fire precaution recommendations for purpose built self contained flats. However the principles of early warning and protected escape routes still apply. You should contact your Local Authority for advice in relation to these properties.

Why is fire safety important?

HMO accommodation has often been created by sub division of larger properties into smaller units and this can increase the risk 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. Deaths and injuries from fires in HMOs are proportionately higher than in single family homes.

The main reasons for insisting on fire precautions in Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) are to provide early warning, and to stop the smoke and fire spreading to parts of the property before other residents have the chance to escape.

Part 2 - Fire Prevention

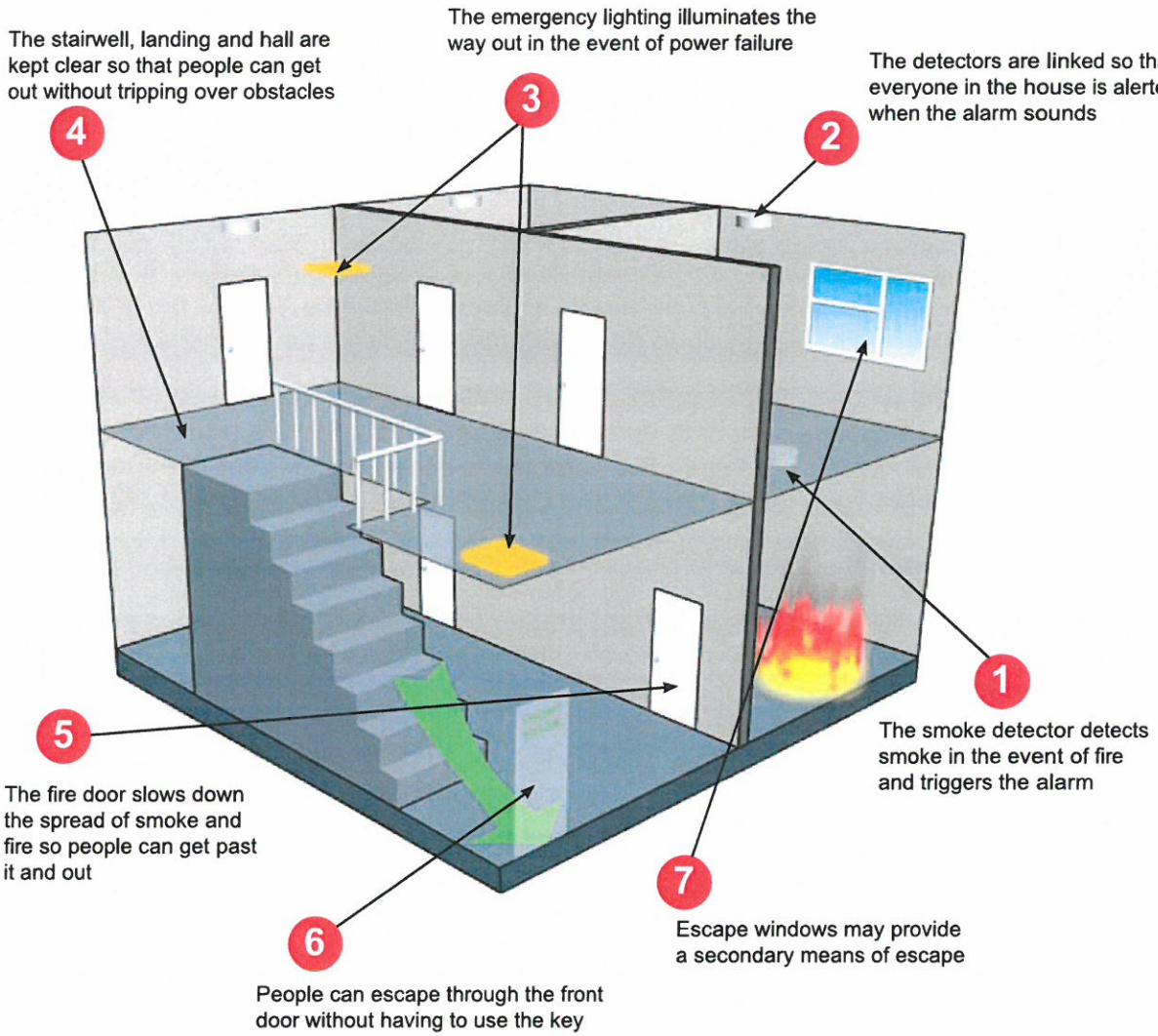
The most important action you can take as a property manager is to try and prevent fires. Whilst the advice given in this booklet has mainly been concerned with methods of warning residents of a fire and preventing the spread of the fire to enable them to escape; fire precaution measures can never guarantee absolute safety for residents, nor prevent extensive property damage.

The most important steps that you, as an owner or manager can take to minimise the risk of a fire are:

Electrics	**Make sure that the electrical circuits, fittings and equipment throughout the house are in good condition. Have the electrical installation checked regularly by a competent electrician (NICEIC or ECA approved) and act quickly on any recommendations that are made.** The electrician's report will tell you the date on which the installation should be checked again. Install circuit breakers and prevent overloading of sockets by ensuring that adaptors are not needed. If you buy new electrical equipment, make sure that it bears the CE mark, either on the equipment itself, or on the box, to show that it complies with legal standards. The purchase of second hand electrical goods is not recommended.
Gas	**Have the gas installation (i.e. the gas pipework, meters, gas fires, cookers, boilers, water heaters and flues) checked, and serviced at least once a year by a Gas Safe registered gas fitter. This is a legal requirement under the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations. You must give a copy of the safety certificate to each resident within 28 days, and give a copy to new residents before they move in.**
Location	Make sure that heaters and cookers are fixed in a position where they will not set fire to curtains, bedding or furnishings.
Furniture	**Make sure that all upholstered furniture that you, as the landlord, provide (such as settees, armchairs, bed bases and mattresses) has sewn-in labels showing that it has fire-resistant filling and covers. This is a legal requirement under the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire)(Safety) Regulations 1988 and the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire)(Safety) (Amendment) Regulations 1993.**
Flammable materials	Prohibit the use of portable gas or paraffin heaters in the house. Do not store highly flammable materials in the house (such as paint, thinners, LPG cylinders, paraffin or petrol).
Combustible items	**Do not store large quantities of combustible materials such as cardboard boxes or newspapers, in understairs cupboards, cellars, or in the loft.**

Part 3 - General Principles for Fire Precaution Standards

The following diagram illustrates the general principles of fire precautions in a representative house:



The HMO's design, construction and condition must limit the spread of fire and smoke and provide a safe and ready means of escape. There must be adequate fire protection to the means of escape and between each unit of accommodation, with appropriate detection and alarm systems provided. Emergency lighting and fire blankets shall be provided where necessary.

1. Every risk room (bedroom, living room, kitchen) and circulation space needs a mains wired detector/alarm. These will detect fires at the earliest opportunity and ensure that warning is sounded.

2. The detectors normally 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 stairwell, landing, and hall are kept clear of obstruction so that people can get out without tripping.

5. The escape route shall be protected to ensure people can exit the property safely. Generally, this will mean the partitions from risk rooms to the escape route giving 30 minutes fire resistance. Between rooms or in certain low risk premises partitions may be acceptable if they are of sound traditional construction - see Plans & Glossary.

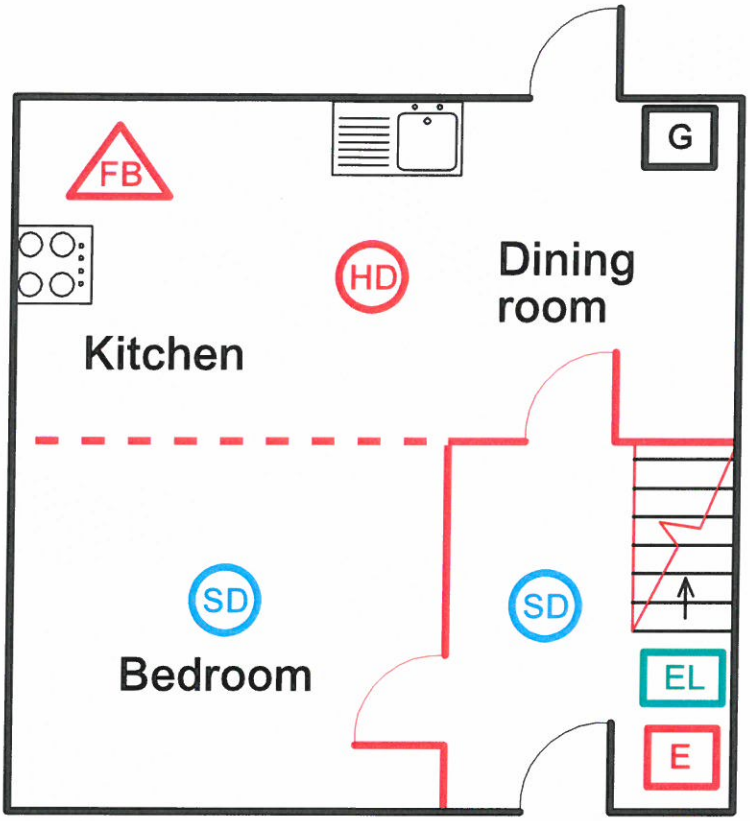
Part 4 - Detailed Fire Precautions Required

The following pages include some typical examples of house layouts and recommended works. Remember that these are suggested ways of complying with the basic principles. There may be other options and you should discuss these with your Local Authority.

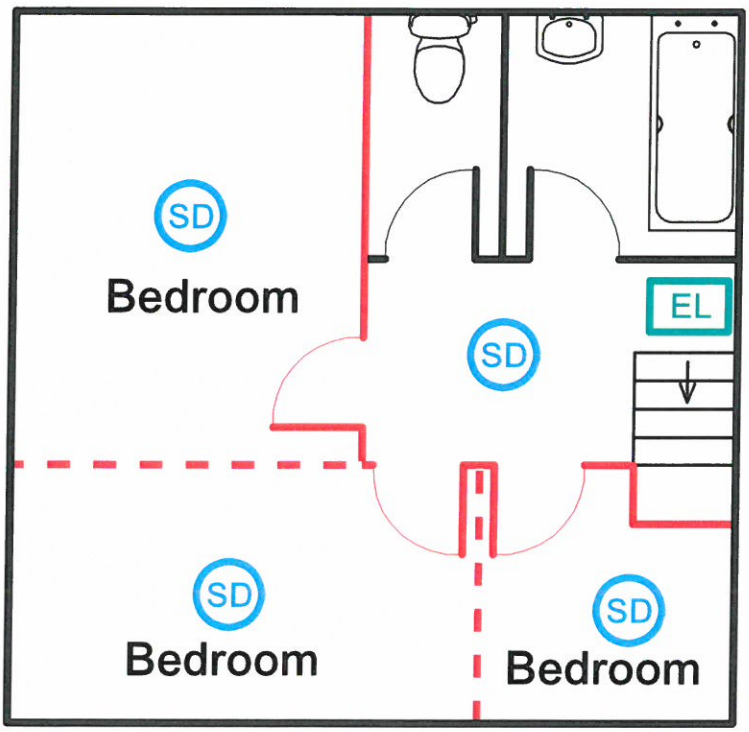
Key to plans

	30 minute fire resistance (wall/door/ partition etc..)
	Sound traditional construction
	1 hour fire resistance (wall/door/ partition etc..)
SD	Smoke Detector - interlinked, mains wired with battery back up
HD	Heat Detector - interlinked mains wired with battery back up
SD	Smoke Detector - independent mains wired. (recommended hush facility.)
FB	Fire Blanket
EL	Emergency Light
CP	Control Panel - for fire detection system
BG	Break Glass Point
	Emergency Escape Window
	Loft hatch – 30 minute fire resistance
E	Electric meter to be boxed in to 30 minute fire resistance
G	Gas meter to be boxed in to 30 minute fire resistance

Plan 1, House Type: Typical two storey house with Shared Cooking Facilities.

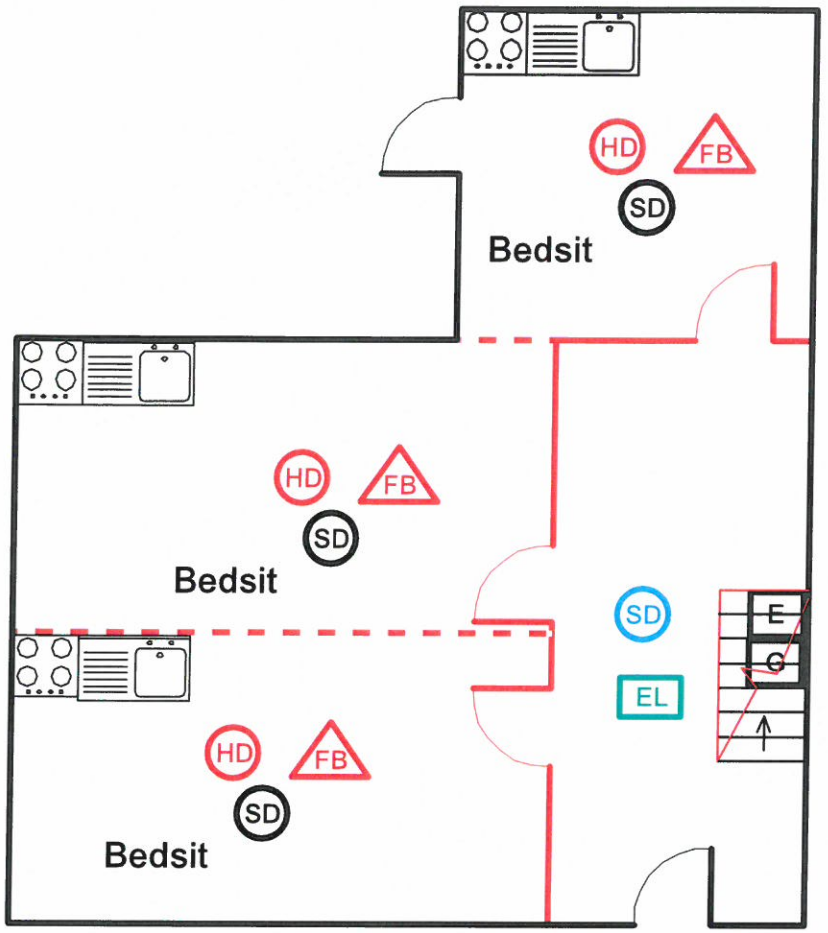


Ground Floor

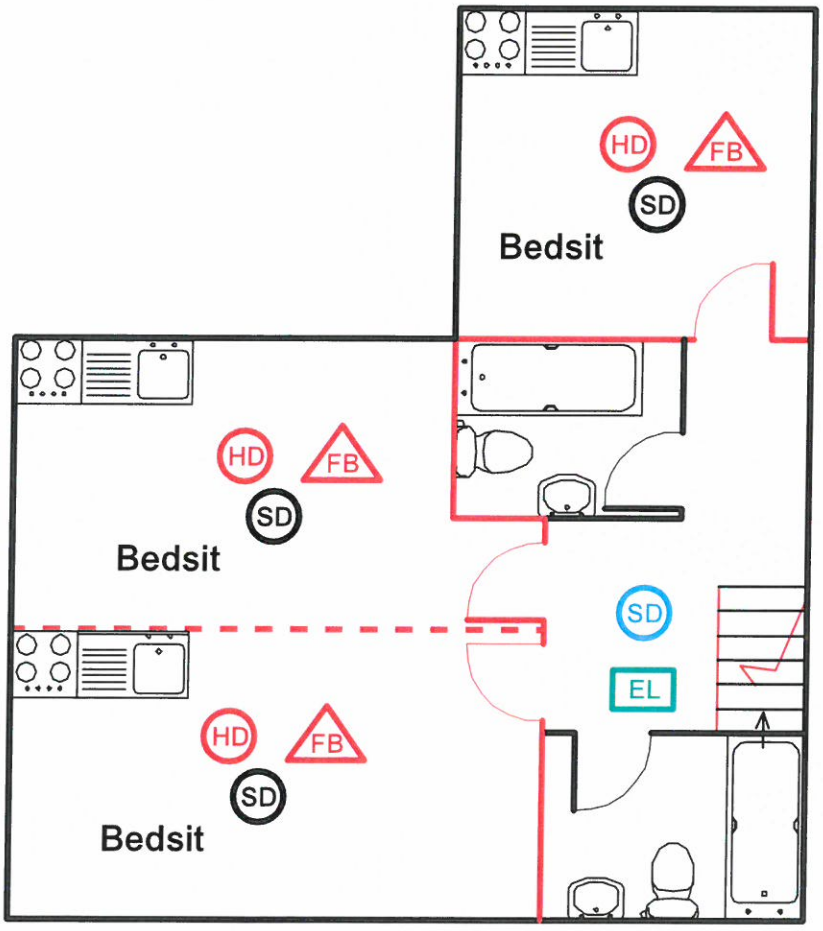


First Floor

Plan 2, House Type: Typical two storey house with cooking facilities in each let.

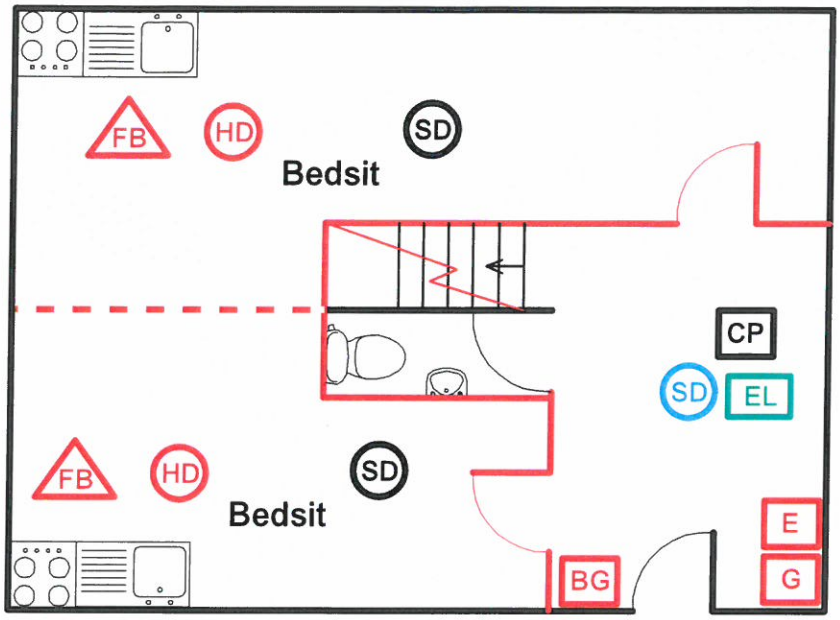


Ground Floor

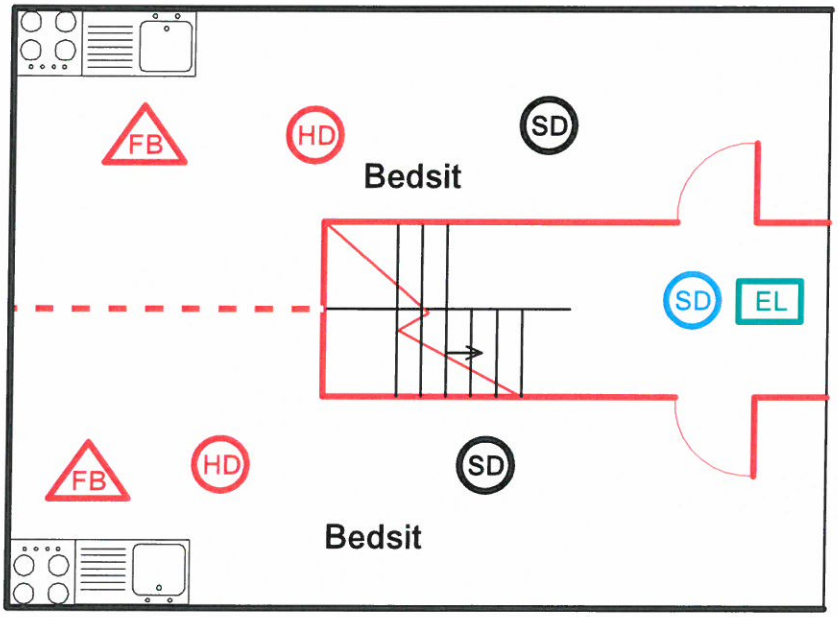


First Floor

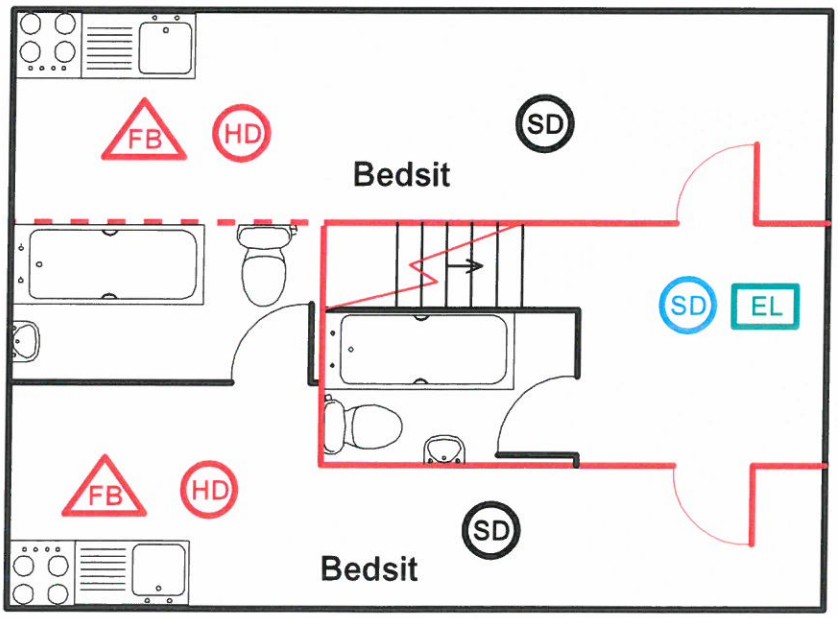
Plan 3, House Type: Typical three storey HMO with cooking in each of the lets.



Ground Floor

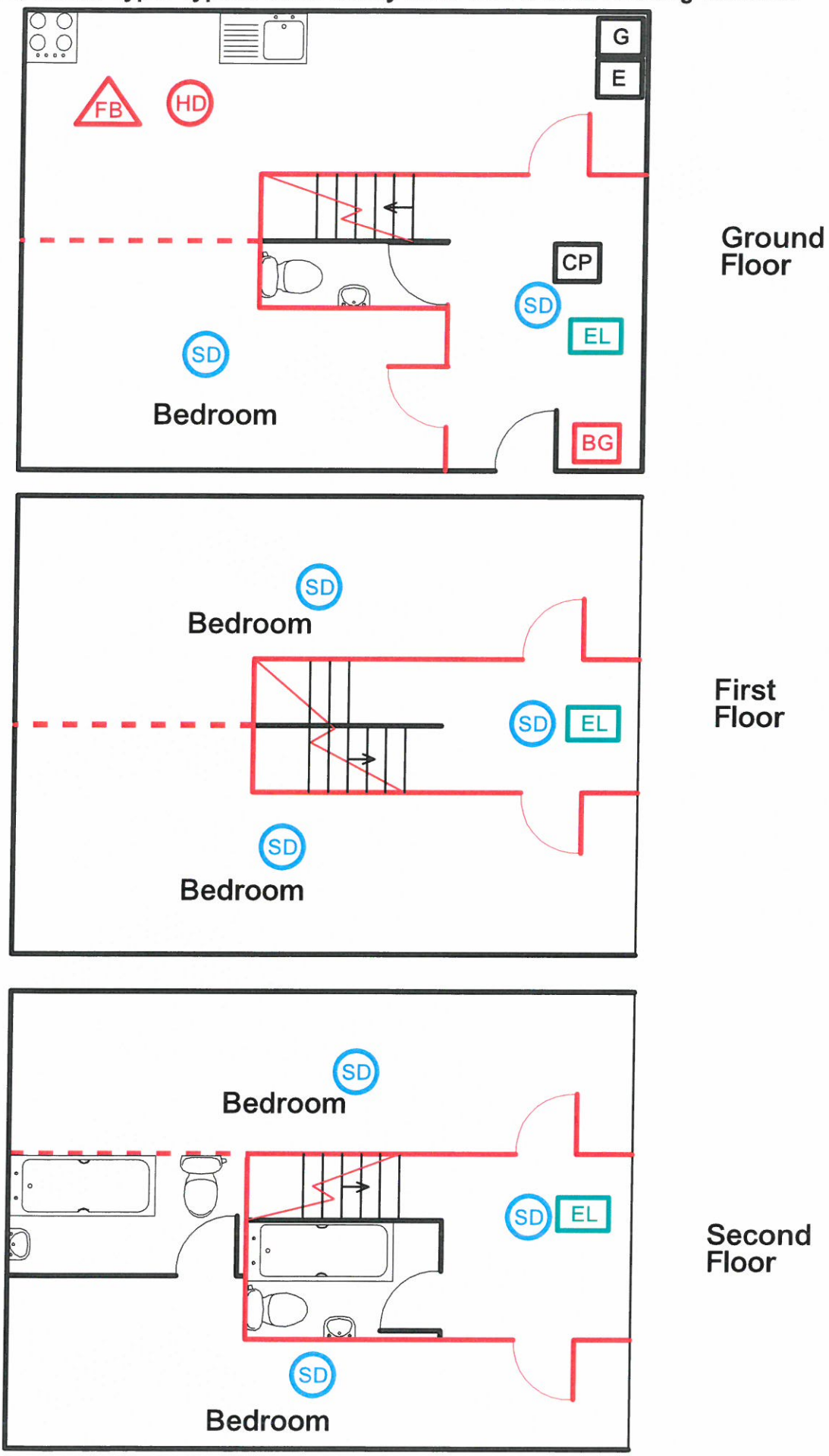


First Floor

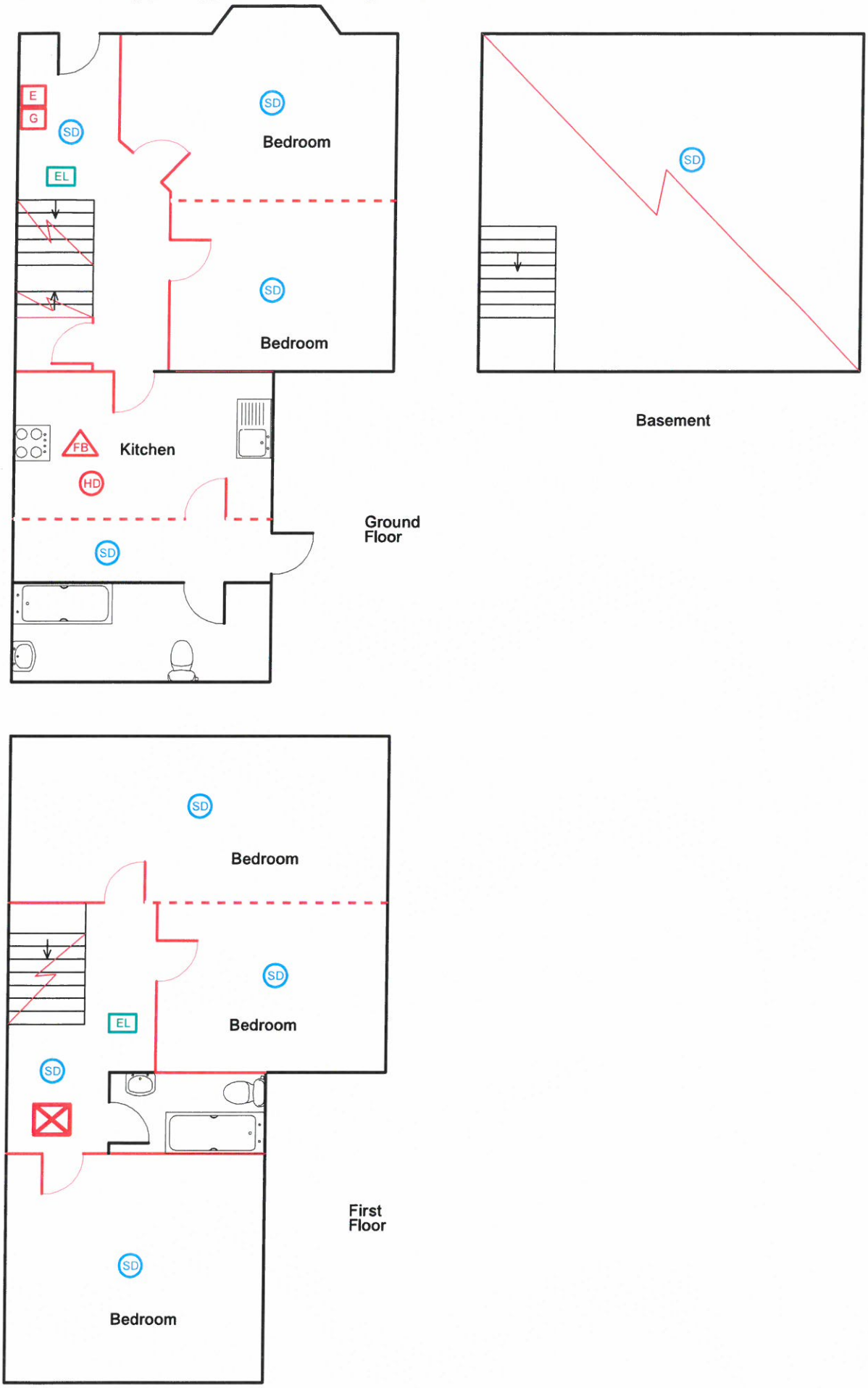


Second Floor

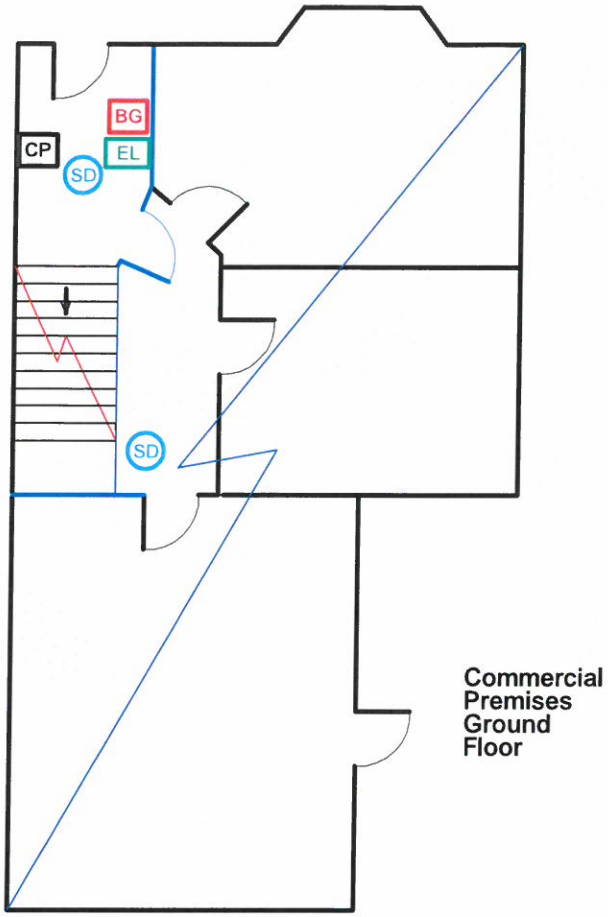
Plan 4, House Type: Typical three storey HMO with shared cooking facilities

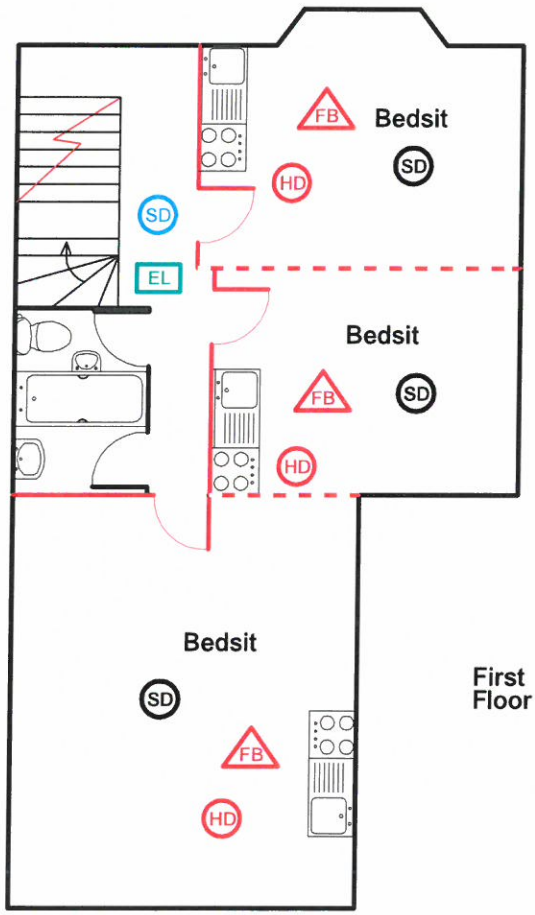


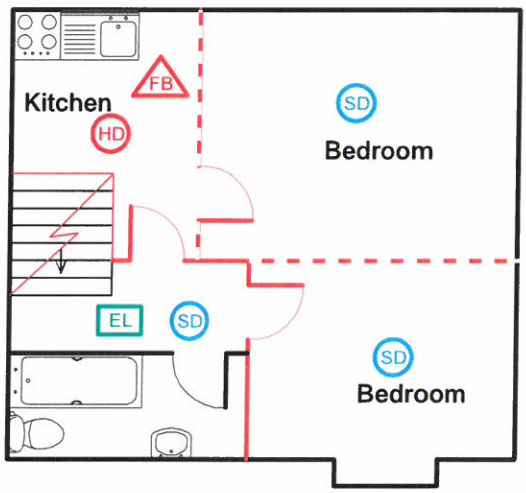
Plan 5, House Type: Typical two storey HMO with basement.



Plan 6, House Type: Typical three storey HMO above commercial premises with cooking facilities in each let







Grade D and E systems

- Routine testing – these systems should be tested every month by use of the test button on the smoke alarm.
- Routine maintenance – all alarms should be cleaned periodically in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.

All systems

- It is recommended that all detectors should be tested at least once a year to ensure that they respond to smoke. Tests should not involve the use of open flame or any form of smoke or non-specific aerosol that could contaminate the detection chamber or the electronics of the detector. Suitable specific test aerosols are available. The test is usually carried out by a specialist alarm engineer under a maintenance contract and should be recorded in the log book, with a periodic inspection and test certificate issued.

It is recognised that the above arrangements represent the ideal. While they may be possible in buildings with a resident landlord or a dedicated caretaker or housekeeper, in most situations for premises covered by this guide such arrangements may be impracticable. Where this proves to be the case tenants should be given clear instructions on how to test grade D or E alarms within their dwelling using the test button, along with clear recording and reporting instructions for any faults or false alarms on the system. Grade A systems are more specialist and resident testing will be inappropriate unless there is a trained individual in the property. Clear fault and false alarm reporting arrangements should be put in place, and the responsible person or his/her agent should respond to reports at the earliest opportunity.

Fire blankets and extinguishers:

- Where provided, these should be checked periodically to make sure they are in place and available for use. Extinguishers must be tested and maintained on an annual basis in accordance with BS 5306-3 and with the manufacturer's instructions.

Artificial lighting:

- Conventional staircase lighting must be working properly at all times. Any blown bulbs should be replaced and all switches should be working. If timer switches are fitted then the duration should be checked and adjusted if necessary;
- Any emergency escape lighting should be serviced and maintained in accordance with BS 5266-8: 2004 (BS EN 50172: 2004) Emergency escape lighting systems. This contains detailed recommendations which include inspections and tests to be carried out, down to a daily basis. For large, complex HMOs (such as those with five or six storeys) or premises with a specific high-risk factor (persistent vandalism problems, for example, or complex escape routes and no effective borrowed light), the full recommendations may be appropriate. However, in most average sized premises with normal risk, the following regime with a procedure for responding to reports of defects should be adequate:
- An annual discharge test in accordance with the requirements of BS 5266: part 8. This must be carried out by a competent person, usually a lighting engineer under a maintenance contract. It entails a full test to ensure compliance with the standard and should be recorded in the log book, with a periodic inspection and test certificate issued.

Information and training:

- Each occupier should be given specific advice on fire prevention and fire safety in the home. This should be provided at the start of each new tenancy and reviewed periodically. Suitable advice can be found in annex one of BS 5588: part 12, Advice to occupiers of domestic residential buildings, and advice is also available from local fire and rescue authorities. Information should include:
- An explanation of the escape routes, particularly where secondary means of escape is provided;
- How the fire detection and alarm system operates and what to do if it activates;
- How and when to re-set the fire alarm system;
- If extinguishers or fire blankets are provided, training in their application and safe use;
- Avoidance of false alarms;
- How and when to call the fire brigade;
- How to report defects;
- The importance of maintaining clear escape routes, free of storage;
- The importance of keeping fire doors closed, not propped or wedged open;
- Smoking and cooking safety;
- Gas safety advice;
- Safe storage and disposal of refuse; and
- The safe use of escape windows where appropriate.

Record keeping:

- It is recommended that a property log book is kept and all routine maintenance and servicing activity (as recommended in this guide) is recorded in it, along with all reported defects and remedial action taken – including false alarms. Model log books may be available from landlords associations or through landlord accreditation schemes.

Fire Alarm System to Comply with Current British Standard 5839 Part 6: Grade D (or equivalent), LD2 category coverage.

General

1. This comprises a system of one or more interlinked mains powered smoke and/or heat detectors each with an integral stand by battery and built in alarm.

Control Panel

2. A control panel is not required with this system.

Call Points

3. Call points are not required on a Grade D system.

Audibility

4. The alarm signal must achieve sound levels of: -

   - Not less than 65dB (A) in all accessible parts of the building
   - Not less than 75dB (A) at all bed heads, to arouse sleeping persons when all doors are shut.

   It is the responsibility of the installation contractor to specify the appropriate number and location of alarm sounders to achieve these sound levels.

Power Supplies

5. The power supply for a Grade D system should be a dedicated circuit or be connected to a regularly used, electrically protected, local lighting circuit. All smoke alarms and heat detectors should be connected to the same final circuit. The system must have a 72 hour battery back up.

Wiring

6. Wiring should comply to IEE Regulations (BS 7671).

Radio-linked System

7. 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.

Model Installation, Commissioning and Test Certificate

Model certificate for Grades B, C, D, E and F systems

This certificate is not valid if the serial number has been defaced or altered FHN2 (B-F)/ TRACEABLE AERIAL RUBBER

Original (to the person ordering the work)

CERTIFICATE OF DESIGN, INSTALLATION AND COMMISSIONING OF A FIRE DETECTION AND ALARM SYSTEM OF GRADE B, C, D, E OR F IN A DWELLING

Issued in accordance with BS 5839-6 : 2004.

DETAILS OF THE CLIENT

Client

Address:

DETAILS OF THE FIRE DETECTION AND ALARM SYSTEM

Address

Extent of the fire detection and alarm system covered by this certificate

The system is
New
An addition
An alteration

DESCRIPTION OF SYSTEM GRADE AND SYSTEM CATEGORY

Tick boxes as appropriate

System grade B [ ] C [ ] D [ ] E [ ] F [ ]

System category LD1 [ ] LD2 [ ] LD3 [ ] PD1 [ ] PD2 [ ]

COMMISSIONING

See Note 1

A tick in the box indicates the inspection or test has been performed and the results are satisfactory. N/A indicates an inspection or test is Not Appropriate

Test buttons checked	Simulated smoke or aerosol test	Dedicated circuit(s) provided	Sound level test instrument used *See Note 2*
All alarm warning devices operate	Heat test	Protective device labelled	Model and serial No.
Silencing system checked	Bedroom sound level (Clause 13.2)	Audible and visual indication of mains failure	Serial No. of associated Electrical Installation Certificate or Minor Electrical Installation Works Certificate (See Note 1)

USER INSTRUCTIONS

Tick boxes to indicate that the written information has been issued to the user

I/We the undersigned declare that the occupier* of the dwelling (or owner in the case of a house in multiple occupancy) has been provided with written information about essential aspects of the operation and maintenance of the system, as follows:

Operation of the system	Routine testing of the system	Checking the system on reoccupation of the dwelling after a vacation etc.
Action to be taken in the event of a fire alarm signal	Servicing and maintenance of the system (including intervals at which any batteries should be replaced)	The need to avoid contamination of detectors by paint
Avoidance of false alarms and action in the event of a false alarm	The need to keep clear space around all detectors and manual call points	As-fitted drawing
Warning that apparent false alarm from carbon monoxide detector may not be false alarm	Special precautions relevant to any lithium batteries used in the system	

** In the case of a newly-built property and where the future occupants unknown, the User Instructions should be issued to the builder for onward transmission to the purchaser together with the related electrical safety certificate.*

CERTIFICATION OF DESIGN, INSTALLATION AND COMMISSIONING

I/We, being the person(s) responsible (as indicated by my/our signature(s) below), for the design, installation, and commissioning of the fire alarm system, particulars of which are set out above, CERTIFY that the said work for which I/we have been responsible complies to the best of my/our knowledge and belief with the recommendations of BS 5839: Part 6 for the system described above, except for the variations, if any, stated below:

Variations (if any)

The extent of liability of the signatory is limited to the work described above as the subject of this certificate.

For the DESIGN, INSTALLATION AND COMMISSIONING of the system:	This certificate has been reviewed by the Qualified Supervisor :
Signature Date	Signature Date
Name (CAPITALS)	Name (CAPITALS)

DETAILS OF THE APPROVED CONTRACTOR

Trading Title

Address

Postcode

NICEIC Enrolment No (Essential information) [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

Branch number (if applicable) [ ] [ ]

Note 1 The electrical safety aspects of the fire detection and alarm system must also be certified in accordance with BS 7671: 'Requirements for Electrical Installations' by issuing an electrical safety certificate of a form which meets the requirements of BS 7671, such as a 'Domestic Electrical Installation Certificate' or, where appropriate, a 'Minor Electrical Installation Works Certificate'.

Note 2 An instrument complying with BS EN 61672: Class 2 with slow response and A weighting (see Clause 13.2) is suitable for measuring the sound level.

Note 3 This certificate may be required by an authority responsible for enforcement of fire safety legislation, such as the building control authority or housing authority. The recipient of this certificate might rely on the certificate as evidence of compliance with legislation. Liability could arise on the part of any organisation or person that issues a certificate without due care in ensuring its validity.

Please see the 'Notes for Recipient' on the reverse of this page.

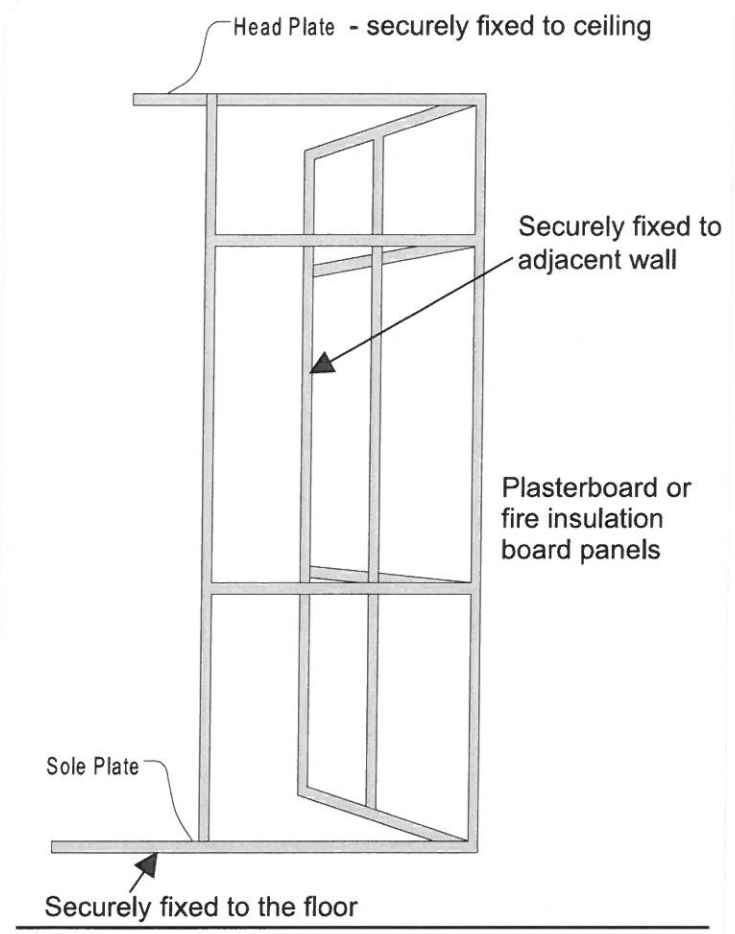
This form is based on the model in Annex F of BS 5839: Part 6: 2004

Diagram 1

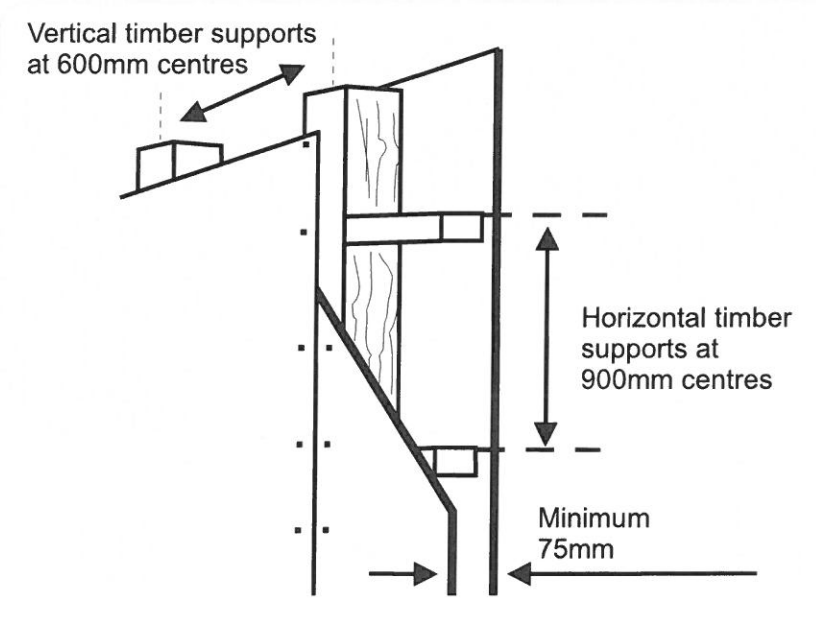
Example of fire resisting partitions

(half hour fire resistance)

The studding framework should be 75mm x 50mm and should be securely fixed where it joins floor, adjacent walls and true ceilings.



(i) Studding framework indicating fixing.



(ii) Boarding of studwork and contacts of timber supports.

Fix 20mm Supalux to the angles with 32mm No 8 self-tapping screws at 300mm centres.

Fix the two layers together with 32mm No 8 self-tapping screws at 300mm centres on both sides of the horizontal and vertical joints.

Specification 2

Fix 25mm x 50mm x 0.8mm galvanised steel perimeter angle secured to the perimeter using steel screws or bolts and plugs at 500mm centres.

Fix 30mm self-drilling/tapping screws at 200mm centres. Secure 20mm layer of New Tacfire to perimeter angle.

Fix 35mm self-drilling/tapping screws at 300mm centres. Secure 15mm layer of New Tacfire to the first layer, around the perimeter and down the centre of each board.

Any joints in New Tacfire boards must be staggered by at least 350mm.

Existing Partitions

The following methods can be used to upgrade an existing (lath and plaster) partition made up of 75mm x 50mm timber studs which is either load-bearing or non load-bearing. The studs at maximum 600mm centres with no infill to provide a partition with 60 minute fire resistance.

Partitions can be upgraded in one of two ways:

By the provision of an additional board to the existing facing **on both sides**:

9mm Supalux fixed, on each side of the partition, using 63mm nails or screws at 300mm centres.

12mm New Tacfire fixed, on each side of the partition, using screws at 300mm centres. The length of the screws should be such that they penetrate 38mm into the stud.

By the provision of a cavity infill:

In this case it must be a non-load-bearing stud partition made up of minimum 89mm x 38mm studs at 600mm centres with no infill and covered with 12.5mm plasterboard.

Take off one face of the existing partition. Fill the cavity between the studs with 90mm Rockwool Timberbatts of density 23Kg/m3. Provide 12.5mm Gypsum Wallboard fixed at 150mm centres with 38mm galvanised nails. Joints must be taped and filled or surface scrimmed and skimmed.

Alternatively, if the timber studs are minimum of 100mm x 38mm at 600mm centres and covered with 12.5mm plasterboard the cavity between the studs can be filled with 100mm Rockwool RW2 slabs.

Any variations or alternatives to the above specifications must be agreed with your Local Authority prior to the works being carried out.

- **Protection below the Existing Ceiling**

The plain edge boards are to be overlaid with 3.2mm hardboard. The existing ceiling is to be supported by chicken wire or expanded metal lathing of 25mm mesh, securely nailed to the joists. 38mm x 38mm noggins must also be fixed to span between the battens to support the following board edges:-

Two layers of 12.5mm **Fire Resistant Gypsum Wallboard** joints staggered.

or

Two layers of 10mm Glasroc Multi-Board with joints staggered.

The plain edge floorboards are to be overlaid with 4.8mm hardboard. The existing ceiling is supported with chicken wire or expanded metal securely fixed to the joists. 12mm Supalux is fixed through the existing ceiling to the joists with 63mm x No 8 wood screws at 300mm centres.

The plain edge boards are to be overlaid with 3.2mm hardboard. The existing ceiling is to be under-drawn with expanded metal lathing to BS 1369: Part 1: 1987 securely nailed to the joists. Plaster with 13mm (from face to lath) lightweight Gypsum metal lathing type.

- **Protection above the existing ceiling**

Take up, as necessary, the existing floorboards. Fix 100mm x 12.5mm thick strips of Glasroc Multi-Board to each side of the joists using 36mm Gyproc Drywall screws at 300mm centres. Lay 12.5mm Glasroc Multi-Boards on top of the strips. Relay the floorboards. Overlay the floorboards with 3.0mm hardboard.

Take up, as necessary, the existing floorboards. Lay 19mm Gypsum metal lathing plaster trowelled between the joists in conjunction with expanded metal lathing or chicken wire at mid thickness of the plaster and well turned up and fixed to the joist sides or continuous over the joists. To prevent staining polythene sheets should be laid on the back of the existing ceiling. Relay the floorboards. Overlay the floorboards with 3.2mm hardboard.

Take up, as necessary, the existing floorboards. Fix 2 x 75mm x 12mm Supalux strips to each side of the joists with 50mm x No 8 screws. Lay 12mm Supalux cut, to be a tight fit, between the joists on top of the strips. Superlux to be overlaid with 80mm x 20Kg/m3 Rockwool Rollbatts. Relay the floorboards. Overlay the floorboards with 4.8mm hardboard.

Great care needs to be taken at the junctions between floors and walls, particularly where the floor construction is to be upgraded by providing additional protection within the floor space. The gap should be sealed between the adjacent joist and partition wall and the gap between the floorboards and skirting boards with **intumescent** paste.

For guidance on achieving 1-hour fire resistance to suspended ceilings, advice should be sought from an Environmental Health Officer.

Any variations or alternatives to the above specifications must be agreed with your Local Authority prior to the works being carried out.

Safety Glazing

Glazing in critical locations (i.e. where there is a danger of falling through or of lacerations) may need to meet both fire resistance and safety standards i.e the use of fire resisting safety glazing complying with current British Standard 6206: 1981 (or equivalent). See Diagram 3 for critical locations of safety glazing.

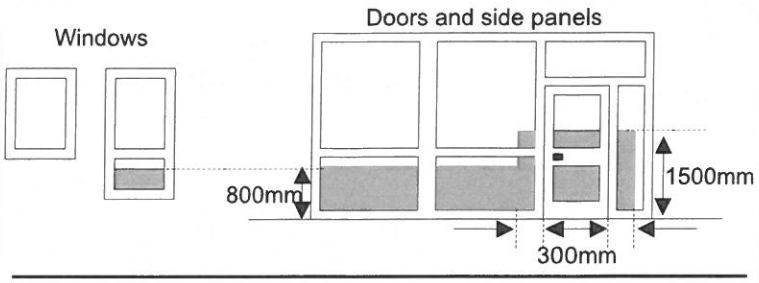


Diagram 3
Critical locations of glazing in internal and external walls.

6I: Additional Escape Route Separation

Electricity or Gas meter on escape route

Provide ½-hour fire resisting enclosure to the electric and gas meter. Enclosure to consist of 100mm x 50mm softwood framing faced with 12.5mm plasterboard both sides or alternatively 6mm fire protective board (e.g. Supalux) to the inner side of the framework, scrim joints and apply minimum 3mm plaster skim to outer surface. Provide ½-hour fire resisting door. Where a fire door is to be cut down to fit a smaller door opening, then solid core ½-hour fire resistant door blanks only are to be used. Hardwood lippings are to be glued and screwed to leaf edges once the door blank has been cut down to the required size. Ensure points where pipes or cables penetrate the cupboard are tightly sealed with a non-combustible compound capable of maintaining the ½-hour fire resistant integrity of the cupboard structure (e.g. intumescent foam etc).

Lead pipes are unsatisfactory and the gas supply pipes should be of high melting point metal. The cupboard to the gas meter should be provided with ventilation grills at high and low levels, these must provide ½ hour fire protection. The gas provider should be consulted to ensure they are satisfied with the arrangements, as they will require access to read meters.

Loft Hatch

Loft hatches must provide the ½-hour fire resistance to the ceiling structure along the means of escape for the property.

Remove the existing loft hatch. Provide and fix suitable lining complete with minimum 25mm deep stops, both to be glued and screwed to loft hatch frame. Provide and fit ½-hour fire resistant loft hatch door to comprise solid core ½-hour fire door blank cut down to appropriate size, with hardwood lippings glued and screwed to each leaf edge. Provide and fit 10mm intumescent and smoke seals to be pinned into rebates on each leaf edge of the loft hatch door or alternatively into the loft hatch frame. The whole door to fit into the existing frame with no more than a 4mm gap at any point between the hatch door and the frame. 2-barrel bolts are to be provided and fitted on opposite sides of the exposed face to keep the hatch in a closed position under pressure when not in use.

Under stairs cupboard

The soffit and spandrel partition to the staircase is to be made ½ hour fire resisting. Apply to the existing soffit and spandrel 12.5mm plasterboard with 3mm skim coat, or 6mm minimum fire protective board (e.g. SUPALUX) with all joints filled with fire resisting compound. The cupboard below the stairs at ground floor level, in addition to the above, is to have all combustible materials removed. Fit new ½-hour fire resisting door and frame. The door is to be kept locked shut. Apply notice to door reading "TO BE KEPT LOCKED SHUT", to comply with The Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Symbols) Regulations 1996.

6K: The Design of Escape Windows

Where window openings are likely to be used for means of escape purposes the following guidance must be referred to:

The window must have an unobstructed openable window area that is at least 0.33msq with at least the width or height dimension being a minimum of 450mm. Side hung opening lights are recommended. Care must be taken when considering the design (particularly with uPVC windows and their various hinge designs) to ensure the necessary openable area required is provided.

The bottom of the openable area (window cill level) must be not more than 1100mm, and not less than 800mm above floor level. Windows are suitable for means of escape where the drop from the window to ground level is one storey only (not exceeding 4.5m from first floor level to outside ground level).

Note: The ground below the windows must be flat and free from hazards (low walls, railings etc). Where security is provided on windows, means of opening must be readily available within the room. Where primary access to a sleeping room is through a high risk room (i.e. communal, kitchen or living room) an alternative suitable means of escape must be provided via a door or escape window directly to the outside.

2.3 Step 1: identify the hazards within the premises

2.4 For a fire to start, three things are needed: a source of ignition, fuel and oxygen. If any one of these is absent, a fire cannot start. Taking measures to avoid the three coming together will therefore reduce the chances of a fire occurring.

2.5 Sources of ignition: these may include:

- smokers' materials such as cigarettes, matches and lighters
- naked flames, for example candles and night lights;
- electric, gas or oil-fired heaters (fixed or portable);
- boilers;
- cookers, toasters and other kitchen equipment (especially when shared);
- faulty or misused electrical equipment;
- electric blankets, computers, TVs, washing machines and dryers;
- lighting equipment (fixed and movable), for example halogen lamps and table lamps;
- the electrical installation itself; such as old and outdated wiring and fuse boxes and the overloading of electrical sockets
- the gas installation;
- arson attack;

2.6 Sources of fuel: these may include

- furniture, furnishings, textiles, bedding, clothing, curtains & laundry;
- accumulations of unwanted mail, waste paper, cardboard, newspapers and magazines (including that awaiting recycling collection);
- waste storage and refuse containers;
- flammable liquid-based products such as paint, varnish, thinners, adhesives, white spirit, methylated spirit and cooking oils;
- liquefied gas (LPG), paraffin, heating oils and petrol;
- decorations for seasonal and religious occasions;
- plastics and rubber such as videotapes, polyurethane foam-filled furniture and polystyrene-based display materials; and
- wall, floor and ceiling coverings and surface finishes.

Compliance with the regulations concerning gas, electrical and furniture safety will reduce the risk presented by some of the items listed above.

Particular care should be taken when premises are undergoing alteration, repair or redecoration. At such times flammable materials may be stored in the premises, possibly in escape routes or in rooms which are otherwise unused. Care should be taken as to where and how these products are stored. Premises which normally have good fire precautions and present a low fire risk may have their fire safety compromised by temporary careless storage of these products or by the disabling of fire precautions during the period of the works.

2.7 Sources of oxygen: in premises covered by this guide the oxygen source will be the air in the building. Where only normal natural domestic ventilation is provided the risk will generally be normal.

2.8 Step 2: Identify people at risk

2.9 Generally be residents and their visitors and anybody working in the premises such as a caretaker or cleaner and any visiting contractors. Only in buildings with mixed residential and commercial use are there likely to be other people to consider.

2.15 Step 4: record, plan, inform, instruct and train

2.16 It is a good idea for everyone to keep a written record of their fire safety risk assessment, and if the property is subject to the FSO the law says you must make a written record of your risk assessment. In these cases it is the "significant findings" of the risk assessment that must be recorded. Significant findings are the actions to be taken as a result of the assessment and details of anyone at particular risk. Significant findings should include details of:

- the fire hazards that have been identified (but ignore trivial things such as a tube of solvent-based glue);
- the actions taken, or which will be taken, to remove or reduce the chance of a fire occurring (preventive measures);
- persons who may be at risk, particularly those especially at risk;
- the actions taken, or which will be taken, to reduce the risk to people from the spread of fire and smoke (protective measures);
- the actions people need to take if a fire occurs. For most HMOs this will simply be to evacuate the property in the case of a fire and to summon the Fire & Rescue Service
- any information, instruction and training identified as being needed, and how it will be given; and
- any discussions that have taken place with residents (or, if appropriate, with staff).

2.17 It is recommended that a record of the significant findings of the fire risk assessment is kept in all cases, even where it is not a requirement to do so. An example template is shown below, and a blank template for you to use can be found at the end of this document, however, any alternative format will be acceptable provided it contains the information above.

2.18 An appropriate emergency plan should be put in place. In most residential accommodation this is unlikely to extend beyond advising residents what to do in the event of a fire or fire alarm and how to contact the fire and rescue service. In large or mixed use premises a more sophisticated plan may be necessary.

2.19 There is no requirement under the FSO to provide training to residents, but providing them with basic information on fire precautions is a simple and effective way of reducing fire risk in the premises.

2.20 Step 5: review

2.21 The risk assessment and the general fire precautions in the premises should be reviewed regularly. There is no specific timescale for this other than where there is a reason to suspect that it is no longer valid or where there has been a significant change in the premises.

2.22 In practice the fire precautions should be kept under constant review. Where problems are identified they should be dealt with as soon as possible.

3. Example Risk Assessment

3.1 Below is an example of risk assessment for a HMO that would be subject to mandatory licensing. The example is not exhaustive and is intended to give the responsible person an idea of what a fire risk assessment could look like. A blank fire risk assessment is reproduced at the end of this guide that you may like to use.

Landlord Fire Precaution Records

This will help to provide evidence of your management and ongoing maintenance of the property. It can used in conjunction with your fire risk assessment and is a tool that will enable you to note and record changes in the property which may in turn affect the hazards and risks of fire in the property.

Fire Doors - must close completely from a 45° angle when room windows closed, intumescent and smoke seals must be fitted correctly.
Common Parts – must be kept clean, in good repair and free from obstructions. Any structural defects should also be noted and repaired – eg. Hole in wall.
Fire alarm – routine testing of call points and detectors. An inspection every 6 months by a competent electrician is required for BS 5839 Part 6 Grade A systems with a control panel or annually for Grade D (no control panel). All false alarms shall also be recorded.
Emergency Lights – a test key may be provided by the installer, alternatively you may turn the electricity off at the mains. Consult the system handbook.

January	Date Checked	Defects found	Actions Taken and date
Fire Doors			
Common Parts			
Fire Alarm			
Emergency Lights			
Other			
Signature of manager			

February	Date Checked	Defects found	Actions Taken and date
Fire Doors			
Common Parts			
Fire Alarm			
Emergency Lights			
Other			
Signature of manager			

March	Date Checked	Defects found	Actions Taken and date
Fire Doors			
Common Parts			
Fire Alarm			
Emergency Lights			
Other			
Signature of manager			

April	Date Checked	Defects found	Actions Taken and date
Fire Doors			
Common Parts			
Fire Alarm			
Emergency Lights			
Other			
Signature of manager			

October	Date Checked	Defects found	Actions Taken and date
Fire Doors			
Common Parts			
Fire Alarm			
Emergency Lights			
Other			
Signature of manager			

November	Date Checked	Defects found	Actions Taken and date
Fire Doors			
Common Parts			
Fire Alarm			
Emergency Lights			
Other			
Signature of manager			

December	Date Checked	Defects found	Actions Taken and date
Fire Doors			
Common Parts			
Fire Alarm			
Emergency Lights			
Other			
Signature of manager			

ANNUAL CHECKS - Certificates must be kept detailing findings and contact details for the contractor

	Date Checked & Company/Contractor details	Defects found	Actions Taken and date
Gas Safety			
Fire Alarm (Grade A system must be checked every 6 months)			
Electrical appliances			
Sprinkler System			

Part 9 - GLOSSARY

Some useful fire safety terms

AFD
Automatic fire detection and warning system. A system of interlinked smoke and heat detectors with integral or linked alarm sounders. The AFD system is designed to provide a reliable and constant means of detecting smoke or fire at the earliest possible stage and to sound an audible warning to occupiers, enabling them to escape before the fire develops to a dangerous stage. The sophistication and coverage of the system varies depending on risk. Design, installation and maintenance of AFD systems for premises covered in this guide are laid down in BS 5839: part 6, 1995.

Area of high fire risk
Room or other area which, because of its function, use or contents, presents a greater risk of fire occurring and developing than a standard risk room or elsewhere – for example large kitchens, boiler rooms and large storerooms.

Back-up supply
See stand–by supply

Bedsit HMO
A building which has been divided into individual non-self-contained lettings, let to unconnected individuals. Each bedsit letting will usually comprise only one room (sometimes more) which may contain cooking/food preparation facilities, washing facilities and living/sleeping space. Usually bathrooms and WCs are shared between a number of bedsits. The actual facilities contained within each bedsit letting will vary from property to property.

Circulation spaces
Passages, corridors, landings, hallways, lobbies and stairways.

Competent person
A person suitably trained and experienced so as to be able to properly examine, test and undertake any remedial action and to present the information in a report.

Competent and registered engineer
A person who is competent to inspect gas installations and provide a gas appliance test certificate. Specifically an engineer recognised by the Gas Safe Register as being competent to undertake such testing.

FD30 / FD30S
Purpose designed and built fire-resisting door assemblies with a minimum fire resistance of 30 minutes. The 30 figure indicates the door's performance time in minutes. A letter 'S' after the figure denotes a requirement for smoke seals to be fitted so as to restrict the passage of smoke, including cold smoke. Tested to either British or European standards.

Fire risk assessment
An organised and methodical look at a premises, the activities carried on there and the likelihood that a fire could start and cause harm to those in and around the premises. A requirement in premises to which the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (FSO) applies, (i.e. those with common parts).

FRA
Fire and rescue authority.

FSO
The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

Final exit
The termination of an escape route from a building giving direct access to a place of safety such as a street, passageway, walkway or open space, and sited to ensure that persons can disperse safely from the vicinity of the effects of fire.

Place of ultimate safety
A place outside of the building and away from it, where people will be safe and unaffected by the fire or its effects.

Plasterboard
A board of gypsum plaster enclosed between and bonded to two paper sheets.

Protected route
An escape route out of a building offering a degree of protection from fire and smoke emanating from rooms opening onto it. In premises covered by this guide it will typically be the usual staircase, landings and hallway of the house leading to a final exit. A protected route will provide varying degrees of protection from fire and smoke in accordance with risk (a 30-minute protected route, for example, will be enclosed with construction giving 30 minutes of fire resistance and containing 30-minute fire-resisting doors with smoke seals (FD30S)). Lower risk premises will have protected routes offering a lower standard.

Relevant persons
Relevant persons include anyone lawfully on the premises and those in the vicinity of the premises who would be affected by any fire at the premises.

Residential property tribunal (RPT)
The formal name given to a tribunal of two or three people set up by law under the provisions of the Rent Act 1977 and the Housing Act 2004. It is an independent decision-making body which is completely unconnected to the parties or any other public agency. The RPT is the tribunal which determines appeals against any enforcement actions taken under the Housing Act 2004. Weblink: www.rpts.gov.uk

Responsible person
The responsible person for the purposes of fire safety provision and maintenance at residential accommodation is the person having control, i.e. the landlord or person managing.

Risk analysis
An exercise to determine the level of risk of suffering harm from an activity based upon a range of criteria – see Part 7.

Risk room
A room with a function, use or contents presenting a risk of fire occurring and developing; typically kitchens, shared living rooms, bedsit rooms. A risk assessment may include bedrooms in some cases. Excludes bathrooms and WCs containing no fire risk. See also 'area of high fire risk'.

Room sealed appliance
A gas appliance whose combustion system is sealed from the room in which the appliance is located and which obtains combustion air from outside the premises, and which also vents the products of combustion to open air outside the premises. Most modern gas boilers are room sealed appliances.

Self-contained flats
The meaning within this guide relates to flats in single occupation with all amenities behind the front door.

Shared house
Where a group of people take out a joint tenancy agreement for the exclusive legal possession and use of a whole house including all bedrooms. Occupation is similar to that of a single family dwelling.

Significant findings
The actions to be taken as a result of a fire risk assessment and details of anyone especially at risk. Must be recorded in some cases (see Part 7).

Record of Significant Findings from the Fire Risk Assessment

Risk Assessment for:		Assessment undertaken by:	
Address:		Completed by:	
		Signature:	
Postcode:		Date:	
Floor unit (for large multi-unit properties)		Property type:	

Step 1: Identify fire hazards	
Sources of ignition:	
Sources of fuel:	

Step 2: People at risk:

Step 3: Evaluate, remove, reduce and protect from risk	
3.1 Evaluate the risk of the fire occurring	
3.2 Evaluate the risk to people from a fire starting at the premises	
3.3 Remove or reduce the hazards that may cause a fire	
3.4 Remove and reduce the remaining risks to people from a fire	

Assessment Review	
Next review date:	
Risk assessment completed by:	
Signature:	
Review outcome (where substantial changes have occurred a new record sheet should be used)	

Notes:

1. This risk assessment record of significant findings should refer to other plans, records or documents as necessary.
2. The information in this record should assist you to develop an emergency plan, co-ordinate measures with any other 'responsible persons' in the building, train any staff and inform residents.

Fire Safety in Houses in Multiple Occupation

Risk Assessment Form

Fire risk assessment for:

(Address) _____

_____Post Code _____

To ensure the adequacy of existing fire precautions within a house in multiple occupation, a risk assessment should be carried out by, or on behalf of, the licensee/prospective licensee to establish both the risk of the fire occurring and the risk to people in the event of fire. This checklist, or similar, may be used and is require to be submitted to Oadby and Wigston Borough Council before a licence can be issued. The landlord should retain a copy and the building should be checked on a regular basis using the checklist.

The answer to all questions should be **YES** or **NOT APPLICABLE** (N/A). If the answer to any question is **NO**, steps should immediately be taken to rectify the deficiencies or review the fire risk assessment.

General	YES	NO	N/A	COMMENTS
1. Have flammable and combustible materials been identified and minimised where possible?	☐	☐	☐	
2. Is the system of controlling the amount of flammable substances and combustible materials operating effectively?	☐	☐	☐	
3. Are all flammable substances and combustible materials stored safely?	☐	☐	☐	
4. Are heating appliances fixed in position at a safe distance from any combustible materials and suitably guarded?	☐	☐	☐	
5. Are all items of electrical equipment fitted with fuses of the correct rating?	☐	☐	☐	
6. Have fire prevention measures been brought to the attention of the residents?	☐	☐	☐	
7. Are lengths of flexible cable and multi-point adapters kept to a minimum?	☐	☐	☐	
8. Are cables run only where damage is unlikely and not under floor coverings or through doorways?	☐	☐	☐	

	YES	NO	N/A	COMMENTS
26. Are all vents and service ducts etc suitably protected, where appropriate, to prevent the spread of fire, heat or smoke?	☐	☐	☐	
Lighting				
27. Has the need for emergency escape lighting been considered?	☐	☐	☐	
28. Is the emergency escape lighting, in working order?	☐	☐	☐	
Fire Fighting				
29. Is there sufficient fire fighting equipment of the correct type?	☐	☐	☐	
30. Are portable fire extinguishers, fire blankets, etc, suitably located and available for use?	☐	☐	☐	
31. Have the portable fire extinguishers been serviced within the last year?	☐	☐	☐	
32. Is the fixed fire fighting installation in working order?	☐	☐	☐	
Fire Alarm				
33. Is the fire alarm system in working order?	☐	☐	☐	
34. Is the fire alarm tested weekly?	☐	☐	☐	
35. Can the alarm be raised without anyone being places at risk from fire?	☐	☐	☐	
36. Are the fire alarm call points unobstructed and clearly visible or suitably indicated?	☐	☐	☐	
37. Is the automatic fire detection system in working order?	☐	☐	☐	
Fire Instructions/Emergency Plan				
38. Are fire instructions clearly displayed through the premises?	☐	☐	☐	
39. Have you recorded the findings of the fire risk assessment?	☐	☐	☐	
40. Have steps been taken to plan what actions everyone should take if a fire starts?	☐	☐	☐	
41. Have these steps been brought to the attention of all residents?	☐	☐	☐	
42. Has a procedure been established to review the fire risk assessment periodically?	☐	☐	☐	

Signature ..... **Date** .....

Print Name .....

Please add any additional comments you may wish to make in this space: