

Fire Safety in Residential Blocks

Statutory obligations for freeholders, RMC directors and managing agents

Fire Safety in Residential Blocks

INTRODUCTION

Fire safety in residential blocks of flats is a critically important area of law and practice that has been significantly strengthened following the Grenfell Tower tragedy of June 2017. Freeholders, RMC directors and managing agents all have statutory duties to ensure that residential buildings are managed safely and that residents are protected from the risk of fire.

This guide provides an overview of the principal legal requirements relating to fire safety in residential blocks and the practical steps that responsible persons must take to comply.

THE RESPONSIBLE PERSON

Under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (as amended by the Fire Safety Act 2021 and Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022), the 'responsible person' for a residential building is the person who has control of the premises — typically the freeholder, RMC or managing agent.

The responsible person must carry out or commission a suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment of the building and implement appropriate fire safety measures based on its findings.

Fire Risk Assessments

WHAT IS A FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT?

A fire risk assessment (FRA) is a systematic evaluation of the premises to identify fire hazards, assess the risk to people, and determine what fire precautions are necessary. The FRA must be carried out by a competent person — for most residential blocks this means a qualified and experienced fire risk assessor.

The FRA must cover the common parts of the building including:

- Entrance halls, corridors and stairwells
- Communal lobbies and lift areas
- Plant rooms, bin stores and meter cupboards
- Car parks and external areas
- The structure and external fabric of the building (since the Fire Safety Act 2021)

HOW OFTEN SHOULD THE FRA BE REVIEWED?

The FRA must be reviewed regularly and whenever there is reason to suspect it is no longer valid — for example following significant alterations to the building, a fire incident, or a change in use of part of the premises. For most residential blocks, an annual review is considered good practice.

Key Fire Safety Requirements

Requirement	Detail
Fire detection	Automatic fire detection in common parts — interlinked where appropriate
Emergency lighting	Adequate emergency lighting on escape routes
Fire doors	Self-closing FD30S fire doors to all flat entrance doors and common areas
Signage	Fire action notices, escape route signs and fire extinguisher locations
Firefighting equipment	Appropriate extinguishers and hose reels in common areas
Evacuation plan	Written evacuation strategy — usually simultaneous or stay put depending on construction
Compartmentation	Maintenance of fire compartmentation — no breaches in walls, floors or ceilings
Cladding	Assessment and remediation of dangerous cladding (EWS1 requirements)

The Building Safety Act 2022

HIGHER-RISK BUILDINGS

The Building Safety Act 2022 introduced a new regulatory regime for 'higher-risk buildings' — residential buildings of 18 metres or more in height (or 7 or more storeys) containing at least two residential units.

For higher-risk buildings, the Principal Accountable Person (PAP) must:

- Register the building with the Building Safety Regulator
- Appoint an Accountable Person for each part of the building they do not own
- Assess and manage building safety risks
- Prepare and maintain a Safety Case Report
- Engage with residents through a Residents Engagement Strategy
- Maintain a Golden Thread of information about the building

FIRE SAFETY (ENGLAND) REGULATIONS 2022

From January 2023, the responsible person for all multi-occupied residential buildings with two or more sets of domestic premises must:

- Provide fire safety instructions to residents
- Provide information about the importance of fire doors to residents
- Carry out monthly checks of communal fire doors in higher-risk buildings
- Carry out quarterly checks of flat entrance fire doors in higher-risk buildings

HOW BERGASON CAN HELP

Bergason Property Services Limited manages fire safety compliance for all developments under our management, including commissioning FRAs, implementing action plans, maintaining fire door records, and ensuring full compliance with the Building Safety Act 2022. Contact us: 0121 384 1333 | info@bergason.co.uk