

Fire Safety

Background

There are many reasons why fire safety should be well managed in a charity. The financial costs of a fire have risen over 30% in the last 10 years. This also does not include potential costs against an organisation from enforcement or civil claims. A fire to your charity could seriously affect the organisations reputation and put people at risk.

In the UK the biggest cause of a fire is arson. Fires are also commonly caused by careless actions, misuse of or defective equipment.

Legislation

The relevant pieces of legislation in the UK for this topic are The [Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005](#) in England and Wales, The [Fire \(Scotland\) Act 2005](#) in Scotland and The [Fire Safety \(Northern Ireland\) Regulations 2010](#) in Northern Ireland.

One method of meeting the requirements of this legislation is through implementing the advice contained in British and European Standards. Some of the best and most practical advice however comes from the Department for Communities and Local Government who produced several [guidance documents](#) for different types of settings. These give a comprehensive, clear, step by step, approach of how to manage fire safety in a variety of settings, providing some clear examples to help explain specific situations.

Members of the Charities Safety Group via its website can also access some [practical fire safety resources](#), including template fire risk assessments.



Simulated office fire

Photo: BRE Group



Aftermath of fire in the 'Rose Park' care home

Photo: Herald Scotland



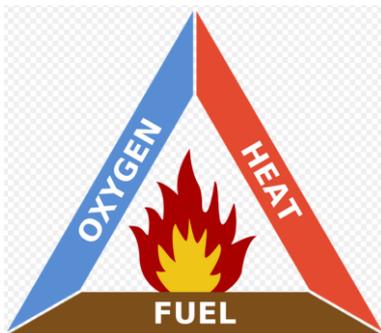
Key Requirements

To reduce fire safety risks it is essential that charities have in place and maintain a 'fire safety management system'. This includes the following non exhaustive items in the table below:

Key Requirement	What needs to be done
Fire safety policy	As part of the fire safety management system a fire safety policy should be created and the key points of this communicated to workers. This should show the aims, objectives and organisational arrangements for effectively managing fire safety.
Fire risk assessment	<p>A fire risk assessment is a process used to plan how to reduce the threat of fire and protect people. It should be carried out by a competent person and is a involves the following 5 steps:</p> <div data-bbox="528 701 1150 1346" data-label="Diagram"><pre>graph TD; A[1 - Identify fire hazards] --> B[2 - Identify people at risk]; B --> C[3 - Evaluate, remove, reduce and protect from risk]; C --> D[4 - Record, plan, inform, instruct and train]; D --> E[5 - Review];</pre></div> <p data-bbox="371 1559 600 1756">Specific attention should also be paid to vulnerable persons in this risk assessment.</p> <div data-bbox="644 1391 1310 1832" data-label="Image"></div> <p data-bbox="767 1861 1315 1890"><i>Aftermath of fire in the 'Rose Park' care home</i></p> <p data-bbox="1107 1912 1315 1942">Photo: Daily Mail</p>

Operational management of fire safety

There should be ongoing operational management of the hazards identified in the fire risk assessment. This is to keep the potential for harm to people in the building from a fire low. Particular regard should be made to keeping the 3 sides of the fire triangle separated i.e.



The Fire Triangle Illustration: Fireguard one

This management of hazards should include suitable ongoing checks, such as ensuring combustible items are correctly stored, escape routes are kept clear and that fire exit doors are able to be easily opened.

Fire evacuation procedures

An evacuation plan for should be created showing the actions to be taken in an emergency.

Where people are within a setting have additional needs, a 'Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan' should be completed, showing what extra assistance is needed to evacuate them safely.

Your building's evacuation plan(s) should also cover the evacuation of people with additional needs who could be an occasional visitor.

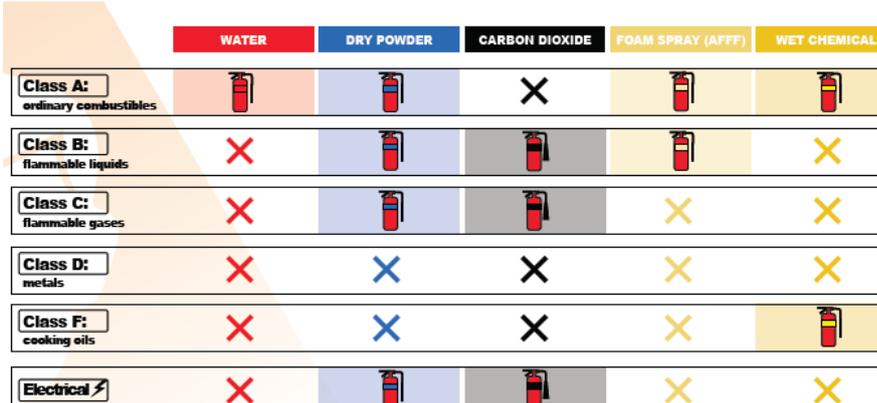
Where necessary due to the potential location(s) of people with additional needs in your building, additional equipment should be provided to ensure their safe evacuation, such as an 'evacuation chair'. Where provided, sufficient people should be trained on how to use this equipment and it should be maintained in line with the manufacturer's recommendations.



An evacuation chair

Evacuation procedures (or their salient parts) should be communicated to all staff, volunteers, visitors and contractors. This could be through a site induction, training, use of signs, fire action notices, etc., depending on the site or person receiving this information. They also need to be tested at least twice yearly by carrying out fire evacuation drills that involve a sufficient amount of your staff and volunteers.

Photo: Evac+Chair

	<p>Good fire evacuation procedures also relates to ensuring that any relevant protective measures needed for good escape are in place. This could include the provision of emergency lighting, adequate fire safety and escape route signage or good building design to prevent fire spread (e.g. fire doors and good compartmentation).</p>																																										
Means for raising the alarm and fighting fires	<p>All buildings should have a suitable way of raising the alarm in a fire, proportionate to the size, use and risk of the building.</p> <p>Adequate provision should be made for fighting fires, such as by providing fire extinguishers. These should be provided in response to the potential types of fire that could occur in your building.</p>  <table border="1" data-bbox="399 560 1276 963"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>WATER</th> <th>DRY POWDER</th> <th>CARBON DIOXIDE</th> <th>FOAM SPRAY (AFFF)</th> <th>WET CHEMICAL</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Class A: ordinary combustibles</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>✗</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Class B: flammable liquids</td> <td>✗</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>✗</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Class C: flammable gases</td> <td>✗</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>✗</td> <td>✗</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Class D: metals</td> <td>✗</td> <td>✗</td> <td>✗</td> <td>✗</td> <td>✗</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Class F: cooking oils</td> <td>✗</td> <td>✗</td> <td>✗</td> <td>✗</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Electrical</td> <td>✗</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>✗</td> <td>✗</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><i>Fire extinguisher suitability for different classes of fire</i></p> <p>Image: IHASCO</p>		WATER	DRY POWDER	CARBON DIOXIDE	FOAM SPRAY (AFFF)	WET CHEMICAL	Class A: ordinary combustibles			✗			Class B: flammable liquids	✗				✗	Class C: flammable gases	✗			✗	✗	Class D: metals	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	Class F: cooking oils	✗	✗	✗	✗		Electrical	✗			✗	✗
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Fire awareness training	<p>All employees and volunteers should receive sufficient induction training on fire safety. Those people with specific roles in a fire should receive more detailed training relevant to their additional duties. This training is generally refreshed as often as necessary, but good practice would be at least annually.</p>																																										
Inspection, maintenance and testing of fire equipment	<p>All items and equipment provided for fire safety (e.g. fire alarms, emergency lighting, fire fighting equipment, etc) needs to be under a suitable inspection, maintenance and testing regime to make sure it is good working order.</p>																																										

Unique Challenges

When considering how to manage fire safety effectively, there are some specific considerations needed based on typical charity settings, including:

- The increased likelihood of candles being used.
- Difficulties with communicating fire safety messages to volunteers and effectively controlling their actions.
- Difficulties with ensuring volunteers are made aware of evacuation arrangements and involved in fire drills.
- The increased likelihood of more vulnerable persons being present.
- The potential for fuels to accumulate, such as rags, clothing, donations or poor waste storage.