



Protection Cost of Living Toolkit



NFCC
National Fire
Chiefs Council

Steps to #StayFireSafe

Steps to #StayFireSafe

As part of the **Stay Fire Safe** campaign, NFCC has produced this toolkit to support Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) Protection teams in engaging with local businesses and responsible persons on potential fire risks associated with the rising cost of living.

This toolkit includes:

- **Key messages**
- **Frequently asked questions (FAQs)**
- **Suggested social media posts and assets**
- **Template press release**
- **Links and resources**

**Download the
toolkit resources
and assets here**



The rising cost of living: What impact might it have on businesses?

The increasing price of goods, energy, and transportation is having a significant impact across the UK. Businesses are facing higher operating costs from fuel and transportation costs to pressure to increase wages in response to the rate of inflation. Coupled with this, customer spending is decreasing as households struggle financially and the number of people in fuel poverty is expected to grow significantly this winter.

These developments may lead business owners to try and cut costs in an attempt to remain in business. Building owners and responsible persons may look to make changes to how their premises is utilised to make savings in the face of the increasing price of energy and goods. These changes could include reducing the number of on-site staff, using alternative means of heating, or changing how areas of the premises are used.

Any cost cutting measures have the potential to exaggerate and/or introduce new fire risks, as well as bringing new people and businesses into the at-risk groups. Even during these challenging times, people responsible for buildings must meet their legal requirements for fire safety. The requirements of The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (as amended by the Fire Safety Act 2021) (FSO) still apply, and the [Fire Safety \(England\) Regulations 2022](#) extend the duties imposed on responsible persons by the FSO. The new Regulations come into force in England on 23 January 2023. They make it a requirement in law for responsible persons of high-rise blocks of flats to provide

information to FRSs to assist them in planning for, and responding to, an incident in their building. The regulations will also require responsible persons in multi-occupied residential buildings, which are high-rise buildings, as well as those above 11 metres in height, to provide additional safety measures.

In all multi-occupied residential buildings, the regulations require responsible persons to provide residents with fire safety instructions and information on the importance of fire doors. The regulations apply to existing buildings, and requirements for new buildings may be different.

The approach undertaken by FRSs to carry out regulatory activities should be based on risk. It is recommended that FRSs engage with premises as early as possible to offer advice to reduce the need for more formal enforcement action later.

We have identified the following issues as key causes for concern on which Protection teams should consider engaging with local businesses and responsible persons. Small and medium size businesses may be at particular risk, so FRSs may wish to focus communications and engagement with these.

This toolkit focuses on businesses and people responsible for buildings, but the rise in living costs is having an impact across society. FRSs are encouraged to consider the issue holistically and Protection teams may find our [Prevention toolkit](#) a useful resource.

The potential scale of the issue

According to [Experian](#), [Government figures](#) show that in August 2022 alone, almost 2000 registered businesses went bust in England and Wales. This is an increase of 43% on the same period last year – making it the third highest month for insolvency since January 2019 – and an increase of 6% on the previous month. This suggests that the figures could mark the beginning of an upwards trend that may only increase as winter hits and bills increase.

This isn't just a consumer issue. Increasing costs in energy, fuel and supplies is also challenging UK small businesses, many of whom will have already been hit hard by the impact of the pandemic.

Experian

The 1,933 insolvencies take the total number of companies going out of business to 20,000 in 2022 so far – an increase of 72% since 2021. It is a difficult time that has left a many business owners questioning their futures.

In fact, a recent survey by Nucleus Commercial Finance found that almost a quarter of UK business leaders (23%) fear their company will not survive the financial year due to the increasing cost of living, and almost three quarters (72%) of owners feel that it is a cause for concern for the survival of their business.

How to engage with businesses on the cost of living

We acknowledge that these are challenging times, so the tone of our communications is important. It helps to be mindful of the context, recognising the potential stress and pressures that business owners face, and understanding their concerns for cost saving.

However, communications should be underpinned by the core message that business owners and responsible persons must meet legal requirements and comply with the FSO (and enforcement action will be taken if necessary). The focus should be on raising awareness of their legal responsibilities and the potential new risks associated with the rise in cost of living that they need to factor in.

Communications should provide clear information on the actions that should be taken, and the rationale behind it, as well as signposting to further advice and guidance.

Key messages: What businesses and responsible persons need to know

Fire risk assessments must be reviewed following any changes to premises, whether temporary or permanent

Increasing living costs and financial hardship may lead business owners to make changes to their premises that could alter the fire safety arrangements in place. Any change, whether temporary or permanent, will require a review of the premises' fire risk assessment. Business owners and responsible persons must meet legal requirements and comply with the FSO.



Fire risk assessments must be reviewed following any changes to your premises

They should take proactive steps to ensure their fire risk assessment is current to prevent enforcement action. However, the FSO's primary concern is with life safety and enforcement action will be taken if necessary.

Responsible persons should be reminded to seek advice from a competent fire risk assessor if necessary. You can [find a fire risk assessor via the NFCC website](#).

It may be advisable for the responsible persons to consult with their insurers when considering risk assessment and mitigation. It should be noted that the insurer's role is not to determine compliance with the FSO. Some of the areas to consider (detailed further below) include:

- Where staffing and occupant levels have changed
- Where parts of the premises are no longer being used, or are being used differently
- Use of alternative heating arrangements
- Reduced energy supply
- Servicing, testing and maintenance
- Sleeping on commercial premises
- Providing facilities and 'warm spaces'

Altering the use of premises

Building owners and responsible persons may consider altering how their premises are used. For example, they may decide to temporarily close off areas of the premises to reduce operating costs or diversify their operations to make best use of their premises. Owners may also consider opening their premises as 'warm spaces' for staff or members of the wider community to use, who are struggling with the rise in living costs.



Any changes introduced will result in a need to review the premises fire risk assessment. Consideration should be given to the following:

- Where parts of the premises are not being used, or are being used differently, it may affect the means of providing early warning of fire and the means of escape. For example, working and operating practices may have changed due to rearrangement of layouts.
- Any control measures applied should not adversely affect fire safety measures e.g. obstructing means of escape, fire escape signage, emergency escape lighting, fire detection and alarm systems, or sprinkler or suppressions systems.
- Ensuring any changes impacting the exterior of any premises (e.g. temporary structures), do not obstruct means of escape or compromise assembly points. If the existing means of escape or assembly point is compromised, suitable alternative arrangements should be in place.
- Where external access is altered, this must not compromise access for firefighting appliances or interfere with firefighting activities.
- Where a means of escape is shared with another premises, it must not be affected by closure of any part of either premises.
- Reviewing storage and stock levels e.g. the amount and positioning of stock.
- Staff training – if staff are working in unfamiliar areas, or fire safety measures have been altered, then staff should be provided with appropriate fire safety training.
- A fire detection and alarm system may serve multiple premises or businesses (e.g. multi-occupied buildings, some of which may still be operating) it should be ensured that the system still provides the required level of cover to all areas. Arrangements should also be put in place to access closed areas of the building if maintenance is required.

- If a building, or part of a building, is closed and may be used for storage only:
 - It is important to reduce the risk of arson (see below)
 - Internal fire protection measures – such as keeping fire doors closed and in good order, as these provide vital protection in event of fire
- The maintenance and testing of the fire detection and alarm system should be continued (see below).
- Businesses may have less capacity to deliver, or have a reduced demand for their products or services, (e.g. food businesses may operate on a takeaway basis only). As a result, more materials or stock may need to be stored on site than would normally be the case. This could result in storage being piled so high that it blocks emergency escape lighting, as well as escape routes. This may also result in a higher fire loading than fire safety systems such as sprinkler systems are designed for.
- In addition, there may be a temptation to use areas for storage that are not appropriate, such as means of escape. The fire risk assessment should determine the level of risk resulting from the changes and any mitigation measures e.g. more frequent deliveries/collections or the use of other sites to provide storage.

Reduction in staffing

If the number of staff is reduced, whether it be due to financial reasons or business requirements, responsible persons should review their premises' fire risk assessment to ensure it reflects the added risk this reduction may pose.



If businesses are operating with fewer staff, this could mean that current processes may no longer be able to be carried out safely, increasing the risk of fire. Similarly, a reduction in staff may result in employees not being able to successfully carry out evacuations and emergency procedures, such as in-house fire response or fire warden duties.

The FSO imposes a general duty of fire safety care in respect of “relevant persons”. This includes anyone lawfully on the premises (and anyone in the immediate vicinity of the premises who could be at risk from a fire in the premises).

Employers should continue to undertake and review Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) and Generic Emergency Evacuation Plans (GEEPs) for relevant persons. Procedures should be reviewed so that they accurately reflect the staff available. Such reviews must carefully weigh the risks from fire and the ability of such businesses to operate safely.

If there is no longer enough staff to carry out the evacuation strategy for the premises safely, the fire risk assessment will need to be reviewed to ensure that the premises can continue to operate safely. Where staff may be working in unfamiliar environments, employers/businesses must ensure that they continue to provide appropriate staff training. This is sometimes overlooked where employees of the same company come to work at a different site. Responsible persons should be able to show that all personnel (permanent or temporary) are aware of what to do in case of fire. They should also test their emergency procedures, particularly after staffing changes.

There may also be areas of the building where the presence of staff can no longer be relied upon to raise the alarm in the event of fire. Therefore, the means of detecting fire and raising the alarm will need to be re-assessed. It is also important to ensure that routine testing and maintenance of fire protection measures continues, especially where undertaken by internal staff.

Using alternative and potentially unfamiliar heating

Businesses (especially small to medium sized) may avoid using central heating and look to use portable heaters and small open fires in the spaces they use. Portable heaters are not restricted to electric heaters and can present additional risks so must be considered.

Portable heaters

- Many people will be using devices that may not have been used for several years, or may have been stored away for emergencies, such as when central heating has needed repair.
- Check that your heater is not subject to a product recall or repair and has a valid PAT check.
- Heaters must not be placed where they will block an escape route or have the potential risk to cause a fire, e.g. under desks, or congested spaces.
- Plug electric heaters into a wall socket not an extension lead, as they can easily be overloaded and cause fires. They must only be moved when they have been switched off and have cooled down.

- Only use a heater in rooms they are designed to be used in. Standard portable heaters (gas and electric) must not be used in shower or bathrooms. Portable gas heaters must not be used in rooms used for sleeping and should only be used in well ventilated rooms.
- Never install, repair or service appliances yourself. Make sure anyone who does is registered with the Gas Safe Register (for gas appliances), the Heating Equipment Testing and Approval Scheme (HETAS) (for solid fuel appliances), or the Oil Firing Technical Association (OFTEC) (for oil appliances), or a qualified electrician for electric heaters.
- Make sure gas, and LPG (Liquefied Petroleum Gas) cylinders are stored safely outside in a secure location and out of direct sunlight. Make sure you change cylinders for portable heaters in a well-ventilated place and away from sources of heat and ignition.
- Second-hand heaters should be avoided. If you need to buy one, however, check it closely for damage and if in any doubt avoid it. Ensure it is made by a manufacturer you recognise and if the seller cannot provide the instruction manual look online and download a copy. This will ensure you know how to use the heater correctly and can reduce the risk of fire.

Outdoor heaters

Outdoor heaters must not be used indoors. They can produce a lot of heat which would be a fire risk in the confined space of a premises. They also produce carbon monoxide which can be fatal.



Reduced energy supply

Business owners may introduce a policy to reduce or limit energy usage. This may have an impact on fire safety measures operating effectively, such as automatic fire detection systems, emergency lighting, automatic door hold open devices, smoke control devices and automatic ventilation systems, sprinklers systems.

There may also be periods of enforced power cuts locally and nationally, so checks will be required to ensure fire safety systems have restarted correctly and are operating as they should. In addition to checking fire safety systems, businesses should ensure that

other equipment that stops during power cuts restarts safely and does not pose a fire risk when doing so, especially if restarting whilst unsupervised. For example, power cuts could result in an increased demand on escape lighting back-up systems. This may also affect the use of medical equipment and storage of some medicines (e.g. in care homes, GP surgeries, hospitals, and day care facilities).

Second-life batteries

As the market for battery powered devices grows through societal demand, so too will the supply of second-life batteries (batteries repurposed from their original intended use), particularly those larger batteries associated with modes of transport. These batteries have a residual value, and their reuse can provide the most attractive value in markets where there is demand for batteries, particularly stationary (domestic and commercial) energy-storage applications.

FRSs should be aware of the potential use of second life batteries, that can be relatively easy to obtain, being used in energy storage applications, where they may not be appropriate for use or installed by a competent electrician. You can read more about the concerns around second-life batteries on the [Union of Concerned Scientists website](#).

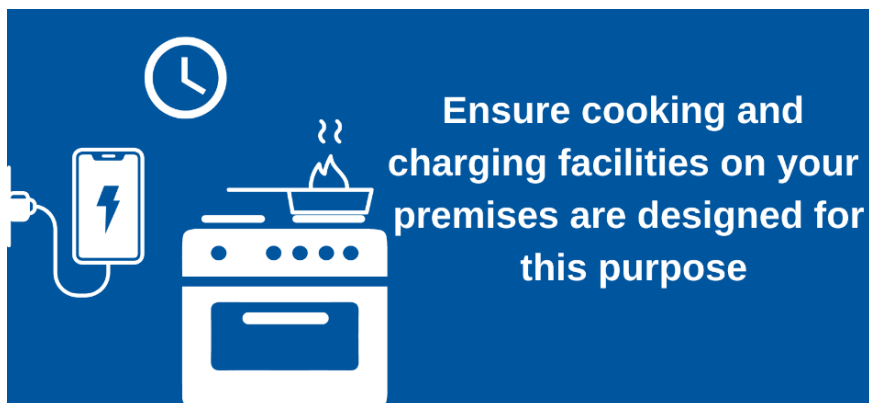
Providing facilities and warm spaces

Recognising the pressures employees and others are facing, business owners may wish to change how their premises is used by allowing employees and/or people in financial hardship to use the heat/energy facilities on the premises. The fire risk assessment should be reviewed in light of any changes to provision.

Sleeping on commercial premises

Owners of small businesses may be tempted to sleep on their own premises or offer temporary accommodation to employees. Introducing a sleeping risk into a premises not designed for this should be strongly discouraged.

Business owners should also ensure that unauthorised sleeping does not occur on the premises. For example, staff members who have not sought permission, or contract cleaning staff staying in the last premises on their out of hours cleaning schedule.



Cooking and charging facilities

Businesses may adopt alternative ways of providing welfare facilities for staff, including cooking/food warming provisions and electric charging facilities. Only appliances designed for this purpose should be used.

Camping equipment and BBQs (including disposable ones) should only be used in outdoor spaces appropriate for their use (i.e. not roofs and balconies) and should not be used to heat premises. Any changes to the provision of cooking facilities should be reflected in the fire risk assessment.

Servicing, testing and maintenance

It is the responsibility of the responsible person and/or duty holder to ensure they are testing and maintaining all fire safety measures to maintain a safe premises.

If a premises is empty, fire safety systems for the protection of life may not be required to be maintained as the FSO's primary concern is with life safety. If there is no one on or in the immediate vicinity of the premises who may be reliant on those fire safety measures (e.g. in sleeping accommodation above a premises), then the FSO allows a risk-based approach to testing and maintenance where it remains vacant. If doubt exists advice must be sought from a competent person.

Where a premises is in part use, the responsible person must ensure a fire safety system for the protection of life is fully checked by a competent person(s) as soon as possible when vacant areas are planned to be brought back into use. The responsible person must ensure the system is tested before occupation.

The routine testing and maintenance of all fire safety measures, including in any areas that may temporarily be out of use as a cost saving measure, is essential in keeping people safe to ensure they operate and perform as required in event of fire.

Responsible persons should review their premises fire risk assessment and inform their insurers (as this could invalidate their insurance) prior to the cessation of testing and maintenance of fire safety systems to ensure this does not cause additional risks. If any doubt exists as to the purpose of any fire safety system that may not be maintained, advice should be sought from a competent person and/or their local FRS. This should be prioritised based on the risks identified by the responsible person and their contractors, e.g. the risk of fire in a shop that is now closed affecting the residents in the flat above.

Crime prevention

Energy theft: Hotwiring or bypassing electrical and gas supplies

With the rise in energy bills, business and building owners should be aware of the potential risk of energy theft, in the form of meter tampering, hotwiring or bypassing electrical and gas supplies undertaken by others.

NFCC will be working with Crimestoppers, as we anticipate that the rising cost of living could see an increase in people attempting to bypass both gas and electric meters. The campaign and resources to support this can be found on our dedicated campaign website [Stay Energy Safe](#).

Resources include content to highlight the dangers of this behaviour. We encourage usage of this in messaging to discourage people from attempting it. Resources also include information for tenants to spot the signs of bypassing by landlords.

- [Commercial energy theft](#)
- [Consequences of not reporting energy theft](#)
- [How to spot meter tampering or energy theft](#)

FRS staff can anonymously report suspected tampered meter by calling 0800 023 2777.



Arson

Business owners should be mindful of the risk of deliberate fires and maintain good practice to reduce the risk of arson on their commercial premises. This includes removing any external sources of fuel or ignition, such as waste, which could cause fire spread. Ensuring gates and fences are closed and locked, as well as having working CCTV, security systems, and external lighting may help to prevent anti-social behaviour which can lead to arson. Following any changes to how and where stock is stored, businesses should ensure that entrances and exits are clear at all times.

A vigilant workforce can protect a business, so business owners might want to consider any impact resulting from a reduction in onsite staffing. They should also remember to change security or access codes regularly, especially when staff leave the organisation.

CrimeStoppers can be contacted on 0800 555 111.

Further information can be found in the NFCC guide on [Safer Business: Information and advice to reduce deliberate fires](#).

Sleeping arrangements and supported accommodation

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (as amended by the Fire Safety Act 2021) places a legal requirement upon employers and persons with responsibility for premises, including residential buildings. The [Fire Safety \(England\) Regulations 2022](#) extend the duties imposed on responsible persons by the FSO. The Regulations come into force on 23 January 2023 and make it a requirement in law for responsible persons of high-rise blocks of flats to provide information FRSs to assist them in planning for, and responding to, an incident in their building. The Regulations will also require responsible persons in multi-occupied residential buildings, which are high-rise buildings, as well as those above 11 metres in height, to provide additional safety measures.

These responsibilities and safety measures are designed to protect life regardless of fire service intervention. It is, therefore, essential to ensure that all existing fire safety provisions are in place and effective.

Responsible persons for premises should consider reviewing their fire risk assessment and should check their existing fire safety measures are in place and working effectively. Following a review of the assessment of risk, they should make any necessary adjustments and ensure that residents are aware of the risk reduction measures for the premises and the actions they should take in the event of fire.

Vulnerable people, supported living and care homes

FRSs can expect to see a rise in the number of people, households, and businesses who we would define as being vulnerable in the event of a fire, and an increase in behaviours that can increase the risk of fire. Outcomes might include increases in building fires, associated fire injuries, and fire fatalities.

Employers should continue to undertake and review their Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) and Generic Emergency Evacuation Plans (GEEPs) for relevant persons. This is particularly crucial in the care industry where residents may rely on staff to instigate evacuation measures. Procedures should be reviewed so that they accurately reflect the staff available. Such reviews must carefully weigh the risks from fire and the ability of such businesses to operate safely. In care homes, a review of the fire risk assessment may find that a reduction in the number of staff may affect the number of residents that are able to occupy the premises safely.

If there are no longer enough staff to carry out the evacuation strategy for the premises safely, it will need to be reviewed as a matter of priority, which may lead to the need to provide alternative provisions for care where a business is no longer able to ensure the safety of relevant persons. Where staff may be working in unfamiliar environments, employers must ensure that they continue to provide appropriate staff training. This is sometimes overlooked where employees of the same company come to work at a different site. Responsible persons should be able to show that all personnel (permanent or temporary) are aware of what to do in case of fire. They should also test their emergency procedures, particularly after staffing changes.

Residential buildings and sleeping accommodation

Responsible persons of residential buildings and sleeping accommodation also need to be aware of their duties to ensure that appropriate gas safety checks and electrical safety checks are in place and are suitable for their premises and its use. Residents and tenants should be informed of fire risks and fire safety measures in place – as well as encouraged to have PCFRA and Safe and Well visits. Protection teams should liaise with Prevention colleagues and housing providers to ensure a joined-up approach.

Residents

Residents should contact their responsible person to seek advice on the actions they should take to reduce risk and what to do in the event of a fire in their building. Protection teams may wish to share NFCC's [Prevention cost of living toolkit leaflet](#) with responsible persons to distribute to residents.

At home

Many businesses owners and their employees, contractors, and occupants (e.g. residents, students, community groups, or visitors) will be struggling with the impact of rising living costs. Further details of how to prevent fires in the home and stay safe can be found in our [Prevention cost of living toolkit](#). Protection teams are encouraged to work closely with Prevention teams where there is crossover.

The online [Home Fire Safety Check tool](#) can be found on the NFCC website.



The impact on FRS staff

It is important to remember that rising living costs will affect us all in some way. We encourage FRSs to ensure staff are signposted to available support within their own service/organisation, such as occupational health, welfare, employee assistance programmes, and any other internal support they have available. Some of the messages in our Prevention toolkit may be appropriate for some FRS staff.

Templates and assets

Template press release

[FRS] urges local businesses to take steps to 'Stay Fire Safe' this winter

[FRS] is urging local business and building owners to take steps to protect themselves, their employees, and visitors from the risk of fire this winter.

[FRS] is supporting the National Fire Chiefs Council's (NFCC) Stay Fire Safe campaign to make business and building owners aware of their fire safety responsibilities and to ensure staff have information to help prevent and respond to fires in the workplace. The call comes following concerns that the rising cost of living will mean that business owners may look to alternative ways of heating and lighting premises in a bid to cut the cost of rising bills.

[FRS] is advising local businesses to review their fire risk assessment if any changes are made to their premises and how it is used.

[FRS spokesperson] said, "Many local businesses could be impacted by the rising cost of living. Fire and rescue services are committed to helping businesses reduce the risk of fire in the workplace and be compliant with fire safety law.

"To remain in business, owners may look to reduce staffing levels, leave buildings unoccupied, or change where and how they store stock, and how they heat and light their premises. All of these changes can increase the risk of fire, so it's important to review your Fire Risk Assessment and put in place suitable measures to ensure it reflect any changes."

There's plenty of advice and support for businesses from **[FRS]** so we encourage anyone that they check out the information on our website or get in touch with us.

- ENDS -

Notes:

[Link to Stay Fire Safe Protection campaign page on your website and/or NFCC website]

Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

What can I do to reduce the risk of fire at my business/workplace?

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (as amended by the Fire Safety Act 2021) (FSO) and the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 (which come into force on 23 January 2023) place a legal requirement upon employers and persons with responsibility for premises. These responsibilities and safety measures are designed to protect life regardless of fire service intervention. It is, therefore, essential to ensure that all existing fire safety provisions are in place and effective.

To help small businesses understand your legal duties for fire safety, NFCC has developed a free, interactive [Business Fire Safety Awareness Tool](#).

Directors, Senior Managers and Health & Safety Managers will want to ensure the following are maintained and considered:

- Check business continuity plans
- Review their existing fire risk assessment
- Ensure any measures they take are in place, working and effective
- Check staff are fully aware of fire and evacuation procedures
- Take appropriate steps to enhance staff vigilance
- Review arrangements for calling the emergency services
- The need for additional staffing or patrols.

I'm making changes to my premises – what actions am I required to take?

Any changes made to your premises (such as closing off areas, using areas for storage, or altering the layout) require your fire risk assessment to be reviewed. The fire risk assessment should determine the level of risk resulting from the changes and any mitigation measures e.g. more frequent deliveries/collections, or the use of other sites to provide storage.

The rise in living costs means I need to reduce the number of staff. What fire protection considerations do I need to factor in?

Responsible persons should ensure that the premises' fire risk assessment reflects the added risk a reduction in staff poses. Where businesses are operating with fewer staff, this could mean that current processes may no longer be able to be carried out safely,

increasing the risk of fire. Similarly, a reduction in staff may result in employees not being able to successfully carry out evacuations and emergency procedures, such as in-house fire response or fire warden duties.

Employers should continue to undertake and review their Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) and Generic Emergency Evacuation Plans (GEEPs) for relevant persons. Procedures should be reviewed so that they accurately reflect the staff available. Such reviews must carefully weigh the risks from fire and the ability of such businesses to operate safely.

I'm considering changing how I heat my premises to save money due to rising energy bills – what do I need to be aware of to protect my premises?

Businesses, especially small to medium sized ones, may avoid using central heating and look to use portable heaters and small open fires in the spaces they use. Portable heaters are not restricted to electric heaters and can present additional risks so must be considered.

Portable heaters

- People may use devices that have not been used for several years, or have had stored away for emergencies, such as when central heating has needed repair. Check that your heater is not subject to a product recall or repair.
- Heaters must not be placed where they will block an escape route or have the potential risk to cause a fire, e.g. under desks, or congested spaces.
- Plug electric heaters into a wall socket not an extension lead, as they can easily be overloaded and cause fires. They must only be moved when they have been switched off and have cooled down.
- Only use a heater in rooms they are designed to be used in. Standard portable heaters (gas and electric) must not be used in shower or bathrooms. Portable gas heaters must not be used in rooms used for sleeping and should only be used in well ventilated rooms.
- Never install, repair, or service appliances yourself. Make sure anyone who does so is registered with the Gas Safe Register (for gas appliances), the Heating Equipment Testing and Approval Scheme (HETAS) (for solid fuel appliances), or the Oil Firing Technical Association (OFTEC) (for oil appliances), or a qualified electrician for electric heaters.
- Make sure gas, paraffin, and LPG (Liquefied Petroleum Gas) cylinders are stored safely outside in a secure location and out of direct sunlight. Make sure you change cylinders for portable heaters in a well-ventilated place and away from sources of heat and ignition.

- Second-hand heaters should be avoided. If you need to buy one, however, check it closely for damage and if in any doubt avoid it. Make sure it is made by a manufacturer you recognise and if the seller cannot provide the instruction manual look online and download a copy. This will ensure you know how to use the heater correctly and can reduce the risk of fire.

Outdoor heaters

- Outdoor heaters must not be used indoors. They can produce a lot of heat which would be a fire risk in the confined space of a premises, but they also produce carbon monoxide which can be fatal.

I'm considering reducing or limiting energy use on my premises to save money due to rising energy bills – what do I need to be aware of?

Introducing a policy to reduce or limit energy usage may have an impact on your fire safety measures operating effectively. For example, the operation of automatic fire detection systems, emergency lighting, automatic door hold-open devices, smoke control devices and automatic ventilation systems, and sprinklers systems could be affected.

Ensure that suitable back-up systems, such as battery backup systems, are in safely place to support the reduction of energy usage. Ensure checks are in place so that fire safety systems have restarted correctly and are operating as they should.

In addition to checking fire safety systems, you ensure that other equipment that stops during power cuts restarts safely and does not pose a fire risk when doing so, especially if restarting whilst unsupervised. This may also affect the use of medical equipment and storage of some medicines (e.g. in care homes, GP surgeries, hospitals, or day care facilities).

I've made changes to my storage/stock handling – how can I reduce the risk of fire?

Following any changes to how and where stock is stored, businesses should ensure that entrances and exits are clear at all times. Increased stock levels may result in a higher fire loading, which fire safety systems (such as sprinkler systems) may not be designed for. Any change to your premises, including how and where stock is handled and stored will require the fire risk assessment to be reviewed.

What could power cuts or reduced any supply mean for my fire safety systems?

In case of any power cuts locally and nationally, back-up measures must be put in place, as well as checks to ensure fire safety systems have restarted correctly and are operating as they should. In addition to checking fire safety systems, businesses are encouraged to ensure that other equipment that stops during power cuts restarts safely and does not pose a fire risk when doing so, especially if restarting whilst unsupervised. This may also affect the use of medical equipment and storage of some medicines (e.g. in care homes, GP surgeries, hospitals, or day care facilities).

What can responsible persons do to reduce the risk of fire in their residential buildings?

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (as amended by the Fire Safety Act 2021) and the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 (which come into force on 23 January 2023) place a legal requirement upon employers and persons with responsibility for premises, including residential buildings. These responsibilities and safety measures are designed to protect life regardless of fire service intervention. It is, therefore, essential to ensure that all existing fire safety provisions are in place and effective.

Responsible persons for premises may wish to consider reviewing their fire risk assessment and should check their existing fire precautions are in place and working effectively. Following a review of the assessment of risk, they should make any necessary adjustments and ensure that through their resident engagement strategy that residents are aware of the risk reduction measures for the premises and the actions they should take in the event of fire.

What can residents do to reduce the risk of fire in their residential building?

Following a review of the assessment of risk, responsible persons should make any necessary adjustments and ensure that residents are aware of the risk reduction measures for the premises and the actions they should take in the event of fire.

Residents should consider the risk of using alternative heating sources and discuss any concerns regarding staying warm etc with their landlord to ensure safe practices are in place. Residents should contact their responsible person to seek advice on the actions they should take to reduce risk and what to do in the event of a fire in their building. Residents may wish to read our [Prevention cost of living toolkit leaflet](#).

What steps can I take to prevent energy theft/meter tampering on my premises?

Business and building owners should be aware of the potential for hotwiring or bypassing electrical and gas supplies undertaken by others. You can find information and resources on the dedicated [Stay Energy Safe](#) campaign website.

Why should I be cautious of using second-life batteries for vehicles and energy storage applications?

Although second-life batteries, particularly those used in vehicles and energy-storage applications, can be relatively easy to obtain [there are concerns](#) that they may not be appropriate for use, particularly where not installed by a competent electrician.

What are the requirements for servicing, testing, and maintenance in areas of my premises which are currently out of use?

It is the responsibility of the responsible person and/or the duty holder to ensure they are testing and maintaining all fire safety measures to maintain a safe premises. If there is no one on, or in the immediate vicinity, of the premises who may be reliant on your fire safety measures (e.g. in accommodation above a premises), the FSO allows a risk-based approach to testing and maintenance. If doubt exists advice must be sought from a competent person.

What are the requirements for servicing, testing, and maintenance in areas of my premises which are only partly being used?

If your premises is in part use, the responsible person must ensure any fire safety systems for the protection of life are fully checked by a competent person as soon as possible when vacant areas are planned to be brought back into use, and ensure they are tested before occupation.

The routine testing and maintenance of all fire safety measures, to ensure they operate and perform as required in event of fire, is essential in keeping people safe. This includes in any areas that may temporarily be out of use as a cost saving measure.

You should review your premises fire risk assessment prior to the cessation of testing and maintenance of fire safety systems to ensure this does not cause additional risks. If any doubt exists as to the purpose of any fire safety system that may not be maintained advice should be sought from a competent person and/or your local fire and rescue service.

Can I permit staff to sleep on my business premises?

We strongly discourage business owners from introducing a sleeping risk to a premises by permitting anyone to sleep in a premises that is not designed to provide sleeping accommodation. Business owners should be mindful to prevent unauthorised sleeping on the premises, such as employees who have not requested permission, or contract cleaning staff.

I want to support staff by providing cooking and food warming facilities – what should I put in place to ensure this can be done safely?

Make sure that only appliances designed for this purpose are used. Camping equipment and BBQs (including disposable ones) should only be used in outdoor spaces appropriate for their use (i.e. not roofs and balconies) and should not be used to heat premises. Ensure that any changes to the provision of cooking facilities are reflected in the premises' fire risk assessment.

I have a different question, where can I find out more?

You can find out more about business fire safety on [the NFCC website](#). Please contact [\[insert FRS details\]](#) if you have any questions.

Social media posts and assets

Has the rise in cost of living led you to make change to your business premises or staffing? Make sure your fire risk assessment up-to-date and #StayFireSafe

Energy theft is not a victimless crime. Protect your business from the dangers of meter tampering #StayFireSafe <https://youtu.be/umNsU2b-47m>

If you've had to change the way you use your business premises, you should review escape routes in case of a fire #StayFireSafe

As a local business, you can access our free, interactive [Business Fire Safety Awareness Tool](#) to help understand your legal duties for fire safety #StayFireSafe

If using portable heaters in your workplace, check they are still in good working order and not subject to a product recall. <https://www.gov.uk/product-safety-alerts-reports-recalls> #StayFireSafe



Links and resources

- [NFCC Prevention Cost of Living Toolkit](#)
- [NFCC Prevention Cost of Living Leaflet](#)
- [Online Home Fire Safety Check](#)
- [Stay Energy Safe](#)
- [Fire Safety Regulations \(England\) and Fire Safety Act 2021](#)
- [Business Fire Safety Awareness Tool](#)
- [Citizens Advice – Cost of living support](#)
- [Product Safety Alerts, Reports and Recalls](#)
- [Electrical Safety First – Saving money safely](#)
- [Government Help for Households cost of living support website](#)
- [Safer Business: Information and advice to reduce deliberate fires](#)

Download the resources and assets here

