



Property A-Z

This guide has information on issues you may need to know about if you're managing property used for Girlguiding activities.

We've used the term 'property manager or management group' to refer to the person or team of people the owners of a site have appointed to manage it. For smaller properties, this responsibility may fall on just 1 volunteer. For larger properties, a manager employed by the management group may have responsibility. We use 'property' to refer to any building, campsite or other premises.

Some sections may not apply to your property. Equally, the guide might not cover some items of equipment or issues relating to your premises. However, we hope it gives you the information you need on the majority of issues you'll face and that your property risk assessment might include.

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Accident and incident reporting

You should keep a record of all the accidents and incidents that happen on your property, so you can identify any trends which may help you reduce accidents in the future. Consider [General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\) issues](#) when you're keeping records and make sure you keep data secure. Think about what you could do differently, so accidents/incidents don't happen again.

If an accident or incident does happen on your property, it's important to report it properly.

You must report the following incidents to Girlguiding headquarters, together with details of the investigation and any action taken to stop it happening again:

- Accidents/incidents caused by the property
- Damage to the property
- Potential insurance claims
- Incidents involving aggression from a Girlguiding member or volunteer

Useful documents

[Emergency file](#)

[Accident notification form](#)

Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) 2013

In some circumstances it may be necessary to report accidents or injuries to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

If you employ staff, you must report incidents arising out of work activity that cause a death, serious injury or more than seven days off work.

You only need to report incidents/accidents involving volunteers and users of the property where they arose from a work-related activity and:

- The incident resulted in a fatality

- The injured person was taken directly from the scene of the incident to hospital for treatment

You can find out more on [HSE's webpage about RIDDOR](#).

Some examples of incidents that must be reported would be:

- A volunteer at the property amputates their finger while clearing debris from the blades of a mower. They're taken directly to hospital for treatment.
- A volunteer helping at a fundraising event run by a charity (which has employees) breaks their foot when struck by a heavy falling object and is taken to hospital.
- A volunteer dies after falling from height while doing roof maintenance work on behalf of a property management group.
- A volunteer switches on the light at the hall they help out at and gets an electric shock from the switch that causes them to go to hospital.

An example of what's not reportable would be:

- A child playing a game in a hall tripping over another child's foot, falling, breaking their wrist and needing hospital treatment. This isn't reportable as it's not work-related. You would need to report it if the child fell over equipment left by contractors doing maintenance in the building.

Asbestos

Asbestos was used in buildings for many years. It was banned in 1999 when it was confirmed that it can cause serious health problems for people heavily exposed to it, including cancer. Asbestos is a mineral made up of fine fibres that are resistant to heat, fire and many chemicals, which is why it was used so much. It can, for example, be found in wall panels, roofing materials, floor tiles, Artex, gaskets including sink gaskets, and insulation, including around pipework.

Any property built before 2000 should have an appropriate asbestos survey in place. Buildings can be 'green – no asbestos present', 'amber – possibility that due to age, asbestos may be present, but none detected by survey' and 'red – asbestos is present'.

The duty to manage asbestos is detailed in regulation 4 of the [Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012](#). These regulations are for people who manage non-domestic premises, and have responsibility for protecting others who work in or use these premises.

An asbestos survey will help you:

1. Find out whether the premises contain asbestos, and, if so, where it is and what condition it's in. **If in doubt, materials must be presumed to contain asbestos**
2. Assess the risk from any asbestos in the premises
3. Make a plan to manage that risk and act on it

For smaller premises it's not always necessary to use an asbestos contractor to do the survey – the HSE's website has a guide on [managing my asbestos](#) you can use.

You must give information about asbestos to employees, contractors and users of the building who are likely to disturb any asbestos present, so they can take appropriate action.

Below are some basic principles to consider when managing asbestos:

- Asbestos is only dangerous when disturbed. If it's safely managed and contained, it isn't a health hazard.
- Don't remove asbestos unnecessarily – removing it can be more dangerous than leaving it in place and managing it.
- Not all asbestos materials pose the same risk. For example, the measures needed to control risks from pipe insulation are different from those needed for asbestos cement.
- If you're unsure whether certain materials contain asbestos, you should presume they do and treat them as such.
- Remember that the duty to manage asbestos is about putting in place the necessary practical steps to protect maintenance workers, people using the premises and others from the risk of exposure – it isn't about removing all asbestos.
- The condition of asbestos must be reviewed regularly. This just needs to be a visual check, as long as it's in good condition, contained and doesn't present a health hazard.

If materials with asbestos need to be sealed, encapsulated or removed, you'll need to employ a licensed contractor if the materials are high-risk (for example, pipe insulation or asbestos insulating panels). If the materials are lower-risk (for example, asbestos cement sheets or roofing), you can use an unlicensed but competent contractor or carry out the work yourself if you feel competent.

Find out more about [non-licensed work with asbestos](#).

Asset register/planned preventative maintenance (PPM) schedule

An asset register/PPM maintenance schedule is a useful tool for managing your property. You can create one by going round each room/area of your property and listing what's there. You can then note

maintenance requirements against the list.

Where applicable, Girlguiding's risk assessment and monthly checklists also note these requirements.

Example asset register/PPM schedule

	Comments	Frequency
Asbestos report	When the report's completed, there must be evidence that any actions identified have been undertaken.	One-off
Pressure vessel insurance examination/written scheme	Relates to larger non-domestic boilers but also pressurised coffee machines.	Every 6-26 months depending on equipment and scheme
Waste transfer certificates	Separate certification needed for general, recycling and hazardous waste transfer.	Annual
Electrical installation	Frequency can depend on requirements determined by last report.	Min 5-yearly
Electrical portable appliance testing (PAT)	The law states the frequency of testing depends on risk assessment.	As identified by risk assessment
Emergency lighting	Not required in all locations necessarily – depends on whether there is borrowed light available in event of power cut.	Annual 3-hour discharge test with monthly checks to ensure lights function.
Fall arrest equipment examination	This may be present on a roof if is access needed.	Annual
Fire alarm	Check call points are working, and alarm can be heard in all areas.	Weekly
Fire evacuation	Ensure everyone is aware of evacuation process and assembly point.	Min annual review
Fire extinguisher maintenance	Fire extinguishers need to be available to aid escape.	Annual
Fire risk assessment	When the report's completed, there must be evidence that any actions identified have been undertaken.	One-off
Gas safety check		Annual

	Comments	Frequency
Passenger lift examination, under Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations (LOLER) 1998		6-monthly
Goods lift LOLER examination		Annual
Stair lifts		Annual
Lifting equipment LOLER insurance exam		Annual
Disabled hoists		6-monthly
Lightning conductor test		14-monthly
Legionella risk assessment	When the report's completed, there must be evidence that any actions identified have been undertaken.	One-off

Biohazards and local environment issues

If your property has any known local environmental hazards that may be harmful to health, the property manager or management group must make sure users, including volunteers, staff, young members and contactors, are made aware of these

before their visit. The management group should also ensure that preventative action is taking to reduce risk of infection.

Some common biohazards include:

Biohazard	What is it?	Actions needed	Risks
Blue-green algae	Naturally-occurring algae found in outdoor bodies of water	Display warning notices if algae blooms are found. Request local Environmental Health Officer tests the water. Don't do any water activities. Make washing facilities available in case the algae comes into contact with anyone's skin.	Skin irritation/dermatitis when contact occurs. Urgent medical attention is needed if anyone swallows algae.
Weil's disease	Contamination from rats' urine commonly occurring in ponds and slow-running rivers	If rats or evidence of an infestation are found, take action to get rid of them. Cover cuts and breaks in skin with waterproof plasters if doing water activities. Wash hands thoroughly before eating. Clean all surfaces.	Flu-like symptoms which start 7-13 days after infection. Weil's disease can also cause jaundice and conjunctivitis. Seek medical if infection is suspected.

Biohazard	What is it?	Actions needed	Risks
Lyme disease (particularly common in parts of Scotland)	Infection transmitted by tick bites. Ticks are commonly found on animals and vegetation.	Inform visitors in areas where ticks are known to be common about the issue. Advise them to wear suitable clothing and footwear, eg, a long-sleeved shirt and long trousers. The highest risk is between April and October.	Flu-like symptoms may occur, including a raised temperature, headaches, tiredness, muscle pain and rash. Seek medical advice if infection is suspected.
E. coli	Bacteria that live in the intestines of some animals including cattle, sheep and goats. The infection is transmitted via droppings or contact.	Wash hands thoroughly. Ensure that 'wash your hands' signs are prominently displayed. Avoid sitting directly on the ground or other surfaces where animals may have been.	Symptoms can include diarrhoea (often bloody), severe stomach pain and sickness. Seek medical advice immediately if infection is suspected.
Myxomatosis	Disease of rabbits (that only rabbits can get) usually spread by biting insects (fleas, mosquitoes) carrying the Myxoma virus. However, direct rabbit-to-rabbit spread can happen.	If present, take action to eradicate the wild rabbit population. Find out more on gov.uk's rabbits: how to control numbers page.	Highly fatal infectious viral disease of rabbits, characterised by fever, swelling of the mucous membranes and skin tumours.

The [Preventing or Controlling Ill Health from Animal Contact at Visitor Attractions industry code of practice](#) may be useful if

you have a property close to farmland and/or you keep farm animals and encourage people to view or touch them.

Building regulations and British Standards

Building regulations cover the construction and extension of buildings.

You might also need building regulations approval for alteration projects, including if you plan to:

- Replace fuse boxes and connected electrics
- Install a bathroom that will involve plumbing

- Change electrics near a bath or shower
- Put in a fixed air-conditioning system
- Replace windows and doors
- Replace roof coverings on pitched and flat roofs
- Install or replace a heating system
- Add extra radiators to a heating system

[Check with a building control body](#) if you're not sure if you need approval.

The British Standards Institute produces British Standards. The government often draws on these when putting together legislation or guidance documents. Standards can provide technical detail, and compliance with a standard will often mean you're compliant with the relevant legislation. However, there may be ways of complying with legislation without using the relevant standard.

Building regulations and British Standards aren't retrospective. This means that something built 30 years ago doesn't need to be brought up to current standards, but should have complied with standards in force then.

Work will often be certified as compliant but don't worry if the certificates aren't available. Just acknowledge on the risk assessment that you don't know if they complied or not.

Caravan exemption certificate

Under the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960, land to be used as a caravan site must have planning permission and a licence.

Girlguiding UK has a caravan exemption certificate. This allows property managers/management groups to apply to

Girlguiding UK for permission to host caravans on campsites for up to 28 days consecutively. Girlguiding UK is authorised to issue its own caravan certificates giving permission for this.

Please contact the [Girlguiding UK Information Team](#) to apply for permission.

Carbon monoxide monitors

It's the law that rented domestic premises and domestic premises that have a new electrical system installed must have a carbon monoxide alarm fitted where there are carbon-fuelled appliances such as a boiler, fire, stove, heater or flue. This legislation doesn't extend to non-domestic

premises. However it's best practice to have monitors, especially where the property is used for sleepovers.

Where monitors are fitted, they need to be regularly tested and maintained in working order.

Camping exemption certificate

Under the Public Health Act 1936, you need a licence from your local public authority to use land as a campsite in England and Wales for more than 42 consecutive days or 60 days in any 12-month period.

Girlguiding UK has a permanent camping exemption certificate. This means we can

camp on sites for longer than this without applying for a licence. Our certificate depends on good behaviour on our campsites.

CCTV

CCTV can be an effective tool for managing risk and investigating accidents.

If your property has or is considering CCTV you must make sure you comply with the

Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).

See more [guidance on CCTV](#).

Construction (Design and Management) (CDM) Regulations 2015

The CDM Regulations apply to all construction projects, even construction work that you might not consider to be a project, like maintenance activities. It doesn't matter how long (or short) the duration of the work is or how big (or small) the task. If it's construction work, then the regulations apply.

The definition of construction work under CDM includes preparation for a structure, including site clearance and groundworks; construction, alteration, conversion, fitting-out, commissioning, renovation, repair, upkeep, redecoration and other maintenance; installation of services; and demolition and dismantling of a structure.

For example, CDM could apply to the normal maintenance of a fire alarm, including testing sounders. Battery replacement wouldn't fall under CDM, but replacing the system might, depending on what's involved, for example, drilling into walls and rewiring.

The 'client' must notify the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) about some CDM projects. You can do this using a [notification of CDM project form](#).

Projects the HSE need to know about are where:

- The construction phase lasts longer than 30 days and involves more than 20 workers on site at any one time, or
- The construction phase involves more than 500 person-days of work

Even if you don't need to notify the HSE, you still need to comply with CDM. This includes making the necessary appointments, coordinating with other duty holders and producing CDM documentation, including a pre-construction phase plan and health and safety file.

The table below, adapted from the HSE's website, shows what stakeholders need to do to comply:

Duty holder	Main duties
Clients – organisations or individuals for whom a construction project is carried out	Make suitable arrangements for managing the project, including making sure: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Other duty holders are appointed as appropriate• Sufficient time and resources are allocated• Relevant information is prepared and provided to other duty holders• The principal designer and principal contractor carry out their duties• Welfare facilities are provided• The principal designer produces a health and

Duty holder	Main duties
	<p>safety file which the client then retains and provides if further work is undertaken, or the building is sold</p>
<p>Designers – organisations or individuals who, as part of a business, prepare or modify designs for a building, product or system relating to construction work</p>	<p>When preparing or modifying designs, eliminate, reduce or control foreseeable risks that may arise during:</p> <p>Construction</p> <p>The maintenance and use of a building once it's built</p> <p>Provide information to other members of the project team to help them fulfil their duties.</p>
<p>Principal designers – designers appointed by the client in projects involving more than 1 contractor. They can be an organisation or an individual with sufficient knowledge, experience and ability to carry out the role</p>	<p>Plan, manage, monitor and coordinate health and safety in the pre-construction phase of a project. This includes:</p> <p>Identifying, eliminating or controlling foreseeable risks</p> <p>Ensuring designers carry out their duties</p> <p>Prepare and provide relevant information to other duty holders.</p> <p>Liaise with the principal contractor to help plan, manage, monitor and coordinate the construction phase.</p> <p>Produce the post-construction health and safety file.</p>
<p>Principal contractors – contractors appointed by the client to coordinate the construction phase of a project where it involves more than 1 contractor</p>	<p>Plan, manage, monitor and coordinate health and safety in the construction phase of a project. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaising with the client and principal designer • Preparing the Construction Phase Plan (pdf) • Organising cooperation between contractors and coordinating their work • Producing the health and safety file <p>Making sure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suitable site inductions are provided • Reasonable steps are taken to prevent unauthorised access • Workers are consulted and engaged in securing their health and safety • Welfare facilities are provided
<p>Contractors – the individual or company that carries out the actual construction work</p>	<p>Plan, manage and monitor construction work under their control, so it's carried out without risks to health and safety.</p> <p>For projects involving more than 1 contractor, coordinate their activities with others in the project team – in particular, comply with directions given to them by the principal designer or principal contractor.</p>

Duty holder	Main duties
	For single contractor projects, prepare a Construction Phase Plan (pdf) .
Workers – those working for or under the control of contractors on a construction site	Workers must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be consulted about matters which affect their health, safety and welfare • Take care of their own health and safety, and of others who might be affected by their actions • Report anything they see which is likely to endanger either their own or others' health and safety • Cooperate with their employer, fellow workers, contractors and other duty holders

The client should provide the following sort of information to the person completing the [Construction Phase Plan \(pdf\)](#):

- Any existing health and safety file
- Details of where the services and isolation points are
- Access restrictions to the property
- If there's any asbestos present
- Details of any fragile roofs etc

Essentially, they should provide anything they're aware of that might impact on the safety of the project.

Health and safety file

A health and safety file is a document the principal designer should prepare and issue to the property manager promptly following completion of the construction works. It should contain information that may be needed for future construction work (this could include future cleaning, maintenance, alterations, refurbishments or demolition work) at the same site or structure.

A health and safety file is legally required for all projects involving more than 1 contractor. However, it may be necessary to amend existing health and safety files even for smaller projects.

Information required includes:

- A description of the project carried out, along with details of the location of the site
- Information on residual hazards which remain and how they've been dealt with, for example:
 - Ground conditions
 - Asbestos
 - Fragile materials
 - Other residual hazards, for example a disused lift
- Safe working loads of the structure and other key structural principles
- Details of any hazardous materials used
- Health and safety information relating to operation and maintenance of the structure, including information required for safe cleaning and maintenance of the structure
- Health and safety information relating to the installed plant and equipment, such as information on removal or dismantling
- The location and nature of significant services, particularly hidden services
- As-built drawings of the structure, its plant and equipment

Contingency planning

It's always better to be prepared for an issue rather than dealing with it blind.

You should think about putting together contingency plans for failure of your fire system, gas, electric, water supply and lift, plus flooding or any other issues that might impact the premises.

Make sure you have a list of emergency contacts available. Also ensure you let building users know where the gas shut-off, electric mains switch and water stopcock are and how to use them.

Things to consider

1. Failure of fire alarm system

Think how you would raise the alarm if the system failed. Would people be able to hear you if you shouted? Could you provide a temporary air horn or bell as a way of raising the alarm?

Would you need to arrange for people to patrol areas to check for fires if there was no automatic detection?

You should document all this and attach it to your fire risk assessment.

In the worst case scenario, you may need to close the property until the alarm is fixed.

2. Failure of gas supply

Is the failure just in your property, or are others affected?

If your heating is gas-powered, in winter can you provide temporary portable electric or gas heaters? (You may have to amend your fire risk assessment.)

If there's no hot water can you boil kettles to do the washing up? Or do you need to close the kitchen?

In the worst case scenario you may need to close the property until the gas supply is restored.

3. Failure of electricity supply

Is the failure just in your property, or are others affected?

Is there enough light to see? Is temporary lighting using batteries or a generator feasible?

In the worst case scenario you may need to close the property until the electricity supply is restored.

4. Failure of water supply

Is the failure just in your property, or are others affected? The water board should be able to help if water is unavailable for a long time and they're responsible for the fault.

Can you use bottled water and/or arrange to use toilets in nearby premises?

Are there activities you'll need to stop, such as preparing food or flushing toilets?

In the worst case scenario you may need to close part or all of the property until the water supply is back on.

5. Lift failure

If you have a lift, you need to think about 2 issues.

Firstly, if it fails with passengers trapped, what's the process for releasing them?

The fire brigade doesn't generally respond to lift breakdown calls. So you need to have arrangements to release passengers. This could be a specialist company able to come to your premises in a reasonable timeframe. Or someone at your premises could be trained to release passengers. However, doing this can be very dangerous, even fatal, so they must be competent.

It's important to keep yourself and the trapped passengers calm and reassure them throughout the process.

Secondly, if the lift is out of action for any period, how are you going to transport people who need to use it to upper or lower

floors? They could already be trapped away from ground level – what can you do to get them down?

Think about using an evac chair or escape slide, or perhaps people can use stairs with help.

In the medium to long term, can you move activities that involve people using lifts to lower floors?

6. Flooding

If your area is prone to flooding this is probably already high on your agenda. But

even if it's not, it's worth thinking about what you would do. Issues like broken pipes can cause flooding too.

Do you have access to sandbags? If flooding affects the whole area these will become scarce. There are other portable flood barriers on the market and mop-up kits that can help after a flood.

Think through the scenarios and what action you would take.

[Check the long-term flood risk for different areas in England on the gov.uk website](#) (this also links to flood risk in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland).

Corporate Manslaughter and Homicide Act 2007

In extreme circumstances following a death, an organisation (for example, a Girlguiding district, division, county or region) or an individual could be found guilty of corporate manslaughter. This would

happen if it was proven beyond reasonable doubt that the way the organisation's activities were organised caused the death, and this amounts to gross breach of duty of care owed to the deceased.

Disabled access

The Equality Act 2010 says associations and private clubs like Girlguiding must make changes or adjustments to make sure disabled people can access them.

They only have to make adjustments if it's reasonable to do so. What's reasonable depends on things like:

- How practicable the changes are
- How much money and resources are available
- The cost of making the changes
- If any changes have already been made

Citizens Advice has more information on the [duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people](#).

An effective way to understand the impact your property has on a disabled person is to do a disability access audit or assessment.

This should map the journey different disabled people might take through your property, for example people with mobility or sensory issues. It should look at the property's accessibility, identify barriers and give options for improvement.

You can do this yourself but sometimes it's best left to professionals. Surveyors who do disability access assessments have in-depth knowledge of the Disability Discrimination Act and awareness of working with disability issues.

We don't recommend any particular auditors, but the [Local Surveyors Direct website](#) may help you find someone in your area to help.

Display screen equipment (DSE)

If you have any DSE users working for you then you'll need to provide eyesight screening and encourage them to take regular breaks. A 'user' is someone who regularly uses DSE for 1 hour a day, more than 1 day a week.

Users are entitled to eyesight screening once every 2 years.

Users need to use their middle-distance eyesight to read the screen. This deteriorates with age and we don't generally use it for other everyday activities.

Display screens don't cause eyesight problems. However, depending on how they're set up, users may suffer from eye strain and should be encouraged to take regular breaks from the screen. Looking at something other than a screen, for example at paperwork, is sufficient.

You should assess DSE workstations against the [Health and Safety Executive's requirements on set-up](#) and after any significant changes.

Electrics

Electrical equipment (PAT testing)

There's no statutory requirement to have electrical items tested annually. Checks and testing depend how and where the equipment is used. Some electrical items won't need to be tested at all, whereas others will need testing far more than others. You should test items in line with the manufacturer's servicing guidance.

Find out more about [maintaining portable electrical equipment](#) on the Health and Safety Executive's website.

The person who checks electrical equipment just needs to know what to look for, such as signs of plugs overheating or cuts in cables.

Leads and extensions are the cause of most injuries and fires. Check leads for cuts and if on a drum use the lead only when it's completely unwound. If a lead has to go across a main walkway, place it in a cable run to stop trips and damage to the lead.

Sockets shouldn't have any square adaptors connected to electrical equipment plugged into them.

Always unplug chargers for items like phones or cameras after using them. These could be a fire hazard if left plugged in and switched on, especially overnight.

Fixed wiring tests

It's best practice to have up-to-date plans of your electrical system and to do a check of the wiring every 5 years for most buildings. However, there is no legal requirement for this. A check may be needed every 3 years for buildings such as outbuildings that can be exposed to bad weather. It should be every year for swimming pools due to the wet/corrosive atmosphere in the pool. In some cases, an electrician's report may recommend retests sooner than these intervals.

The check will be against current standards. So the electrician will often highlight issues due to new requirements coming in since the system was last inspected or originally installed.

If you do any major electrical work, like adding a new spur or changing the consumer board, the electrician (who should be registered with NICEIC) will be obliged to check the whole system. If necessary, they will need to bring it up to the current standard before issuing a completion certificate. If they don't do this they could lose their registration.

If you rent your premises, the landlord may require a full system check. Landlords legally have to do one every 5 years on residential premises.

If you have a large building you can check, for example, 20% of the electrical system a year – you don't need to check the whole system at the same time.

The electrician will split their report into mandatory requirements and recommendations. You only need to fix mandatory issues, although you may choose to act on the recommendations too.

Find out more about the [Electricity at Work Regulations 1989](#) on the Health and Safety Executive's website.

Residual current devices (RCD)

An RCD is an electrical protection device that disconnects a circuit if there's a fault.

They're sometimes called Earth leakage detectors. They can reduce the likelihood of an electrical injury.

Newer electrical installations will have RCDs built into the main switchboard that don't require testing.

If you don't have this, consider using an electrical socket outlet incorporating an RCD, or a plug-in RCD adaptor.

If you use these, test them regularly using the test button. RCDs are mechanical, and testing helps stop them sticking. Don't use faulty RCDs – either repair or replace them as soon as possible.

Energy Performance Certificates (EPC)

An EPC rates how energy-efficient your building is using grades A to G (with 'A' the most efficient).

You must have an EPC:

- If you rent out or sell premises
- For newly-finished buildings
- If there are changes to the parts of your building used for separate occupation and these involve providing or extending fixed heating, air conditioning or mechanical ventilation systems

You can be fined between £500 and £5,000 (depending on the rateable value of your building) if you don't make an EPC available to prospective buyers or tenants.

You must display your EPC by fixing it to your commercial building if all these apply:

- The total useful floor area is over 500 square metres.
- The building is frequently visited by the public.
- An EPC has already been produced for the building's sale, rental or construction.

The cost of an EPC will depend on the building. All EPCs are valid for 10 years. You can only get an EPC from a commercial energy assessor.

The type of assessor you'll need will depend on the complexity and features of your building. If you need advice on choosing one, speak to a commercial (non-domestic) energy assessor or contact the approved accreditation scheme they belong to.

Since April 2020, landlords can no longer let or continue to let properties covered by the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards Regulations if they have an EPC rating below E, unless they have a valid exemption in place.

If you're planning to let or are currently letting a property with an EPC rating of F or G, you'll need to improve the property's rating to E, or register an exemption. Otherwise you won't be able to continue to let or enter into a new tenancy.

If your property is empty, and you're not planning to let it, you don't need to take any action to improve its rating until you decide to let it again.

The 2020 energy white paper indicated that all commercial properties would be required to achieve an EPC rating of at least B by 2030. A consultation issued in 2021 set out a proposed framework for meeting that, suggesting that an interim target of C rating by 2027 may be required. Legislation is expected to come into force in 2025.

Fire risk management

Fire risk assessment

You need to do a site-specific fire risk assessment of your building. For smaller, less complex premises you can consider doing the assessment yourself.

The government has published a [new guide for small non-domestic premises on fire risk assessments](#). It only applies to England.

There is different guidance and legislation for [Wales](#), [Scotland](#) and [Northern Ireland](#).

The guide will help you work out what you need to do. It's for premises with no more than a basement, ground and first floor, in which:

- You have sole control of the premises
- The area on any floor is no more than 280m²
- The maximum distance that anyone will need to walk from any point in the building to an exit to open air is no more than 25m
- On each floor, there's relatively clear vision across the floor area
- There are no hazardous processes, particularly involving cutting, welding and similar, and no storage or use of dangerous substances, such as highly flammable liquids, other than in quantities of less than 50 litres
- Cooking processes happen away from exits, so there's no potential for them to stop people escaping if there's a fire
- No one sleeps on the premises

You need to consider using a specialist fire risk assessor if:

- Your premises fall outside the scope described above
- Your premises are part of a larger complex, such as a shopping centre
- The design of fire precautions in your premises differs significantly from those recommended in section 5 of the guide

The Institution of Fire Engineers' [Fire Risk Assessors Register](#) is a list of individual assessors who do fire risk assessments.

Fire directional signage

Signage showing people where to go if there's a fire is important. But too many signs can be confusing. You only need to put signs at points where the route changes direction or where you have a choice of routes to take. When placing signs remember to always direct people to the nearest exit.

Make sure to place signs where people can see them and where they're not going to be obstructed.



All fire signs must comply with the latest regulations. They should be white on a green background, with a running man symbol and a direction arrow.



A good way to assess if your fire signage is adequate is to stand in any part of the building and rotate yourself 360 degrees. You must be able to see a fire exit sign and follow the route to a final exit door – or to a protected route, stairwell or corridor that leads to a final exit door.

Emergency evacuations

You need to have a plan for evacuating your building, including for people with disabilities. You should review this annually.

You should do a planned emergency evacuation of your building at least once a year. You don't need to involve premises users as long as your arrangements involve a full sweep of the building to ensure everyone is evacuated to a point of safety.

Remember, not all evacuations will be fire-related. You may need to evacuate for other reasons, and the way you do this may be different. For example, if there was a terrorist threat you may decide to stay put or evacuate further away from the potential threat. In these circumstances the police will often help direct you.

Think about:

- Calling the emergency services and liaising with them when they arrive
- Making sure the building's been cleared and everyone is accounted for
- Putting together an 'emergency pack' to grab in case of a fire with details of the building, such as its electrical plan (cut-off switches etc), gas supply/storage, water supply and storage of chemicals or flammable items. Also include a torch in case it's dark outside when you evacuate

Make sure premises users are fully aware of your evacuation requirements and plan when they place a booking. Where you have regular users try to involve them if you can.

Consider that you might be out of the building for some time and need access to facilities.

Think about where you'll gather outside the building. Your assembly point should be safely away from the property and clearly marked. It's good practice to have a primary and secondary point in case the first point is unavailable due to the nature of the emergency.

Record details of any evacuation. If you're using Girlguiding's risk assessment you can record the details in there.

Emergency evacuation notice

Review this annually and display it prominently in your building.

See our [example emergency evacuation notice](#).

Evacuation of disabled people

Think about how people with different types of disabilities would evacuate from your building.

There are many aids available to help, for example:

- Bleepers that vibrate or flash to help people who are deaf
- Evacuation chairs and slides to help people get down steps or stairs
- Disabled refuges to keep people safe until help comes

If you do decide to provide aids, make sure people are trained/instructed properly in how to use them.

Fire ignition sources, materials and accelerants

Smoking

It's the law that 'No smoking' signs must be displayed in public buildings, in particular at the entrance.

There's no legal requirement to provide a smoking area. However, it's considered good practice as offering a controlled area equipped for smoking reduces fire risk.

If a smoking area is in a car park, consider how people are going to get to and from it safely without being at risk from moving vehicles.

A sufficient number of bins should be provided to put out cigarettes. These must be emptied regularly.

There's no requirement to have a fire extinguisher in a smoking area.



You may decide to provide a shelter. If you do, it must be no more than 50% enclosed. For example, the sides of the shelter could be open.

Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG)

LPG is a highly flammable gas used in many things, including camping stoves. When stored correctly, LPG doesn't pose any particular risk. However, if it's involved in a fire, it will provide fuel, make the fire much worse, and possibly explode.

LPG is heavier than air so any leakage will collect at low levels.

Storage and use of gas cylinders, bottles and canisters

- A gas cylinder might seem empty but could still contain LPG vapour. Treat all LPG gas cylinders as if they were full.
- You should store a maximum of 5 cylinders/bottles/canisters indoors (up to 70kg in total). You should store these in a lockable cage, cabinet or enclosure in a well-ventilated area away from any drains or basements.
- If you want to store more than 5, you must keep them in a lockable cage in the open air away from drains and gullies. You must check these during regular site visits (minimum quarterly) to make sure they're secure and free from rust.
- Always store and use gas cylinders in the upright (vertical) position. Never store them horizontally (this could cause a leak).
- Always display safety and operating notices prominently.
- Never store or change gas cylinders in the presence of a naked flame.
- If you find leaking bottles or cartridges allow them to vent off completely away from drains or gullies.
- Don't use propane cylinders indoors. They have higher pressure than butane cylinders, so they're not suitable for indoor use.

Bulk storage

Bulk LPG storage tanks are usually owned by the gas supplier. It's important these are checked regularly, and fully inspected every year. The Health and Safety Executive has more information about [safe use of bulk LPG storage tanks](#).

Flammability of furnishings

The Furniture Industry Research Association has a [useful guide about fire safety and furnishings](#).

Storage of petrol

You can store up to 30 litres of petrol at home or at non-workplace premises without informing your local Petroleum Enforcement Authority.

You can store it in:

- Suitable portable metal or plastic containers
- 1 demountable fuel tank

- A combination of the above as long as you don't keep more than 30 litres

In this context, the Health and Safety Work Act 1974 defines 'premises' as including, for example, motor vehicles, boats and aircraft.

Find out more about [storing petrol](#) on the Health and Safety Executive's website.

Chimney sweeping

If you have a real fire or log burner, we recommend you book an annual chimney sweep by a qualified chimney sweep to reduce the risk of a chimney fire.

Fire detection and warning systems

The law says you must have a way of raising a fire alarm. It could technically be someone shouting 'fire, fire' if they could detect and raise the alarm in time.

However, this would rarely be a safe option, so you'll probably have a fire system in place, or need to install one.

If your premises are used for sleepovers, they must have an automatic fire detection system connected to the mains with battery back-up. This should be a linked system (when 1 detector goes off, all the alarms go off, so you can hear them in all areas of the building) – unless your fire risk assessment specifically deems this unnecessary. For example, if your premises is just 1 room with 1 detector, a linked system is unnecessary.

For premises just hosting unit meetings where people will be awake, we also recommend an automatic system.

However, it isn't necessarily essential – your fire risk assessment will determine this. If you don't have an automatic system, your risk assessment should outline what steps you've taken to compensate for this.

A variety of fire systems are available, usually linked to smoke and heat detectors. Although they operate in much the same way, the component parts are very different. When doing your fire risk assessment, you'll

need to identify which system you need and have installed.

It's common to have a **heat detector** installed in a kitchen area, as smoke detectors are often activated by heating food or burning toast.



There are 3 types of **smoke detector** – ionising, beam and aspirating smoke detectors (ASD), also known as very early smoke detection apparatus (VEDSA).

An ionising system

detects carbon deposits (from soot and ash) in the air. When the carbon enters the chamber it interrupts an electric field and sets off the alarm.



Beam detectors go off when smoke interrupts a beam aimed at a photoelectric cell. They're generally found in areas with high ceilings, not in other buildings since any break in the beam caused by movement will set off the alarm.



Aspirating smoke detectors work by sensing smoke in the air. These systems have filters that must be changed every 18 months on average to make sure the system is effective. When you change a filter, the system needs 15 minutes to



recalibrate before working again.

If you have a large gap between a false ceiling and true ceiling in your premises, you should fit smoke detectors between the 2 ceilings. You should also install a remote indicator to show when the alarm between ceilings is going off.



Remote indicators may also be fitted outside lift doors to indicate where a detector has been fitted in a lift shaft.



Means of escape from fire and building design in relation to fire spread

Compartmentation

A building is divided up into fire compartments to stop fire spreading unchecked. Compartment boundaries are walls, doors, floors and ceilings that enclose an area. They not only stop but should also resist the spread of fire for a set time. Typically, this can be for 1, 2 or 4 hours.

Compartment boundaries must provide stability (not collapse) integrity (not crack and allow smoke and hot gasses through) and insulation (stop heat from the fire side passing through and igniting items on the non-fire side).

It's important to maintain the integrity of any fire compartment. Even a tiny gap could cause fire to spread.

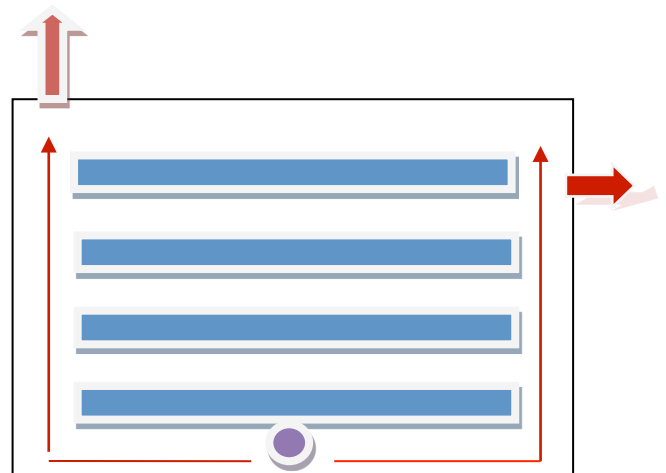
This includes making sure compartmentation is carried through to areas above the ceiling or in the loft space.

Electricians and plumbers may breach compartmentation when installing systems – it's important these are re-sealed.

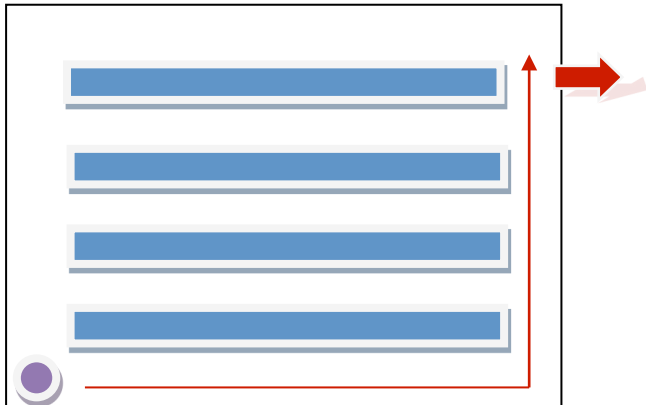
Spray can foam insulation is a good way to fill small gaps around pipes and wires effectively and for little cost.

Travel distances

Under British standards, people shouldn't have to walk further than 18 metres in a building to reach a final exit door, protected route or staircase, when the building has only 1 exit. Where a building has more than 1 exit, they shouldn't have to walk more than 45 metres.



Different rules apply to more complex buildings, for example, with more than 1 floor. An expert should look at the fire risk assessment for these buildings and determine if the distances are acceptable.



Emergency lighting

You need to install emergency lighting where there's no other light (natural light or light from street lamps, for example) you can use to safely move around and evacuate if your power fails.

There are 2 types of emergency lighting systems. 'Maintained' systems are connected to the mains supply and lit-up all the time. They're usually made up of lightboxes above final exits and at entrances to passageways. 'Non-maintained' systems only work when the mains lighting fails. They can be installed within normal fluorescent fittings (strip lighting). Or they can be individual and come in a variety of shapes and types. Either way, they will have an indicator light or 'LED' that will show when they're online.



If you have emergency lights you need to test them monthly.

To test emergency lighting:

Firstly, walk through the building with all lights on. Check any illuminated lightboxes, making a note of any that aren't on. Also check that LEDs on non-maintained fittings are illuminated.

Next, turn on all emergency lights. You can do this using a 1-hour or 3-hour test switch (if fitted) at the mains distribution panel, or by using a test switch and fish key.



Finally, turn off all mains lights and walk through the building, making sure that:

- All emergency lights are on
- There's enough light to see the evacuation routes and exits
- All lightboxes not previously lit are now on

If you turn the lights off using the last man switch (LMS), remember to switch off the emergency lighting switch at the panel before leaving the building. Otherwise the emergency lighting won't work.

You need a reputable contractor to do a maintenance check on emergency lighting annually. This should include a discharge test, generally for 3 hours. However, in small, low-risk premises without a public entertainment licence a 1-hour test may be enough. After the test, the system's batteries will need time to recharge. Avoid any lettings for at least 24 hours to allow them to recharge properly.

Fire doors

A door needs to be a fire door if it's on a 'protected route', such as on to a stairwell or corridor that leads to a final exit.

Fire doors are designed to stop fire spreading between rooms for at least 30 minutes, to contain fires into smaller areas.

When checking fire doors, make sure:

- They're fitted with a self-closing mechanism
- They close fully into the frame without obstruction
- They're fitted with a suitable smoke seal, either on the door edge or in the frame (depending on age of door)
- Fire doors that provide separation in corridors or that lead from rooms into protected routes are fitted with a vision panel of fire-resistant glass
- They're not propped open
- They have a sign attached that says 'FIRE DOOR KEEP SHUT'



Fire doors should only be held open by a device that will automatically release if there's a fire. Some doors may be fitted with magnetic devices linked to the fire alarm that would release automatically. These are very expensive to retrofit. Alternatively, there are standalone, battery-operated devices known as Dorgards that should release when the fire alarm sounds.

If you fit these, it's important to follow the manufacturer's instruction manual. You should also test and change the batteries regularly to make sure they're working.

Final exit doors

For security, external fire exits should be locked, barred or chained when your building is unoccupied. However, all access routes must be available when the building is occupied.

When opening your building, make sure to remove all locking devices and put any bars and chains in an area where they won't be a hazard if you need to use the exits. You could use a chain board.



Fire exits can be single, double or one-and-a-half-leaved doors. They're operated by push bar, push pad or single operating handle. Wherever possible they will open outwards in the direction of travel.

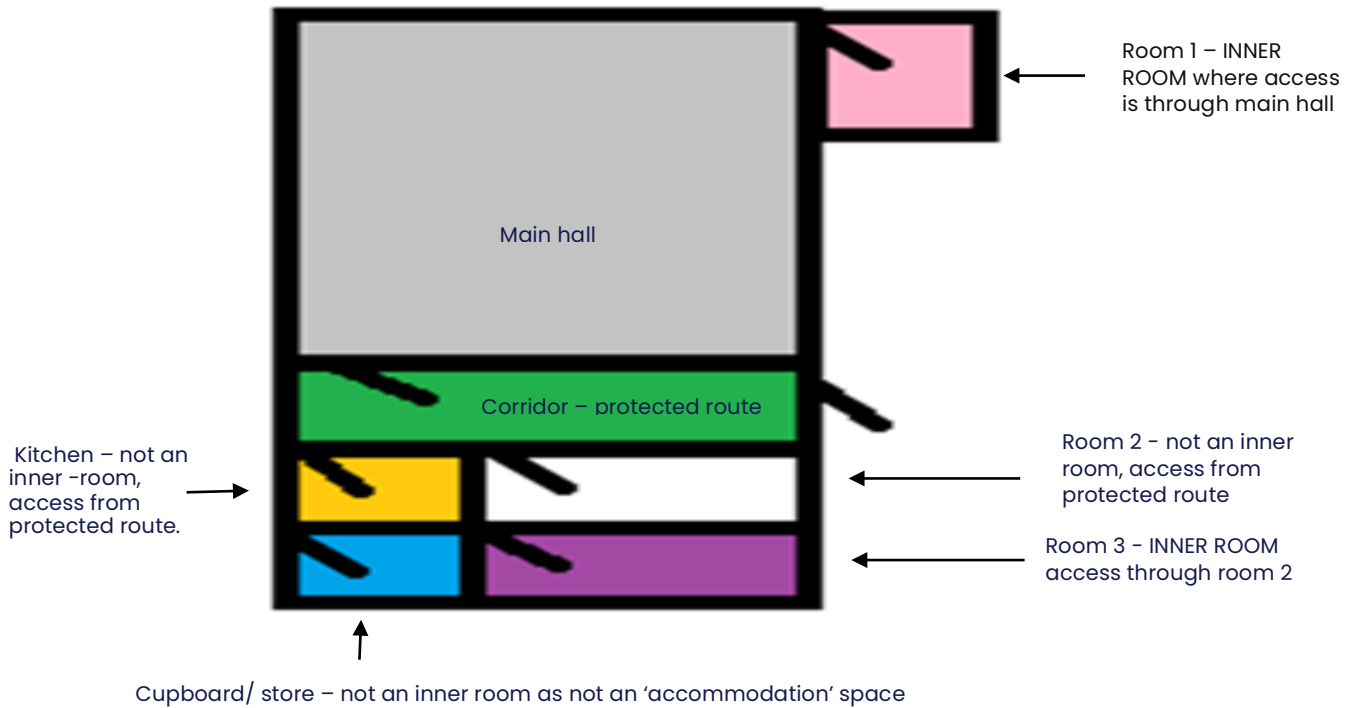
When opening up you should check the outside of doors to make sure nothing has been placed against them.

You must open all doors once a month to make sure they open fully and aren't obstructed by weeds or debris. Sweep areas outside of doors and remove any build-up of rubbish. Check doors and frames for damage and ensure the push bars or pads operate correctly and that the door opens freely. Also check the sign on the outside of the door says:

It's a good idea to put a date label in the door frame and a corresponding date label on the door to say you've checked it that month.



Make sure the door closes fully into the frame and that the crash bar dead bolts.



Inner rooms

A room is classed as an 'inner room' where the only way out is through another room and where it's used for 'accommodation' (for example, as an office) – not just for storage. An unnoticed fire in the out room could trap people in the inner room.

Rooms you can access directly from a protected route/corridor are not inner rooms.

If you have an inner room, you should have:

- A vision panel between it and the outer room so people can see the conditions in the outer room and how to escape
- An automatic smoke detector in the outer room that will sound a warning to the inner room

You should also consider:

- Restricting the number of people using the inner room to 60
- Making sure outer and inner rooms are under the same person's control
- Ensuring inner rooms are not in areas at high risk of fire

Smoke extraction systems

Smoke extraction systems are sometimes built into buildings as part of a 'fire engineering' solution. They're designed to

work with the fire alarm system. When activated, they draw smoke away from an area to contain fire and to clear the air of smoke so people can escape.

Your fire risk assessment should have details of any smoke extraction system you have. A good way of finding out if you have a smoke extraction system is to test your fire alarms – the smoke extractor fans should activate, whereas all other fans will shut down.

It's important to regularly service smoke extraction systems, and keep their fans clear at all times.

Smoke vents

If you have smoke vents, your fire risk assessment should detail them. There are a variety of smoke vents in use in modern buildings, but they all fall into 2 categories. 'Manual' smoke vents look like plastic or Perspex panels in the roof and are sometimes called failure vents. 'Automatic' vents are connected to the fire alarm system.

Manual vents are designed to melt at high temperature, allowing hot smoke and gases to pass out, slowing down fire spread.

Automatic vents open when the alarm sounds, either electrically or using

pneumatic rams. Their system is controlled by a compressor. When the system is on standby the compressor will occasionally start up to maintain working pressure, ready to open the vent when needed.

You'll need to include the compressor in your testing programme, and you'll need a certificate to verify its condition.

Fire-fighting equipment

Fire extinguishers including fire hoses

Fire extinguishers are there to help people escape from buildings, not to put out fires.

There are 4 main types of extinguishers that all basically work in the same way, by removing the pin and squeezing the trigger.

The location of fire extinguishers in your building should be based on your risk assessment. Look at where a fire might start and what action you would need to take to put it out to reach the exit and get out of the building safely.

FIRE EXTINGUISHER TYPES AND USES				
FIRE RISK TYPE ↓				
	WATER	FOAM	CO ₂	POWDER
 A PAPER, WOOD, TEXTILE	✓ YES	✓ NOT VERY EFFECTIVE	✓ NOT VERY EFFECTIVE	✓ NOT VERY EFFECTIVE
 B FLAMMABLE LIQUIDS	✗ NO	✓ YES	✓ YES	✓ YES
 C FLAMMABLE GASES	✗ NO	✗ NO	✓ YES	✓ YES
 ELECTRICAL HAZARD	✗ NO	✗ NO	✓ YES	✓ YES
 VEHICLE PROTECTION	✗ NO	✓ YES	✗ NO	✓ YES

Smoke curtains

In buildings with high apex ceilings, smoke curtains may be fitted. These are designed to keep hot smoke and gases from spreading across the ceiling, lowering the risk of fire spreading and increasing the time available for evacuation.

A fire extinguisher company can provide guidance but remember they're in the business of selling fire extinguishers.

There are now some P50 extinguishers that don't need annual servicing. They're guaranteed for 10 years and only need a monthly check. So if you're changing your fire extinguishers or installing them for the first time, consider these. They'll be more expensive initially but save money in the long run. You can [find suppliers online](#).

You should check extinguishers monthly to make sure:

- They're in their correct position, either hung on a wall bracket or on a stand
- Wall brackets are secure
- Nozzles and hoses aren't damaged or split and are correctly in the holder, where fitted
- Safety pins are in place
- Pressure indicators, where fitted, are in the green
- They're not obstructed
- The date on the servicing label hasn't expired



Fire hoses

Buildings generally don't have fire hoses nowadays. Many have been decommissioned and replaced with fire extinguishers.

If they are fitted, make sure they're serviced annually and checked monthly to ensure they're accessible and not obstructed by furniture etc.

If they're decommissioned, they should have a notice or sticker attached to the hose reel saying 'NOT IN OPERATION'.

Fire hydrants



A fire hydrant is a point where firefighters can connect into a water supply. Some premises may have them on site.

Hydrant covers have 'FH' markings. Additional signs attached to walls or concrete posts to show the distance to the nearest hydrant in metres. The hydrant may be underground or a pillar type above ground.

Hydrants are an important part of firefighting, so it's important they're not obstructed and are kept in good working order.

Water companies own, install and maintain statutory fire hydrants. The local authority Fire and Rescue Services usually carry out regular inspections and maintenance to make sure they're in good working order too.

Private fire hydrants found on private water mains are not the responsibility of the local water company or the Fire and Rescue Service. Any private hydrants you're responsible for should be tested, maintained and kept in good working order.

Sprinkler systems

You may have sprinklers fitted in your building, depending on how it's constructed, and the requirements of building regulations, landlords' insurers and your local fire authority.

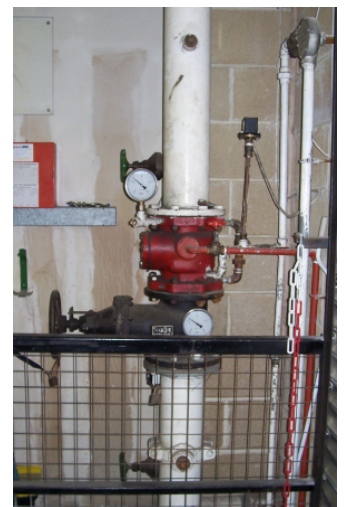
You should know what your sprinkler system looks like, so you're more likely to notice any problems with it. In particular, be aware of the mains or inlet valve and main sprinkler supply valve (valve sets). These will be open and locked by padlock, chain, strap or other means. Other valves are normally shut unless moved to test the system. Your sprinkler valve block should be freely accessible.

The water pressure needed to make the sprinklers work can come from mains pressure. Or, where that's not sufficient for the size of the building, you may have a pumped system. This takes water from a holding tank and sprinkles it using diesel- and electrically-powered pumps.

These pumps may be within a building on your premises. If they're under your control, keep the building locked when not in use and keep it free from combustible materials. You can keep the access or 'fly' ladder for the water tank in the building too if you have one. This will help stop unauthorised access to the tank top systems

Sprinklers must be tested weekly, and pressures recorded.

Each sprinkler system will have a recognised testing procedure to check inlet and outlet water pressure, that a fire alarm triggers the sprinklers and, where appropriate, pump running pressures.



When testing a pumped system you must run the pumps. These are very noisy so anyone involved must wear hearing protection.



Sprinkler heads should be a set distance apart to make sure that together they cover enough area to put out any fire.

They can be fitted with 'life heads' that are thinner and break at a lower

First aid

There's no legal requirement to provide first aid to property users. However, it's good practice to have a simple first aid kit and a first aider or 'appointed person' (see below) on site, if appropriate, and to provide information about local medical facilities. You should include these details in the information you give to users.

If you employ anyone, you have a duty to do an assessment to identify what facilities, equipment and people you need to provide first aid to employees who are injured or become ill at work.

You can find out more about [assessing your first aid needs](#) on the Health and Safety Executive's website.

If as part of your site assessment you decide having a qualified first aider on site isn't necessary, you must appoint a person to take charge of first aid arrangements. This includes looking after first aid facilities and equipment, and calling the emergency services if needed. All employees and property users should be made aware of who this 'appointed person' is.

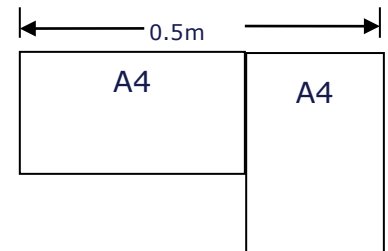
First aid kit

There's no mandatory list of items for a first aid kit. It depends on what you assess needs to be in there. The Health and Safety

temperature. This will give people more chance to get out of the building. Thicker heads may not break until the building is fully on fire and people would be unlikely to survive.

If your sprinklers don't cover the whole area, they may not put any fire out fully. It's essential to have a clearance area

of at least 0.5 metres around all sprinkler heads so they can spread water effectively (2 sheets of A4 paper placed long side against short side).



Executive has a guide to [what to put in your first aid kit](#).

Appointed persons and trained first aiders

If through your assessment you decide you need a qualified first aider on site, they must have appropriate training. Under HSE requirements, to become a first aider in the workplace, you must complete a 24-contact-hours course in first aid at work. Then every 3 years you have to do refresher training (12 contact hours). Training providers offering these courses must be approved by HSE. Girlguiding's first aid training isn't sufficient to become a qualified first aider.

It's important to remember that 'appointed persons' are not first aiders. They shouldn't try to give any first aid they haven't been trained for.

There's no legal requirement for 'appointed persons' to be trained but you might decide to send them on a one-day emergency first aid course. Girlguiding's [first aid training](#) would be appropriate.

Defibrillators

There's no legal requirement to provide a defibrillator, but to you may choose to.

St John Ambulance has a [Defibrillator Guide for First Time Buyers](#).

Fluorinated gases (F-gases)

Air-conditioning and refrigeration systems often use F-gases.

These are man-made gases used as substitutes for ozone-depleting substances because they don't damage the atmospheric ozone layer. However, F-gases are still powerful greenhouse gases that can stay in the atmosphere for centuries and contribute to climate change. That's why tighter controls on their use have been introduced.

F-gas regulations apply for larger air-conditioning systems and refrigeration that contains F-gas equivalent to 5 tonnes or more of carbon dioxide.

All refrigeration and air-conditioning equipment should have an information plate on it saying which refrigerant is inside and the amount in kilograms. On air conditioning you can usually find this on the outdoor condensing unit, and on refrigeration, on the main plant. Refrigerant types start with an 'R'. For example, R410a, R404a, R407a, R407c, R407f.

Once you have the information from your plate, you can [calculate the weight of F-gas in carbon dioxide equivalent](#).

Where it's over 5 tonnes, you must keep records for 5 years on the:

- Quantity and type of gas in the equipment when it's installed
- Quantity and type of gas added during maintenance (for example, during leak repairs)
- Dates and results of all mandatory leak checks
- What you've done to recover and dispose of gas – for example, the registered waste carrier you use to dispose of it

If the gas used in the equipment has been recycled or reclaimed, record the:

- Quantity of gases recovered
- Name, address and certificate number of the recycling or reclamation facility

Keep records of the name, address and certificate number of any companies used to install, service or decommission your equipment.

Gov.uk's page on [fluorinated gas: guidance for users, producers and traders](#) has more information.

Glazing

The law requires structural glass – windows, glass panels and doors – in critical locations to be made of safety material. It must be to the appropriate British standards and protected against breakage. The transparent or translucent material must be appropriately marked or incorporate features so it can be seen.

You need to survey any glazing in your property, and consider:

- Putting up suitable barriers or screens to stop people or vehicles coming into contact with the glazing. The size and strength of the barrier or screen will depend on who, or what, needs to be kept away from the glazing
- Modifying your glazing to reduce the risk of injury, by replacing it with a safer material or applying a safety film which stops it shattering in a dangerous manner
- Reorganising traffic routes (either for people or vehicles) to avoid the risk of glazing being broken
- Marking all glazing so it can be seen. This could just be putting up a poster or etching a line across it. (Don't forget wheelchair users and children need to see it so you might need to mark it at different heights)

Ground maintenance

It's good practice to make sure that all the land you're responsible for is well-managed. This might include, for example, ensuring ditches and land drains are clear and maintained, and cutting grass and hedges regularly, at set times, during the season.

You should also have processes in place to identify unsuitable ground conditions. For example, you may have a written process to check areas you know are susceptible to flooding, including how you'll notify site users that these areas are out of bounds.

Make sure you follow manufacturers' guidance on using any equipment, including any training and maintenance requirements. Consider the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations if you use any chemicals.

If you have large areas of land to maintain you may have issues with hand and body vibration from using equipment. The Health and Safety Executive has an [introduction to managing vibration at work](#).

Health and safety policy

If you employ 5 or more people, you must have your own written health and safety policy.

HSE has a guide to [preparing a health and safety policy](#).

Hazardous chemicals - Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations

The COSHH Regulations say you must identify any hazardous substances used within your property and control the risk from them, so they don't harm anyone. You can do this using a COSHH assessment.

Hazardous substances generally have a hazard warning sign on their packaging.

Draw up a list of all the chemicals on your site. Have a good look round, checking storage cupboards/sheds etc.

You must have data sheets for all chemicals, providing information about the product. Note that a data sheet is NOT a COSHH assessment.

Look through the data sheets and check how hazardous the chemicals are. If you have several chemicals for the same job, try to get rid of the more hazardous ones. Don't keep anything labelled toxic, or anything listed as a carcinogen or mutagen. Try to avoid substances listed as harmful.

Try to reduce the chemicals you have on site as far as you can. It's also better to use the same products each time so you don't have to keep going through this exercise.

For any remaining hazardous chemicals, you'll need to complete a [COSHH register and assessment form](#).

You need to make COSHH assessments and data sheets readily available to anyone using the chemicals. You may do this by putting sets of the relevant information where the chemicals are stored. If appropriate, make sure anyone using the chemicals is briefed on the information too.

First aiders/appointed persons must have immediate access to the COSHH file. It's a good idea for them to be aware of any first aid procedures necessary with particular chemicals.

Maintaining COSHH controls

You must maintain the COSHH precautions you've put in place at all times. This is your responsibility, although you may involve others.

You may like to include some checks on COSHH compliance in your monthly safety inspection. You can take checks from your COSHH assessment and add them to your inspection form. You also need to make sure no new chemicals are introduced on site without being assessed.

Storage

It's best practice to keep chemicals in a COSHH cupboard or room. It should be adequately ventilated, and locked to stop children accessing it. Consider keeping

chemicals in deep trays to contain any spillage. You may need spill-control material and an eye wash. Keep chemicals separate as far as you can. In particular, make sure bleach is stored well away from chemicals that are essentially acids, like Harpic.

If chemicals are decanted into other containers, make sure these containers are labelled. Never keep any chemical in an unlabelled container. Don't store chemicals with food or drink.

Direct dosing

When using hazardous substances, particularly corrosive liquids, you should consider using direct dosing. Direct dosing will minimise direct contact with the chemical.

Inclement weather

Gritting plan

It's advisable to have a gritting plan in place for icy weather. This could be an actual plan of the property marked with where to grit, or just a description of where gritting will be done.

There's no point putting grit down once snow has fallen or a path has

become icy. Grit doesn't get rid of ice and snow, it just stops it freezing.

Consider which areas pose the most risk and plan to grit there. For example, it may not be feasible to grit a whole car park, so just grit main pathways, entrances and exits.

Interlocks

An interlock is a device that stops you doing something inappropriate or adjusts the system to a safe state if you do.

Examples of interlocks are:

- Removal of a guard on a food processor stopping the motor and blade, reducing the chance of a spinning blade injury
- The gear shift selector on an automatic car allowing the engine to

start in park position only, stopping the driver starting the engine in gear and the car moving unexpectedly

- The inability to open the door on a clothes washer during the high-speed extraction cycle

You need to check any interlocks you have to make sure they're working effectively. Check any stop buttons are working.

Lead paint

Lead paint used to be widely used in the UK and is often found in older buildings. However, properties built after 1978 are unlikely to contain it.

Its risk is minimal. Eating flaky paint could cause lead poisoning. A bigger risk is lead paint being vaporised through heating then inhaled during maintenance work. This can cause cancer and respiratory illness.

You need to take reasonable steps to determine the location and condition of any materials likely to contain lead. You should keep a register, and assess the risk of anyone being exposed to lead flakes.

If you're doing major refurbishment or demolition work, you should employ a certified inspector to assess your site if you think lead paint could be present.

Legionella

Legionella is a bacteria that can cause a serious type of pneumonia (lung infection) called Legionnaires' disease. It can grow and spread in water systems.

Your building will need a risk assessment for Legionella. For smaller, less complex premises, you could do the assessment yourself using [Girlguiding's pre-filled property risk assessments](#).

If your building has a large non-domestic type of water system, you should consider asking an external company of Legionella specialists to do the risk assessment.

HSE's information on [Legionella and legionnaires' disease](#) will help you work out if you should be doing the risk assessment yourself or not.

Other things to do/think about:

- Do a visual inspection of cold-water storage tanks annually. They should be covered and cleaned and sanitised as required.
- Consider how often the system is used – is there a risk of stagnant water?

- Have you got a plan of your water system? Does it appear complex? Are there old pipes and dead legs (pipes that don't go anywhere)? These can occur where equipment or facilities have been removed.
- Look at where aerosols are produced – the risk is higher in these areas.
- If you have unused equipment not flushed through monthly for some reason, you should chlorinate the system if possible before using it. You should also take precautions to avoid inhaling any aerosols.
- Consider the people doing any work on your water system. Male smokers over 50 are far more susceptible to Legionnaires' disease, as is anyone who is immunocompromised.

For more information, see the Legionella Control Association's [Code of Conduct for Service Providers](#).

Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations (LOLER) 1998

The Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998 place duties on people and companies who own, operate or have control over lifting equipment. This includes all businesses and organisations whose employees use lifting equipment, whether owned by them or not.

In most cases, lifting equipment is also work equipment so the Provision and Use of Work

Equipment Regulations will also apply (including inspection and maintenance).

All lifting operations involving lifting equipment must be properly planned by a competent person, appropriately supervised and carried out safely.

Find out more information about the [Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations](#).

Machinery and vehicle maintenance

You should do a risk assessment before buying any machinery, so you can decide if it's suitable for the task you need it for.

Read the manual that comes with your machinery carefully, or find it online or speak to your supplier, to make sure you can operate it safely. Keep the manual, so staff can use it for training.

You should keep an inventory of all machinery and vehicles you have on the premises. It should have the age of the machinery, date of purchase, and the manufacturer's recommended service requirements.

Training should come as part of the package of buying any larger machines or vehicles.

Check safety signage/labels on machinery and vehicles, making sure they're in place and legible. Manufacturers should be able to provide replacement labels.

All machinery/vehicles should be maintained as required by the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER), and as recommended by the manufacturer of the machinery/vehicle. In addition, vehicles more than 3 years old used on public roads must have an MOT.

Make sure you have appropriate insurance in place for all vehicles. It's a legal requirement to have insurance for vehicles driven on private land that the public has access to.

Only authorised people should drive vehicles on your site. They should have a full driving licence, and have received additional on-site training in operating any specialist vehicle.

You should check drivers' licences at regular intervals to make sure they're all still valid.

Managing contractors

Contractors are responsible for their own health and safety and that of others their work may affect. However, as a client you have a legal duty to ensure that any contractors you appoint are competent from a health and safety perspective.

You must also give contractors any information you may have that will help keep them safe. For example, if there's a fragile roof and they're going onto it, you need to tell them. Or, if you know that there's asbestos, you need to say.

One way of checking a contractor's competence is for the contractor to complete a [competency assessment](#). This will give you information to help you decide if they should work on your property. Competent contractors should be happy to do this.

[A signing-in and permits to work system](#) is a good way to make sure contractors get the information they need to work safely and have thought through any significant safety issues relating to your premises and the work they're doing.

[Contractor signing in form \(Green\)](#)

[Contractor signing in form \(Amber\)](#)

[Contractor signing in form \(Red\)](#)

The contractor should give you a risk assessment and method statement (RAMS) for the work they're doing. You should check this before they start work.

Checking a risk assessment and method statement (RAMS)

A risk assessment and method statement (RAMS) describes in a logical sequence exactly how a contractor will complete work using safe practices and without risks to health.

It should include all the risks identified and the measures needed to control them.

You're not expected to be an expert in electrical safety or any other aspects of construction safety, but there are some basic things you should check:

- Is the RAMS written for your premises/job? Often contractors use standard templates, which isn't a problem as long as the details are correct. For example, has the RAMS got the right name and address? Are details like where the contractor is accessing the building correct?
- If the RAMS is dated, is the date appropriate?
- Does the RAMS reflect all the work the contractor is undertaking? For example, if it just talks about electrics

but they're also doing plumbing then this needs to be included.

- Does the RAMS consider the presence of asbestos?
- Has the contractor completed the permit to work as appropriate for hot work, work at height, electrical work and lone working? For example, if they need to do electrical work and disconnect the power (they shouldn't be live working), have they explained how they'll prevent it being turned on while they're working? What risk will there be to others in the building if they can't see because there are no lights? The contractor should address all this fully in the RAMS.
- Is there any other aspect of the work that could impact the operation of the building? Has the contractor covered this in the RAMS? For example, where are they storing material? Are fire exits being kept clear? Will dust created be controlled so it doesn't cause a slip hazard or other issues?

Health and safety is common sense, so if any aspect of the RAMS doesn't make sense, discuss it with the contractor.

Checking insurance documentation

It's important to check the contractor's insurance:

- Is in-date
- Has been issued for the company you're contracting. Companies can change names and if they're trading under a different name to the name insured you wouldn't be covered
- Covers (does not exclude) the work they're undertaking for you
- Provides an adequate level of cover

Maximum occupancy capacity of a building

A number of factors determine the maximum occupancy capacity of a building. They include the maximum number that could safely evacuate in a reasonable time in an emergency, and the maximum number the building can reasonably hold, based on its size and use. You may also want to limit occupancy in a room based on number of chairs available.

You should cover maximum occupancy of your building in your fire risk assessment.

During the Covid-19 pandemic maximum occupancies often changed so people could safely distance. You may want to consider a contingency plan for similar future issues.

Once you've worked out your capacity, you need to take steps to make sure building users never exceed it, particularly if a number of groups are using the building together.

Find out more about [calculating maximum occupancy](#).

Microwave testing

Testing microwaves for leakage used to be a legal requirement, but this is no longer the case.

However, you still have a responsibility to maintain work equipment in a safe condition, in line with the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998.

You should:

- Keep your microwave in clean and sound condition
- Unplug it from the power socket to wipe the inside walls and carousel
- Pay attention to wiping around the door perimeter and seal to remove

any grease or debris that could stop the door sealing properly

- Clean the vents (food splatter often clogs them up)

Check the safety interlock switch works (the microwave should switch off when you open the door)

If there are any problems with the door such as cracks or floppy hinges, or the oven continues to run when the door is opened, it's a hazard and you should replace it.

Some companies that do PAT testing also offer microwave testing, if you feel this is necessary.

Temporarily closing a building

There may be circumstances when you decide to shut your building temporarily, for example over the summer holidays, over winter, or during a pandemic. You'll need to think about what needs to be turned off and/or left running, and what, if any, periodic checks are needed.

Don't forget if maintenance of the building is needed when it's shut, services will still need to be available for the people carrying this out.

See Girlguiding's [building shutdown](#) and [reopening checklist](#).

Moving windows, doors, gates, shutters and barriers

Bear in mind that moving windows, doors, gates, shutters and barriers can cause serious injuries and even death. They should

either be secured closed or held open by a hook or other means at all times.

Noise

There are legal limits on noise levels. This is because excessive noise can cause hearing damage. Noise levels above 140 dB(A) can cause permanent hearing loss.

Some equipment, such as generators, can exceed the control limit of 85 dB(A) 8-hour time-weighted average when running. Excessive noise could also be due to a defect in machinery. If you think equipment is excessively noisy, have it checked. New equipment should have details about its noise levels in the spec.

Read more about [noise](#) on HSE's website.

Noise nuisance

You need to have consideration for your neighbours. Noise can be particularly annoying to neighbours, especially at night.

Councils must look into complaints about noise that could be a 'statutory

nuisance' (covered by the [Environmental Protection Act 1990](#)).

For the noise to count as a statutory nuisance it must do 1 of the following:

- Unreasonably and substantially interfere with the use or enjoyment of a home or other premises
- Injure health or be likely to injure health

If they agree that a statutory nuisance is happening or will happen in the future, councils must serve an abatement notice. This requires whoever's responsible to stop or restrict the noise. The notice will usually be served on the person responsible but can also be served on the owner or occupier of the premises.

Find out more about [how councils deal with complaints](#).

Personal protective equipment (PPE)

People on your premises may need to use PPE for certain tasks. Depending on the task (removing asbestos, for example), there may be regulations in place around what PPE they should wear.

There are also some general regulations for PPE:

- PPE should fit the person wearing it. When buying PPE, consider the person's size, shape and other characteristics. For example, do they have facial hair, which could stop a disposable mask properly sealing around their face?

- If a person changes, they may need new PPE. For example, if they lose or gain weight.
- Different tasks may require different types of PPE. For example, the type of dust mask for working with wood dust is different to the standard required for working with asbestos.
- Non-disposable PPE must be stored correctly to make sure it's maintained properly.
- It's important to dispose of certain types of PPE properly. For example, harnesses should be cut up once they come to the end of their life to stop anyone else using them.

Planning regulations

If you're considering putting up a new building, converting or extending your site, or changing your building's use, contact

your local authority's planning department at an early stage for advice on what planning permission you may need.

Pressure vessel insurance examination and written scheme

Pressure vessels can include boilers, steam heating systems and steam coffee machines – things that have a pressure gauge.

Malfunctions of this type of equipment can cause serious injuries and even death. However, assessing the risks and putting proper precautions in place will minimise the chance of any accidents.

The law says you must have a written scheme for this sort of equipment and make sure it's checked in accordance with this scheme.

Find out more about [written schemes of examination](#).

Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER)

The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations place duties on people and companies who own, operate or have control over work equipment. They also place responsibilities on businesses and organisations whose employees use work equipment, whether owned by them or not.

According to these regulations, equipment provided for use at work must be:

- Suitable for the intended use
- Safe for use, maintained in a safe condition and inspected to make sure it's correctly installed and doesn't subsequently deteriorate
- Used only by people who have received adequate information, instruction and training
- Accompanied by suitable health and safety measures, such as protective devices and controls. These will normally include guarding, emergency stop devices, adequate means of isolation from sources of

energy, clearly visible markings and warning devices

- Used in accordance with specific requirements, for mobile work equipment and power presses

Some work equipment is subject to other health and safety legislation in addition to these regulations. For example, lifting equipment must also meet the requirements of the [Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998](#) (LOLER). [Pressure equipment](#) must meet the Pressure Systems Safety Regulations and personal protective equipment must meet the [PPE Regulations](#).

HSE has more information about the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998.

Reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC)

If your building was built between 1950s and 1990s, it would be worth reviewing if it might have any RAAC. You would be advised to

get a structural engineer or surveyor to check if you are not sure.

Risk assessment

A risk assessment looks at who could be at risk, hazards, factors contributing to risk and control measures at a premises. The key is to control the risks you identify and mitigate them as far as reasonably practical.

All sites however small should be conducting a risk assessment. Where more than 5 people are employed then this must be completed and fully recorded.

Risk assessments are live documents. You should review them regularly, at least annually. In the interim, you should assess any new hazards identified and add them to the existing risk log. Store all risk assessments for a minimum of 3 years.

See Girlguiding's [property risk assessment](#).

Signage and notices

Health and safety signage must comply with the [Health and Safety \(Safety Signs and Signals\) Regulations 1996](#).

Storage

You should store items with the heaviest items in the middle of the shelf at about waist height. Light items should go at the bottom or top. Store light items used infrequently at the top.

Shelving should be strong enough to take the weight of items on it. Don't overload the racking.

Make sure there's space between the top of the shelf and any light fittings, to stop any fire hazard.

If step ladders are needed to reach items, they should be suitable for the task and ensure users don't overreach.

Tree management

Risks from trees include a falling tree striking someone, pests and diseases, subsidence claims from neighbouring properties, and issues related to climate change.

You should review any trees on your property and consider specialist inspections for those considered high-risk due to their location, age and/or condition. Make sure

any obviously dead or decaying trees and branches are removed.

If your site includes large areas of woodland, you may want to approach the local Forestry Commission or Woodland Trust for help with forestry management, advice and grants for support.

HSE has more information about [managing the risk from falling trees or branches](#).

Ventilation

Ventilation is the process of bringing in fresh air from outside and removing indoor air, which may be stale or contain pollutants and other impurities such as airborne infectious diseases.

In terms of ventilation in your property, you need to:

- Assess the premises to identify poorly ventilated areas
- Look for areas with no natural ventilation (no windows, doors or vents to the outside) or mechanical ventilation (fans or ducts bringing air in from outside)
- Identify areas that feel stuffy or smell bad.
- Consider [using a CO2 monitor](#) to identify poor ventilation

It may help to list areas or use floor plans to record how areas are ventilated. Remember to include changing rooms, toilets etc.

Once you've assessed your property, you need to decide on the actions you can take to improve ventilation. HSE has some [examples of improving ventilation](#).

Methods of ventilation

The method of ventilation will depend on the building.

Natural ventilation relies on doors, windows and other openings such as trickle vents, air bricks or grilles to provide air. You may need to tell users of your building to open windows or keep windows open.

If your space is naturally ventilated, there are simple steps you can take to make sure it has enough fresh air without opening windows wide and making it too cold:

- Partially opening windows and doors can still provide adequate ventilation
- Opening higher-level windows will create fewer draughts
- Using trickle vents rather than opening windows

You could also consider regularly airing rooms that rely on natural ventilation, by opening windows and doors in between use.

Mechanical ventilation uses fans to move air into and out of rooms. In small spaces and buildings these may be in the room. Larger buildings may use a network of ducts and fans to blow clean air into rooms and/or extract the stale air.

Many buildings have a mixture of natural and mechanical ventilation, with either (or both) systems in different spaces. You shouldn't rely purely on desk or ceiling fans in poorly ventilated areas. They won't improve fresh air.

Ventilation rate

The ventilation rate is the volume of air provided to a room over a period of time. What's necessary for adequate general ventilation will depend on several factors, such as the amount of floor space per occupant, and the activity going on in the room.

HSE's [Approved Code of Practice and guidance](#) states that: 'The fresh-air supply rate should not normally fall below 5 to 8 litres per second, per occupant.' Some building guides recommend 10 litres per second per person for most commercial buildings.

In some places, it's obvious there's enough air. In other more enclosed settings, it can be difficult to estimate the flow rate of air in a space, particularly for natural ventilation. Using [CO2 monitors](#) is a useful way to check this.

Deep cleaning of extract systems

How often you need to deep clean kitchen extract/duct systems depends on how much you use them. You should have an inspection hatch so you can see their condition annually and determine whether they need to be cleaned.

Violence and terrorism

There is draft legislation (Martyn's Law/Protect Duty) currently out for consultation that means properties with between 100 and 800 capacity will become a standard duty holder and will need to meet certain obligations. This will include completing free training, awareness raising and cascading of information to staff and completing a preparedness plan.

The legislation's aim is make sure property managers and staff are better prepared to respond quickly to evolving situations, aware of what processes to follow, and able

to make rapid decisions and carry out actions to save lives. This could be as simple as locking doors to delay attackers' progress while guiding staff and customers to alternative exits. Training could also mean staff are able to administer life-saving treatment while waiting on the emergency services to arrive.

We will update this A-Z when we have more details on this new legislation.

Protect UK has more information about [what to do during a terrorist attack](#).

Waste

Any waste that comes from a commercial activity is business waste and you're legally required to store and dispose of it appropriately. This includes waste generated as part of Girlguiding activities.

This also applies to camp sites. The people who produced the waste could take it home. However, it's illegal for someone to carry rubbish they didn't produce unless they're a waste carrier. If rubbish was generated by 'work activity', for example, a

cardboard box that had held a fluorescent tube used in the toilet block, you need to get a waste carrier to remove it.

Some waste is classed as hazardous, for example waste from a sanitary bin or first aid waste contaminated with bodily fluids. This needs a separate waste collection and waste transfer note.

Find out more about your [responsibilities for disposing of business or commercial waste](#).

WiFi

If you're letting buildings to youth organisations, it's best practice to make sure that internet accounts have the appropriate monitoring and filtering options switched on.

The UK Safer Internet Centre has a [tool](#) you can use to test whether your filter blocks unsuitable content. They also have guidance about [what 'appropriate' filtering and monitoring might look like](#).

Working at height

As far as possible, no one should work at height.

Any work at height should have a risk assessment to make sure hazards are minimised, and the correct equipment is used for the task.

Ladders or stepladders should only be used for low-risk, short-duration tasks.

Ladders' condition should be checked before they're used. It's good practice to inspect ladders (and record the inspection) every 6 months. Ladders should also be numbered for ID purposes.

Ladders that are damaged should be cut up and disposed of so no one else can use them.

It's recommended that ladders and step ladders used for work are BS EN 131 or Class 1. They should be maintained and stored in accordance with the manufacturer's guidance.

You don't need any formal training to use ladders and stepladders, but you should follow the [HSE guidance](#).