

Fire safety: Best practice guidelines for occasional hosts

Introduction

The STAA is committed to ensuring that best practice is upheld in the field of fire safety. We believe that all properties that are being short-let should be as safe as possible. For this reason, we have produced these best practice guidelines for occasional short-term letters.

Fire risk assessments

By law, anyone with paying guests in their property must carry out a fire risk assessment, and have a plan of action based on the findings of that assessment.

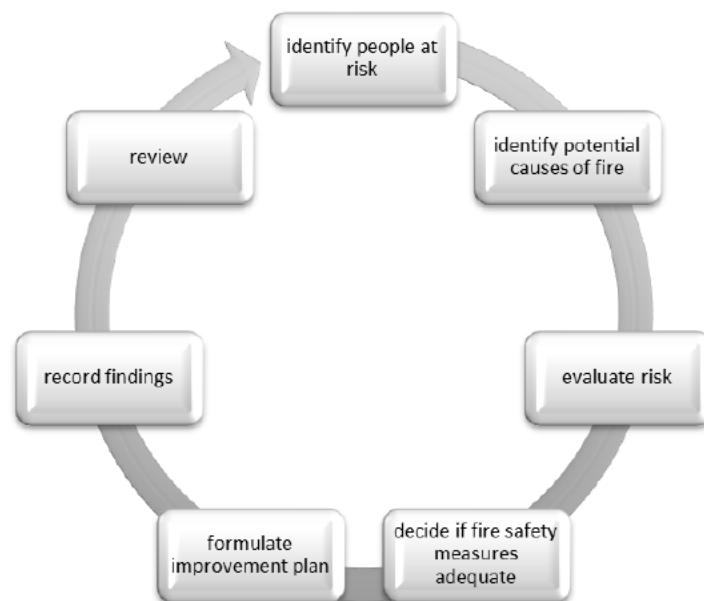
Broadly, a fire risk assessment involves identifying potential fire hazards within a home and taking steps to mitigate them, as well as to improve fire safety measures. The risks and relevant fire safety measures must be kept under review.

Hosts should look around their homes and identify areas of potential fire risk. The kitchen is the area of greatest risk, but there might also be risks in other rooms, especially where there are large numbers of electronic appliances, or rooms where there are open fires or portable heaters.

Hosts should identify necessary fire safety measures as a result of their assessment, and act on these measures.

If hosts feel that they do not have sufficient resources, skills or experience to undertake a fire safety risk assessment themselves, they can arrange for a suitably qualified person or company to carry out an assessment on their behalf.

More information of kitchen fire safety can be found [here](#). Information on portable heaters and open fires can be found here, while an example Home Safety Assessment can be found [here](#). Please also see the image below for an example of the process of a fire risk assessment.



Alarms and warning systems

All hosts, as an absolute minimum, should have alarms in the kitchen, hallway and landing areas. Hosts should consider installing smoke alarms in bedrooms, especially if there are numerous electronic appliances in those rooms.

Hosts should consider heat alarms for their kitchen in place of smoke alarms, as they will not false alarm if food is lightly burnt, but will sound when the room temperature reaches a certain threshold.

Carbon monoxide detectors are essential for any rooms where gas, oil or solid fuel is burnt.

Hosts should ensure that alarms are always working. They should never take the batteries out, and should test their equipment regularly, ideally once a week. Special alarms will be needed for those with visual or aural impairments. Alarms should be loud enough to wake people when sleeping. Guests should be given information on the system installed and what to do in the event of a false alarm.

In properties which are hosting for more than 140 nights per year, or which have ten or more paying guests at any one time, hosts should consider installing an interlinked alarm system.

More information on smoke alarms can be found [here](#).

Escape process

In the eventuality that a fire knocks out the normal lighting inside a property, hosts should consider whether there is enough 'borrowed light', such as from street lamps, to allow people within the premises to find their way out.

If this is not the case, means of lighting their way out should be provided. If ambient light from outside is insufficient, hosts should consider providing torches to their hosts in easy-to-access locations.

Corridors, stairs, landings and doors should be kept clear, especially ones that lead outside the property. Hosts should identify escape routes, and should communicate these escape routes to guests.

Doors that lie in exit routes should be simple to open, without the use of a key. Hosts should consider installing solid fitting timber doors to protect such routes, if they do not already have them, and should advise guests to keep doors closed, especially at night.

Hosts should consider guests with mobility impairments, as well as children and those with disabilities, when devising their escape processes.

Keep flammable material away from fire risks

Fires require something that can catch fire, something that can cause fire, and oxygen. Hosts should try, insofar as is possible, to separate things that cause fire from things that catch fire.

Fires can have obvious causes, such as cigarettes, matches, heaters etc. They can also have less obvious causes, including charging cables and hair straighteners. More information on what can cause a fire can be found [here](#).

Further information

A wide range of safety information leaflets are available from the government website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fire-safety-guidance>

Local resources

- The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service has produced a [helpful guide](#) which describes a range of measures that are principally benchmarks. These benchmarks should not be applied prescriptively to premises and are not minimum legal standards.
- Devon and Somerset Fire Rescue Service have also produced a guide to fire safety in self-catering holiday accommodation, which can be found [here](#).