

Houses in Multiple Occupation

Housing Act 2004

Hostels or Hostel Type Premises

Notes on Standards of Fire Resistance (GN.H70)

The Standards set out are for means of escape and other fire precautions purposes and are based on the use of materials and type of construction deemed to be capable of resisting the action of fire, or detecting the presence of fire. They do not necessarily comply with the current Building Regulations, which may impose a different or higher standard where they are applicable.

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Doors

1. Doors must comply with British Standard 476 and installation to BS8214 rated as half hour fire resisting. Existing panelled doors and doors previously 'made up' with fire resisting material are not acceptable. They will not provide adequate fire resistance and must be replaced with proprietary fire doors to current BS 476 as above.
2. All fire doors must be fitted with an intumescent strip incorporating a smoke seal in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions (i.e. - Dufalysite or similar approved strip). In addition they must be a close fit (3mm or less) within the door frame.
3. All fire doors must be made effectively self-closing by means of an approved self-closing device, these being either a double chain concealed jamb closer e.g. Perkomatic or an overhead type closing device, which ensures the door closes fully within the door frame and is held firmly shut against the door stops. (Gibraltar type closers and single Perko's are not acceptable). The door should be retained in this closed position by locks or by lever latch type door furniture, all of which must be operable from inside the dwelling without the use of a key (bales catches or roller catches are not acceptable). See Appendix 1 for illustrations.
4. Any glazing in doors to be secured by 15 x 15mm finished hardwood beading bedded in intumescent putty securely fixed to the framing by screws at not less than 200mm centres. Not less than 2 No screws to any one bead.
5. Hinges (or part of the hinge) must be capable of resisting a fire and have a melting point of not less than 800°C. Doors to be hung on 3 100mm broad leaf butt hinges fixed with 32mm No.8 steel screws.
6. Door stops must be securely fixed to the door frame with steel screws. It may be possible to increase the size of the existing rebated stops by "planting on" suitable timber battens to achieve the required dimensions.
7. Where possible i.e. in new buildings or where a new door opening is created it is recommended that manufacturer's door 'sets' are installed (i.e. door and frame complete).
Doors sited within an escape route which may be used to evacuate disabled persons should incorporate vision panels and have a minimum opening width of 800mm.

Lobbies

Lobbies may be necessary within the property to provide two protective fire doors to separate living accommodation from the fire escape route (where the escape route is a single staircase affording a downwards escape only).

8. Partitions to form lobbies should be constructed from 75mm x 50mm timber studding soundly fixed to the permanent fabric of the building, faced on both sides with 12mm plasterboard securely fixed by felt nails to the timber. All plates and noggins to be

supplied as necessary to provide support to the edges of the covering material. Timber skirting boards to be fitted to the base of the partition walls.

9. The lobby enclosure must be carried to the full height of the room or should have a ceiling at an appropriate height, which is constructed in the same manner as the partition walls. In addition the floor of the lobby must be capable of resisting a fire for not less than one half hour.

10. Doors situated within the lobby must comply with BS 476 and BS 8214, see 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7.

11. Lobbies must be effectively illuminated by artificial lighting in accordance with BS 5266 Part 1 (Emergency Lighting).

12. The provision of lobbies may be waived if a suitable secondary means of fire escape is provided at the premises. If an external fire escape is preferred planning permission will be required. Separate advice is available from the Private Sector Housing Team.

Screens and Partitions

13. Screens and partitions may be constructed of:

(a) Timber studding not less than 75mm x 50mm (3" x 2") faced on both sides with 12mm (½") plasterboard or Masterboard, Tacboard, Tacfire or Supalux building boards of the thickness recommended by the manufacturer with joints closely butted and kept to a minimum. Any joints or gaps must be properly filled and sealed.

(b) Non-combustible materials in accordance with the Building Regulations 1991.

Screens and partitions may be sectionalised for the purposes of moving furniture in or out of the house, providing the sections remain to a standard of fire resistance of not less than one half hour when replaced.

Partitions and Spandrels

14. Where the framing of the existing partition or spandrel does not equal or exceed 38mm in thickness then it should be taken down and a stud partition as described under item 13(a) constructed.

Where the framing exceeds 38mm in thickness then the panels can be made flush with the framing with 12mm (½") plasterboard or Superlux, Masterboard, Tacboard or Tacfire buildingboards on the side remote from the staircase enclosure and the whole partition completely sheeted on that side with that material.

Matchboard partitions should be removed and a stud partition as described erected in its place.

Glazing

15. Any glazing which is necessary in doors, screens or partitions, e.g. borrowed lights, shall be 6mm fire resisting reinforced glass secured by wood or metal (not aluminium) beads, bedded in intumescent putty. Glazing beads to be of hardwood 15mm x 15mm minimum finished size. Beads to be fixed by screws at not less than 200mm centres with a minimum of two fixings per bead.

The casement/sash shall be fixed shut and timber frames shall have a minimum width and thickness of 44mm clear of rebates; each panel to be not more than 0.372m² (4 sq ft) in area.

Soffits

16. The soffit of a protected staircase and the underside of the exit-way to the street (where basement or cellar under) is to be of sound lath and plaster or plasterboard or one of the following sheet materials to the manufacturers recommended thickness:- Superlux, Masterboard, Tacboard or Tacfire.

Fire Alarms

17. Hostels will require a fire alarm installation which should incorporate automatic fire-sensors (smoke detectors or heat detectors) which must be installed in accordance with British Standard 5839 Part 1:2002, or as amended, type L2 system.

18. They should be sited throughout the escape route, within circulation spaces and in storage areas to achieve an audible warning of at least 75 dB(A) within any room containing a bed. The dB(A) reading to be taken from the bed head and be achieved with all doors in the closed position.

19. Care should be taken to ensure that sensors chosen are appropriately sensitive to the fire hazards which may be expected, and resistant to environmental conditions which may cause false alarms. In situations where the incidence of intentionally started flaming fires can be expected to be high and particularly in those situations where occupants would be immediately exposed to the effects of such fire, sensors giving the most rapid responses to flaming fires (e.g. of the ionisation type) may be preferred. However, in the premises covered by this advice, where a high degree of staff supervision cannot be achieved, sensors sensitive to this type of burning (e.g. of the optical type) should be chosen.

20. Any rooms which are provided with an induction loop (for the hard of hearing) must be provided with a suitable interruptor affording suitable audible warning (in case of fire) effectively connected to the alarm system.

21. User Responsibilities, Testing and Servicing

The recommendations of British Standard 5839: Part 1 relating to user responsibilities, testing and servicing should be followed.

22. Self-Contained Sensors

Self-contained battery operated fire sensors are not suitable as a means of giving warning in case of fire in the types of premises covered by this guide.

Call Points

23. 'Break Glass' call points must be installed adjacent to each exit door and within the staircase enclosure at each floor level.

Emergency Lighting

24. Emergency lighting by means of electricity should be provided for the purposes of illuminating all stairways, routes of exit, common rooms and directional signs, sufficiently to enable people to make their way out of the premises. The installation should comply with the recommendations of British Standard 5266 part 1:1988 and be capable of maintaining a suitable level of illumination for two hours or one hour in the case of premises with a straightforward single downward escape facility.

Lighting General

25. In common escape routes including stairways, and common rooms, normal lighting with a suitable system of control by means of electricity should be provided so that people are able to move and escape from the building during the hours of darkness and from any areas without the benefit of daylight. Careful consideration must be given to the duration of the lighting that can be expected if press button slow release switches are provided. It is recommended that circuits for such lighting should be designed so that the complete escape route can be illuminated by the operation of any one switch.

Older type buildings which are to be converted to hostel type premises may be requested to furnish a certificate of compliance with the requirements of the regulations of electrical equipment of buildings (current edition) issued by the Institution of Electrical Engineers and any standards required by the South Eastern Electricity Board. The certificate to be issued by a qualified electrician.

Recommendations for Fire Fighting Equipment Applicable to Self-contained Units and to Hostel-type Accommodation

26. Water type extinguishers should be provided in communal areas and circulation spaces for dealing with the kind of fire likely to be encountered.

27. The number of portable fire extinguishers required will depend upon the size and layout of the building and the nature of the fire separation. On each floor there should normally be at least one water type extinguisher of 9 litres capacity for every 200m² of floor area, or part thereof with not less than two such extinguishers on every floor, except where the floor area does not exceed 100m². Two extinguishers of 4.5 litres capacity may be used instead of one of 9 litres.

28. In addition to water type extinguishers provided in accordance with paragraph 26 there should also be other extinguishing equipment for special risk and fire blankets for communal kitchens, for which water is unsuitable. Fire blankets to comply with BS6575:1985

29. Portable fire extinguishers should conform to BS 5423 and/or BS EN 3: part 5 Specification for portable fire extinguishers, and be installed and maintained as outlined in British Standard 5306 for selection installation and maintenance of practice for selection installation and maintenance of portable fire extinguishers. Schemes for ensuring conformity with these standards have been produced by British Approvals for Fire Equipment (BAFE) and conforming equipment and services are recognised by that organisation's mark of approval.

30. The use of fire extinguishers employing C.F.C. as a propellant is not recommended owing to environmental pollution possible with this type of extinguisher.

NOTE: The new rating system introduced into BS EN 3 parts 1-10 identifies extinguishing capabilities of extinguishers in relation to the size of a standard test fire. New extinguishers will be marked with a number(s) and a letter indicating the rating and class of fire for which they are suitable, e.g. a 9 litre water-type extinguisher will probably be marked 13A.

Directional Signs and Notices

31. All fire safety signs, notices and graphic symbols should comply with British Standard 5499.

32. A door fitted with a panic bolt or latch should have the words 'Push Bar to Open' in conspicuous lettering of appropriate size printed on the door immediately above the push bar.

33. A notice with the words "Fire Door - Keep Shut" in letters of appropriate size should be permanently displayed at eye level on both faces of all fire resisting doors. Except a door which is kept open and which closes automatically on operation of the automatic detectors. Doors of the latter type should be marked "Fire Door - Automatic - Keep Clear". Fire door notices need not be displayed on entrance doors to individual dwellings.

34. A notice with the words "Keep Locked" should be permanently displayed on the outside face of all fire resisting doors to cupboards.

35. A Notice with the words "Keep Clear - Exit from Emergency Escape Route" in letters of appropriate size should be permanently displayed at eye level on the external face of all doors which are provided solely as a means of escape in case of fire and which, because they are not normally in use, are liable to be obstructed.

36. Any exit door from a building which is not used as a normal exit or route or travel should be clearly indicated by a notice bearing the words 'Fire Exit' in lettering of appropriate size. The notice should be displayed immediately above the door. If this is not possible a position must be chosen where the notice is least likely to be obstructed and most likely to be seen.

37. At suitable points along an escape route where an exit cannot be seen or where a person escaping might be in doubt as to the location of an exit a notice should be provided bearing in lettering of appropriate size the words "Fire Exit" and a directional arrow. Such notices should be displayed in conspicuous positions wherever possible between 2m and 2.5m above floor level.

38. Any part of an escape route which is likely to be used by partially sighted or blind persons should be provided with tactile signs, conveniently placed, to aid escape from the premises.

39. Fire instructions should be displayed in rooms used as sleeping accommodation adjacent to fire alarm call points, telephones, and common rooms. The notices should be framed and glazed or otherwise protected from defacement. The notices should state the following:-

- (a) If you discover a fire, operate the fire alarm immediately.
- (b) Call the fire brigade from the nearest telephone.
- (c) Dial '999'.
- (d) Give the operator the telephone number and ask for 'Fire'.
- (e) When the fire brigade answers give the message distinctly/clearly.
- (f) Do not replace the receiver until your address has been repeated by the fire brigade.
- (g) Attack the fire if possible **but do not take personal risk.**
- (h) Leave the building.

The instructions should also appear in other languages most commonly used by residents. Notices giving more detailed instructions should be exhibited in all staff rooms, in staff residential accommodation and on all notice boards.

Recommendations for Staff Fire Instructions and Drills in Hostel-type Accommodation

40. In the event of fire the safety of residents is enhanced by the ability of available staff to respond promptly. It is of vital importance therefore that all members of staff should be instructed and trained to ensure that they understand the fire precautions applicable to the building and the action to be taken in the event of fire. This should include staff on shift duties or other regular duties outside the normal working hours. The aim should be to ensure that all staff receive instruction, practical demonstration and training appropriate to their responsibilities in the event of an emergency. These should be based on written instructions.

41. All residents in hostel-type accommodation should be made aware of the evacuation procedures to be followed in the event of a fire and should be encouraged to participate in fire drills.

42. Instructions should be given by a competent person at such intervals as will ensure that all members of staff are instructed at least twice in each period of 12 months.

43. Instructions and training for staff generally should cover the following matters:

The action to be taken upon discovering fire.

The action to be taken upon hearing the fire alarm.

Raising the alarm and the location of alarm call points and alarm indicator panels.

The correct method of calling the fire brigade.

The location and use of fire-fighting equipment.

Knowledge of the escape routes.

Appreciation of the importance of fire doors and of the need to close all doors, where possible, at the time of a fire on hearing the fire alarm.

44. Except in small hostel-type establishments, practice fire drills should be carried out at least twice a year. These should assume conditions in which one or more of the escape routes is obstructed by smoke. During these drills the fire alarm should be operated by a member of the staff who is told of the supposed outbreak and, thereafter, the fire routine should be rehearsed as fully as circumstances allow. In small premises where not more than two members of staff are available the exercise could take the form of a walk over the escape routes, checking fire doors, the position of fire alarms and fire-fighting equipment.

45. Such details as are necessary to show the training and instruction given should be recorded. The following are examples of matters which may need to be included in such a record:

- Date of the instruction or exercise.
- Duration.
- Name of the person giving the instruction.
- Names of the persons receiving the instruction.
- The nature of the instruction, training or drill.

46. In all hostel-type premises one person should have overall responsibility for organising staff training and co-ordinating the action of any staff in the event of fire.

General

47. The premises must be provided with a suitable telephone sited in a common area which may be used to summon the emergency services.

48. All furniture and soft furnishing supplied by landlords/agents must be fire resisting and comply with the furniture & furnishing (fire) (safety) Regulations 1988 (as amended) or be labelled to show compliance.

49. It is recommended that flame retardant paints be used in the escape route(s).

50. Asbestos based materials are not acceptable.

51. Locks on entrance doors to accommodation should be of a type that can be opened from the inside **without** the use of a key. See appendix 1
These are available as mortice lever locks or cylinder night latches.

52. No electrical, gas or liquid fuelled appliances should be placed within any protected escape route.

53. Non- flame retardant polystyrene tiles are not acceptable.

54. Any alterations to the mode of occupation, the structure of the premises, any escape route, or detection system should be notified to the Environmental Health Officer.

55. The guidance given in these notes is without prejudice to any requirements of the Building Control Officer, or other statutory authorities/departments.

56. Following completion of works to ensure satisfactory means of escape in case of fire from premises in multiple occupation, an ongoing programme of maintenance should be undertaken by the person or persons having control of the premises.

The importance of maintaining these works once they have been provided cannot be over emphasised.

57. A suitable fire risk assessment should be carried out and updated on a regular basis in accordance with the Regulatory Reform (fire safety) Order 2005

58. If you require any further information please contact Housing Standards and Enforcement Team on 020-8726 6100 or the HMO Team - hmo@croydon.gov.uk - Phone 020 8726 6000 ext. 28257