



Fire Strategies: What Building Owners and Responsible Persons Need to Know

Why is a Fire Strategy Important?

A fire strategy sets out how a building is intended to protect occupants in the event of fire. It describes the evacuation approach, the fire safety measures that support it, and the management arrangements needed to ensure the building remains safe throughout its lifecycle.

While fire strategies are widely used across the UK, there is no single legal definition of a fire strategy. However, fire safety legislation and building regulations clearly require sufficient fire safety information to be provided to those responsible for managing buildings.

Legal Requirements

Under Regulation 38 of the Building Regulations, anyone carrying out building work must provide fire safety information to the Responsible Person before occupation or completion of the works. The objective is to ensure those managing the building have enough information to understand and implement the building's fire safety arrangements.

For Higher-Risk Buildings (HRBs), additional requirements apply under the Building Safety Act regime. Key fire and structural safety information must be maintained digitally as part of the Golden Thread, kept up to date, and made available to regulators and other duty holders where required.

Which Buildings Need a Fire Strategy?

All buildings should have sufficient fire safety information to explain how fire safety has been designed and is to be managed.

A particularly detailed fire strategy is normally expected where a building is considered complex, for example:

- High-rise residential buildings.
- Hospitals, care homes and buildings housing vulnerable occupants.
- Buildings designed using fire engineering solutions.
- Large or complex layouts with multiple wings, levels or escape routes.
- Premises with hazardous processes or increased fire risks.
- Buildings containing sophisticated fire safety systems or smoke control measures.

What Should a Fire Strategy Include?

A suitable fire strategy should explain:

Building Use and Design

- Intended building use and occupancy profile.
- Design standards and guidance used (e.g. Approved Document B, BS 9999).
- Any departures from standard guidance and the justification for them.
- Key design assumptions, such as occupancy levels, fire loads and management controls.

Evacuation Arrangements

- The evacuation strategy adopted (e.g. simultaneous, phased, progressive horizontal evacuation, stay put).
- Evacuation sequencing and any assumptions relating to occupant behaviour.

Fire Safety Measures

- Fire detection and alarm systems.
- Means of escape and evacuation routes.
- Refuge areas and evacuation lifts.
- Passive fire protection and compartmentation.
- Smoke control systems.
- Fire suppression systems.
- Firefighting facilities and fire service access provisions.

Building Management Considerations

- Security measures that may influence evacuation.
- Operational procedures required to support fire safety systems.
- Any management arrangements critical to the original design assumptions.

Fire Engineered Buildings

Where a building has been designed using fire engineering principles, the fire strategy should also include the supporting calculations, modelling and technical analyses used to justify the design.

These records are particularly important where evacuation capacities, smoke movement, structural fire performance or other engineered solutions form part of the overall safety strategy.

A Living Document

A fire strategy should not be treated as a static document. It should be reviewed and updated whenever significant changes occur, including:

- Alterations to the building layout.
- Changes in occupancy or use.
- Refurbishment projects.
- Installation or modification of fire safety systems.
- Changes to management procedures that underpin the original design assumptions.

For Higher-Risk Buildings, such changes may also trigger a requirement to update Golden Thread information.

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