

## Fire Safety Information Bulletin

### Subject:

The Housing Act 2004:  
Standards of Fire Safety in Houses-in-Multiple  
Occupation

### Relevant Legislation:

The Housing Act 2004

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004

### Summary Details:

This document outlines the standard of fire safety preventative and protective measures that are applicable to houses in multiple occupation.

### Action Required:

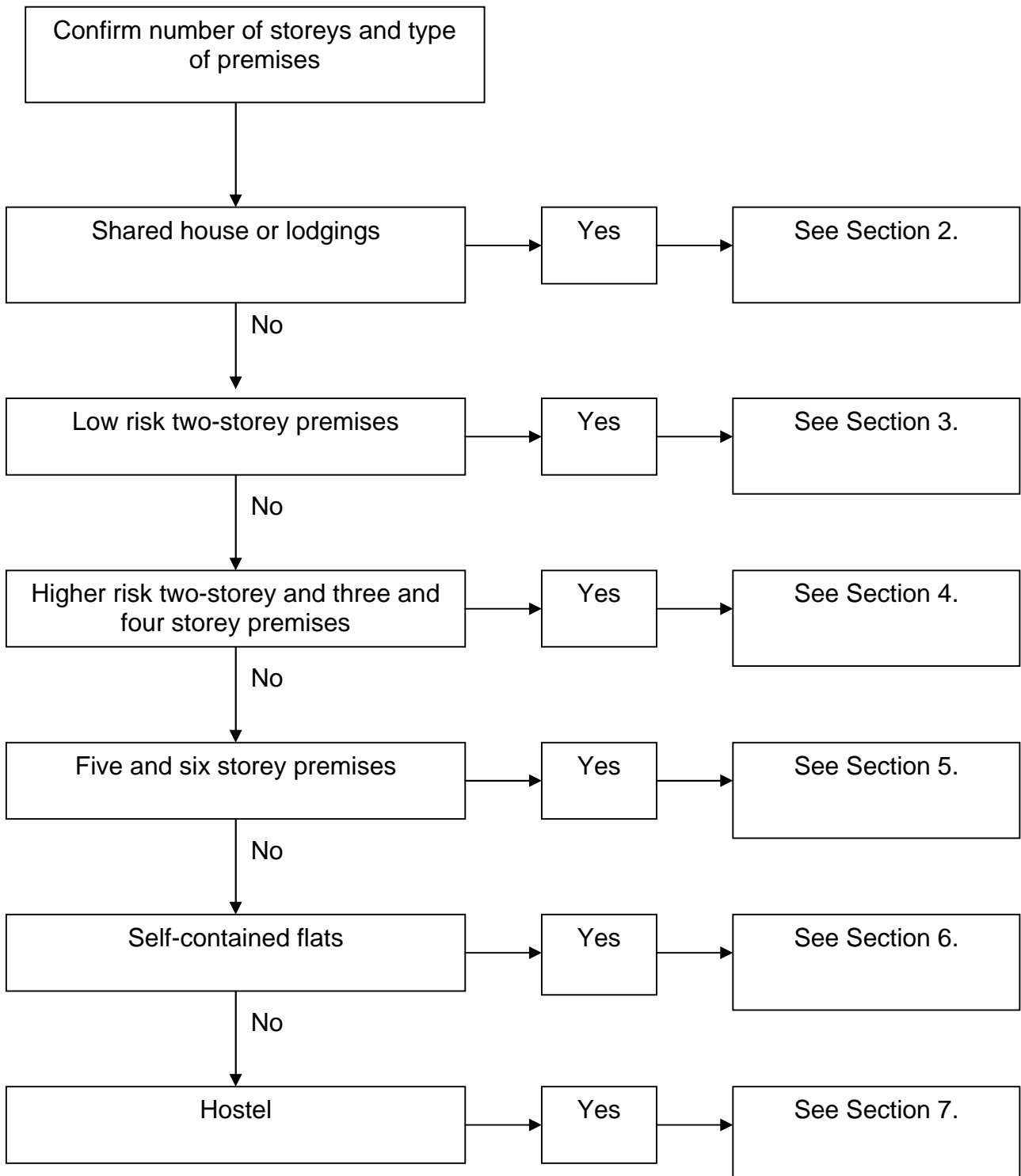
All fire safety (protection) officers are to be made aware of the contents of this note.

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## Type Of Premises Flowchart



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## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Housing Act 2004 allows local authorities the freedom to adopt a risk-appropriate enforcement regime when detailing the standards of fire safety protective and preventative measures required within houses in multiple occupation.
- 1.2 This guidance has been produced to assist officers when undertaking consultations under the Housing Act 2004.
- 1.3 This document is produced in accordance with the Community Safety strategic aim of the Fire and Rescue Authority by supporting the following corporate objective: -
  - Provide fire safety support and guidance, to occupiers of domestic dwellings and assess the risks to users in commercial and public buildings, in order to protect the community
- 1.4 Officers are to use their professional judgement when deciding what standards are appropriate in each case. The following standards are to be used as a benchmark and officers are to adjust the level of preventative and protective measures required as appropriate to the level of risk present within the premises concerned.

## 2 All Shared Houses And Lodgings

### 2.1 Fire Detection System

- As per table 1 (see [page 9](#))

### 2.2 All other matters

- As required on a risk appropriate basis

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## 3 Low Risk Two-Storey

As detailed in [DETR letter 28 April 1999](#) – HMOs: Guidance on Standards.

### 3.1 Providing that the premises meets the following criteria, it may be considered to be of a low risk: -

- High quality and visible management controls
- The premises should have 5 or fewer occupants, including landlord and family (none of whom are to be described as vulnerable – as defined in the [DETR letter](#)).
- All habitable rooms should have an openable window (or door) through which emergency egress to a place of safety is achievable (window should comply with the Building Regulations)
- Premises should be of a conventional layout and not let as bedsits.
- Any habitable room should not be an inner-room (as defined in approved document B (ADB))
- Any habitable room should have a suitable means of egress other than through a higher-risk area (i.e. kitchen)
- All internal doors to rooms should be close-fitting and in good condition
- No adverse risk factors present.

**Note:** - If the premises fails to meet the above criteria it should not be considered to be of a low risk and the standards detailed in this section will not be acceptable. Officers must refer to section 4 or 5 of this document to find details of acceptable standards.

### 3.2 Fire Detection System

- As per table 1 (see [page 9](#))

### 3.3 Protected route

- Kitchen doors that open onto escape routes should be of 30-minute fire-resisting construction fitted with intumescent strips, cold smoke seals, a self-closing device and a “fire door keep shut notice”.

### 3.4 Fire-fighting equipment

- A fire blanket and a 34B rated fire extinguisher should be provided in any kitchen
- 13A rated fire extinguisher(s) should be provided in other areas of the premises on a risk-appropriate basis.

### 3.5 General Matters

For all other matters, see [section 8](#) of this document.

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## 4 All Other Two-Storey and Three and Four Storey Premises

### 4.1 Fire Detection System

- As per table 1 ([see page 9](#))

### 4.2 Protected route

- Travel distances should be in accordance with ADB
- A protected stairway should be provided at all levels (to achieve 30-minutes fire resistance) and routed to a place of safety
- Any additional means of escape should be provided according to risk - appropriate principles
- A 30-minutes fire resisting door should be fitted to all bathrooms, shower rooms and wc's that contain electrical appliances
- Electric or gas meters should be enclosed within a 30-minutes fire-resistant cupboard
- Cupboards (including airing cupboards), if used, should be of 30-minutes fire-resisting construction (including soffits and undersides). If not being used, providing that the door is kept locked shut, there will be no requirement to up-grade.
- All protected routes are to be kept clear of obstructions and combustible materials.
- Any construction within 1.8m horizontally or 9m vertically below or 1.1m above the top most landing of an external escape route should afford 30-minutes fire-resistance
- Surface finishes should be to Class 0 standard (as defined in ADB)

### 4.3 Fire-fighting equipment

- Fire blanket and a 34B rated fire extinguisher should be provided in any kitchen
- 13A rated fire extinguisher(s) should be provided in other areas of the premises on a risk-appropriate basis.

### 4.4 Emergency Lighting

- Three-hour non-maintained emergency lighting should be provided on a risk-appropriate basis (to BS 5266 or equivalent)

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## 4.5 Basements

- 30-minutes fire-resistance should be provided between ground and basement level if fire detection extends to basement.
- 60-minutes fire-resistance should be provided between the ground floor and basement if the fire detection system does not extend to basement.
- Where basement is accessed from within the ground floor, two 30-minute fire doors should be provided (one at the top and one at the bottom of the flight of stairs leading to the basement) unless there is a separate exit from each habitable room from the basement.

## 4.6 General Matters

For all other matters, see [section 8](#) of this document.

## 5 **Five and Six Storey Premises**

5.1 All protective measures to be as per all other two-storey and three and four storey premises except for the additional requirement to provide a secondary means of escape that may be: -

- Internal (and separated from the primary escape route with 30-minutes fire-resisting construction),
- External, or
- A route that incorporates upward travel to a roof area that has access to a secondary means of escape. This should be provided with a fire resistant door across the stairs at third and fifth floor levels on the primary escape staircase.

## 5.2 General Matters

For all other matters, see [section 8](#) of this document.

## 6 **Houses Converted to Self-Contained Flats**

### 6.1 Fire Detection System

- As per table 1 (see [page 9](#))

### 6.2 Protected Route

- Walls and ceilings of protected route should be of 30-minutes fire-resisting construction
- Entrance doors to each flat from protected route should be of 30-minutes fire-resisting construction
- Cupboards within common areas to be constructed of 30-minutes fire-resisting material (to include self-closing fire-resisting door)

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## 6.3 Fire-fighting Equipment

- A fire blanket and a 34B rated fire extinguisher should be provided in any kitchen
- 13A rated fire extinguisher(s) should be provided in other areas of the premises on a risk-appropriate basis.

## 6.4 Emergency Lighting

- Three-hour non-maintained emergency lighting should be provided on a risk appropriate basis (to BS 5266 or equivalent)

## 6.5 Basements

- Where the basement consists of a self-contained dwelling, the fire detection system should be extended from the premises above into the basement
- If the self-contained flat is not occupied as a flat in multiple occupation there will be no requirement for a protected route within the basement

## 6.6 Preferred Layout

- Higher-risk rooms should be sited away from the route to the exit door
- There should be no habitable inner-room

## 6.7 General Matters

For all other matters, see [section 8](#) of this document.

## 7 **Hostels**

- Treat as All Other Two-Storey and Three and Four Storey Premises but note the requirement for a BS 5839: part 1 (or equivalent) system to be installed throughout the premises.

## 8 **General Matters Applicable to All Houses in Multiple Occupation**

### 8.1 Fire Extinguishers

- Installed in accordance with BS EN 3 (or equivalent)
- Tested and maintained in accordance with BS 5306: part 3: 2003 (or equivalent)

### 8.2 Fire Blankets

- Installed, tested and maintained in accordance with BS EN 1869: 1997 (or equivalent)

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## 8.3 Notices and Signs

- Fire routine notices should be provided and sited adjacent to all manual break glass call points (where installed)
- Fire Door Keep Shut notices to be fitted to all doors in protected routes, other than bedroom doors or flat entrance doors, except where a cupboard door has no self-closing device fitted which will require a Fire Door Keep Locked Shut notice.
- Directional notices as required following risk assessment
- All signs and notices should comply with BS 5499: part 4: 2000 (or equivalent)

## 8.4 Locks on Doors

- All doors leading from rooms and final exit doors should be easily openable without the use of a key

## 8.5 Commercial Premises

- Commercial and residential premises should be separated by 60-minutes fire-resisting structure
- Fire detection should extend into the commercial area from the residential accommodation

## 8.6 Separation

- All high-risk rooms should be enclosed in 30-minutes fire-resisting construction
- All walls in protected route/stairway should be of 30-minutes fire-resisting construction
- Ceilings between occupancies should be of 30-minutes fire-resisting construction.

## 8.7 Place of Safety

- Can be considered to be an area two-and-a-half times the height of the premises away from the building. However, this must be risk-assessed and the provision of any lockable gates or restricted occupancy of the area considered.

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## 9 Automatic Fire Detection

Type of property	Standard of Fire Alarm	Minimum System Category	Minimum System Grade
<b>Hostels</b>	BS 5839 part 1	L2	N/A

<b>HMO's -</b>			
All shared houses and lodgings	BS 5839 part 6	<a href="#">LD2</a>	<a href="#">D</a>
Low risk two-storey	BS 5839 part 6	<a href="#">LD2</a>	<a href="#">D</a>
Two storey with at least one floor over 200m <sup>2</sup> in area	BS 5839 part 6	<a href="#">LD2</a>	<a href="#">B</a>
All other two-storey	BS 5839 part 6	<a href="#">LD2</a>	<a href="#">D</a>
Three (or more) storeys	BS 5839 part 6	<a href="#">LD2</a>	<a href="#">A</a>

<b>Self-contained flats / bedsits</b> (Mixed system*)	<u>Individual Units</u> BS 5839 part 6	<a href="#">LD 2*</a>	<a href="#">D*</a>
	<u>Communal Areas</u> BS 5839 part 6	<a href="#">LD2*</a>	<a href="#">A*</a>

\* A mixed system may also be achieved by the installation of an addressable panel combined with a staged-alarm mode of operation to BS5839: part 1: 2002

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## 10 BS 5839 part 6 Grades / Categories

### System grade

- A** A fire detection and alarm system which incorporates control and indicating equipment conforming to BS EN 54-2 and which is designed, installed and serviced in accordance with all the recommendations of BS 5839 pt 1 (with certain substituted clauses, see BS5839: pt 6).
- B** A fire detection and alarm system comprising fire detectors, fire alarm sounders, and control and indicating equipment which either conforms with BS EN 54-2 or BS5839-6 Annex C.
- C** A system of fire detectors and alarm sounders (which may be combined in one unit) connected to a common power supply, comprising the normal mains and a stand by supply, with an element of central control.
- D** A system of one or more mains-powered smoke alarms, each with an integral power supply (the system may include heat alarms).
- E** A system of one or more mains-powered smoke alarms with no stand-by supply(the system may include heat alarms).
- F** A system of one or more battery-powered smoke alarms (the system may include heat alarms).

**Note:** -In grades **D, E & F**, the standard recommends interlinking all detectors.

### Category

#### LD Type – Life safety

- LD1** a system installed throughout the dwelling, incorporating detectors in all circulation spaces that form part of the escape routes from the dwelling, and in all rooms and areas in which fire might start, other than toilets, bathrooms and shower rooms.
- LD2** a system incorporating detectors in all circulation spaces that form part of the escape routes from the dwelling, and in all rooms or areas that present a high fire risk to occupants (following risk assessment). The specification for a type LD2 system should always include details of the areas or rooms of the dwelling that are to be protected.
- LD3** a system incorporating detectors in all circulation spaces that form part of the escape route from the dwelling.

**Note:** - When specifying a system by reference to BS 5839 part 6, the grade and type of system should always be stated.

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## 11 Design Freedoms for Residential / Domestic Sprinkler Systems

11.1 All premises should be subjected to a suitable and sufficient risk assessment of the existing fire safety preventative and protective measures before a residential / domestic sprinkler system can be considered. Any subsequent requirements or recommendations should be proportionate to the level of risk present.

### 11.2 1, 2 & 3 Storey Premises

#### **Extent of System**

All communal areas and habitable rooms should be provided with sprinkler protection. In addition, under-stair cupboards used for storage must either be sprinklered or up-graded to achieve a fire-resisting standard.

The sprinkler system should be designed, installed, commissioned and maintained in accordance with BS 9251 or equivalent.

#### **Automatic Fire Detection**

Where there is a requirement for a BS 5839: Part 1 fire alarm system to be installed, the enforcing authority may allow a BS 5839: part 6 system to be fitted within premises provided with a sprinkler system.

The system must be fitted with an alarm capable of giving adequate warning to all occupants in the event of any outbreak of fire. This may be achieved by an interface (of an appropriate standard) between a flow-switch in the sprinkler system and the fire alarm system; or, by using an integral alarm fitted to the sprinkler system. In both cases any alarm must be capable of achieving audibility levels as per BS 5839: part 1.

In premises where a BS 5839 part 6 system has been installed it will not be possible to relax the standard of the fire-alarm system.

Optical-type smoke detectors should be installed to BS 5446 within a BS 5839: part 6 system, except where a heat detector would normally be required. A heat detector within kitchens will not be necessary, as the sprinkler system will provide heat detection and alarm capability in this room.

#### **Fire Fighting Equipment**

Where a sprinkler system is installed, with the exception of a fire-blanket in any kitchen, there should be no requirement for portable fire-fighting equipment.

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## **Fire Resistance and Smoke Control**

There will be no requirement to provide fire-resistance to the escape route; therefore, the requirement for walls and doors to be 30-minute FR can be relaxed.

However, all doors opening onto escape routes (except where a close-fitting door is acceptable) should be fitted with a self-closing device and smoke seals. All walls should provide an adequate barrier to smoke travel.

## **Compartmentation**

The requirement to provide compartmentation between different purpose groups may be relaxed. For example, the requirement to achieve 60-minutes fire-resistance between occupancies may be reduced to 30 minutes.

## **Fire Spread (Linings)**

Common areas and escape routes should be lined to achieve a class 1 rating. All other areas should achieve a class 3 rating.

## **Multiple Escape Routes**

Where alternative escape routes/stairways are necessary, the common corridor should be sub-divided by fire-resisting construction and smoke control measures so that smoke will not affect access to more than one escape route.

## **Other Premises**

Buildings in excess of four storeys will need to be risk assessed on a case-by-case basis. Any relaxation of standards must be proportionate to the level of risk present and be acceptable to the Fire and Rescue Authority.