SECTION 17
FIRE SAFETY

SECTION 17 - FIRE SAFETY

17.1 Contents

Attribution: Sylvain Pedneault, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons

17.2 Introduction

Just like every other business, salons also need to take adequate care of fire safety. Any negligence at any stage can turn into a hefty loss.

Additionally, reopening a business after a big fire breakout is not simple. Most businesses do not survive 5 years after such a major incident.

More importantly, it can put the life of your staff and customers in danger.

Therefore, adhering to the law of fire safety is imperative.

17.3 Fire Safety Risk Assessment

To fully understand your business, you must complete a fire safety risk assessment.

This risk assessment must be done by a Competent Person – and it **must** be recorded, regardless of the size or purpose of the premises.

> **COMPETENT PERSON**
>
> A 'competent person' is someone who has the required training, skills, knowledge and experience required for that particular task.

Based on the findings of the assessment, employers need to ensure that adequate and appropriate fire safety measures are in place to minimise the risk of injury or loss of life in the event of a fire. Remember to review and update your risk assessment regularly.

All Responsible Persons must now record their fire safety arrangements.

17.3.1 Fire safety arrangements

Fire safety arrangements are the arrangements you have in place to the fire safety in your building. These can be anything from procedures you need to have written down to policies you have in place.

 All Responsible Persons must now record the identity of the individual employed, or contracted by them, to undertake or review any or all of the fire risk assessment. This includes:

> ➤ Their full name
> ➤ Their organisation name, if applicable

If you appoint someone to help undertake or review your fire risk assessment they must be competent.

For a fire safety risk assessment, use the five steps of a risk assessment (see SECTION 2 – RISK ASSESSMENTS).

Here are a few things to take into consideration:

1. Know the possible sources of fire accidents. For instance, check all the electronic appliances hairdryers, straighteners, curlers etc. Sometimes, even a loose switch in the socket can result in fire. Therefore, check all the sockets of the salons and the connectors of these appliances. Also, be sure to put the flammable salon chemicals away from the machines.
2. Keep at least two fire extinguishers in the salon. One should be a CO2 extinguisher and the other one should be water or foam. The third category, which is a dry powder extinguisher is not suitable for salons. CO2 extinguishers are suitable for fires caused by electrical items. Foam extinguishers are best for fires related to cloth, gas, paper, and rubbish.
3. Purchase other precautionary equipment to avoid direct handling of electrical appliances like gloves, uniforms, masks, etc. Additionally, use disposable gloves when handling harsh chemicals.
4. Emergency lighting is highly important even if you have a single-story salon. This light will help staff and clients know where the exit route is in case of emergency.
5. Keep a check on gas pipes and leakages. Also, call a registered gas engineer for a yearly assessment. If you own the property of a salon, you should have a gas safety certificate. A gas safety certificate cost is minimal, and it allows you to ensure the gas safety of your building.
6. Be sure to provide appropriate training to staff members for fire safety. Yearly training is not enough. Keep reinforcing the must-haves and to-dos for fire safety after a few months.
7. Prepare a contingency plan and send copies of it to everyone in your team
8. Prepare proper documents of the findings. Also, keep a check every month so that you can reduce the chances of any mishap.

17.4 Identifying People at Risk

To identify those at risk in case of a fire, you must look at where your employees are working. Also, consider who else may be at risk, e.g. customers and visitors, and where they're likely to be found. You must consider those who may be especially at risk, such as:

➢ Staff who work alone and/or in isolated areas, e.g. cleaners and security staff
➢ Anyone with disabilities, particularly if they have slow mobility (e.g. elderly customers)
➢ Anyone with language difficulties
➢ Anyone who is unfamiliar with the premises (such as new staff, contractors, agency employees and customers)
➢ Anyone in the premises' immediate surrounding area

17.4.1 People with Special Needs

You must pay particular attention to employees who have special needs, such as those with a disability.

During your assessment, you may want to discuss their individual needs with them. Disabled people may react differently to a fire warning, especially if they have mobility issues.

Therefore, you must also provide a safe means for them to exit if there is a fire.

You must make other reasonable adjustments to ensure that they're not put at a disadvantage when compared to employees without disabilities.

Similarly, you should also consider others with special needs, such as young children and the elderly.

17.5 Fire Warden

Fire wardens are essential for every salon. Select a couple of responsible members of your team to be the fire wardens. These people will then be responsible to train the other staff, arrange precautions for fire safety, and making everyone calm in case of emergency.

Remember, these wardens must have the appropriate training to deal with such emergencies!

17.6 Emergency Lighting

You should have emergency lighting in place so your staff and customers can find their way out of the building in the event of an electrical failure due to a fire or electrical fault. This is particularly important if you have corridors or stairways in your premises.

17.6.1 Where should emergency lighting be placed?

The legal requirements surrounding emergency lighting are regularly updated and altered. It is therefore advisable to check that your lighting meets the requirements regularly and make any changes needed.

Examples of some of the requirements at this time are described below.

- ❖ Sufficient lighting and signage should be provided to enable a safe exit in the event of mains power supply failure.
- ❖ Emergency lighting should be provided within 2 meters of each exit door, each hazard or obstacle, any fire extinguishers and alarm panels, first aid equipment and electrical distribution boards. Where necessary extra lighting may need to be provided to meet minimum lighting levels.
- ❖ All emergency exits and escape routes should be indicated with clearly laid out illuminated signage. There should be no possibility of confusion.
- ❖ Where a direct exit is not an option, illuminated directional signs should be used to indicate the direction of travel, including signage to indicate each change in direction.

17.6.2 Maintaining emergency lighting

Emergency lighting should be maintained and tested regularly and spare parts for consumable items should be kept on-site.

Testing should be carried out by qualified individuals, with a basic function test carried out at regular intervals and a full simulation test carried out annually.

These should be logged with the date and time that each test was carried out and whether there were any issues, and how those issues were dealt with.

17.7 Fire-fighting Equipment

Fire extinguishers are essential when it comes to proofing your salon against a fire emergency. They can help control small outbreaks of fire quickly, preventing flames from spreading and causing more damage. In more severe emergencies, fire extinguishers can save lives.

17.7.1 Matching the fire with the extinguisher

There are different types of fire, with different characteristics.

Here are the classes of fire pertinent to most standard salons:

- Class A – fires involving solid materials such as wood, paper or textiles (this is the most common fire type)
- Class B – fires involving flammable liquids such as petrol, diesel or oils
- Class C – fires involving gases
- Electrical Fires – fires involving live electrical apparatus (it doesn't get an 'official' category)
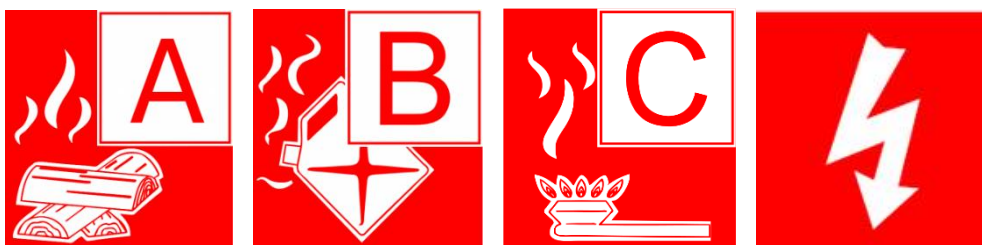
To deal with the different fire types, a range of fire extinguishers are available. Here are the types of fire extinguisher, their colour code (put on the extinguisher for quick identification) and what types of fire they are suitable for:

Water

Wood, paper, straw, textiles, coal

Foam

Petrol, diesel, paints etc.

CO_2 Gas

Electrical equipment, flammable liquids

Powder

Mixed – solids, flammable liquids, gases, electrical

Wet Chemical

Cooking oil / deep fat fryers

Fire blanket

17.7.2 Dangers of using the wrong fire extinguishers

When using a fire extinguisher, never use it for a fire that is larger than a waste paper basket, and make sure there is a safe way for you to leave the building.

Using the wrong fire extinguisher can make the fire worse, not better. Only use a fire extinguisher if you're sure it is the correct one.

- ∅ Using a water or a foam extinguisher on an electrical fire can electrocute the user
- ∅ A water, foam or powder extinguisher on oil or fats will make it worse – can explode or spread
- ∅ A powder extinguisher does not reach small places and is difficult to clean up after

Using the wrong fire extinguisher can make the fire worse or help spread it

17.7.3 Using a fire extinguisher

Fire extinguishers are easy to use. It is always best to practice with one before, so you get an idea of the weight and feel of a 'live' fire extinguisher.

Use the P.A.S.S. method:

P   Pull the pin on the fire extinguisher to interrupt the tamper seal

A   Aim the nozzle low, pointing to the base of the fire

S   Squeeze the handle to unleash the termination agent

S   Sweep from side to side at the bottom of the fire until it's extinguished

If the fireplace re-ignites, repeat the last three steps.

17.7.4 The Life of a Fire Extinguisher

Should you have need of them, you need your fire extinguisher ready to work at a moment's notice.

➢ They need to be serviced **every** year or after each use
➢ They must be replaced at the end of their lives which is ten years for CO_2 extinguishers and 15 years for all others
➢ If you need to dispose of your extinguisher, do not put it out with your rubbish. If you have just a couple of fire extinguishers then you could take them to a local recycling centre where staff will know what to do with them, but check with your council first
➢ Ultimately, employing the services of a professional fire company to deal with your fire extinguisher needs is the sensible – and safest – approach

17.8 Fire Safety Signage

If you have the responsibility of taking care of any commercial building, then you must understand the need for fire safety signs.

You may already be familiar with the fire exit sign, however, there are numerous other signs that the law demands be displayed appropriately.

The importance of fire signs cannot be underestimated. It helps people to escape during an emergency incident. The signs also keep indicating the directions to take until you are safe. In case you are in an unfamiliar environment, these signs are very important in guiding you away from harm.

The signage is also important even for those who are familiar with the environment because, in the event of a fire, there is always confusion and disorientation which can impede your escape unless you are guided. The signs are not just for your escape, it guides the emergency services that arrive on the site to navigate the building once you have been evacuated.

17.8.1 How to Position Fire Safety Signs

Fire safety signage indicates the location of the fire safety exit.

It also points to where the firefighting equipment would be. This equipment includes fire extinguishers, fire assembly points and any other relevant accessories. The signs should give clear mandatory instructions for requirements of such places, such as 'fire door, keep shut'. This is important because such doors are fitted with emergency alarms and should only be accessed during times of emergency.

Installation of such safety signs should be done professionally and by competent personnel. A professional will be someone who is knowledgeable with the rules and regulations governing safety in a building.

The layout and risks associated with particular premises should also be considered. When it comes to the sign's requirements, fire exits are site-specific. The signs should be clearly visible by the occupants of the buildings, and nothing should obscure these signs as it could be disastrous in times of emergency.

Depending on the architectural design of the building, some signs may be mounted on the wall alongside other wall-mounted signs. Whenever you are installing the fire signs, try to put yourself in the shoes of a visitor who has no idea how to manoeuvre around the building.

No display should block the emergency exits because visitors or the general public at your site will have no idea where the nearest exits are.

17.9 Fire Alarms

17.9.1 Fire Safety Regulations

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order covers general fire safety in England and Wales. These were updated with the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022.

In Scotland, requirements on general fire safety are covered in Part 3 of the Fire (Scotland) Act, supported by the Fire Safety (Scotland) Regulations

The UK government recommends that all fire alarm and detection systems should be installed and maintained in accordance with the relevant British Standard, BS 5839.

17.9.2 Do I Need a Fire Alarm?

Current UK fire alarm regulations state that all business premises must have 'an appropriate fire detection system'.

This basically means that an outbreak of fire can easily be detected and occupants can easily be warned.

This does not necessarily mean that all business premises will need a fire alarm system.

You are unlikely to need a fire alarm system if all of the following statements are true:

- Your premises are small, simple, and single-storey or open-plan
- You don't store any high-risk substances, such as chemicals
- You don't undertake any high-risk activities, such as cooking

- You don't have any vulnerable occupants, such as the very young, elderly or disabled
- A fire would be easily spotted if it broke out anywhere in the premises
- A shout of 'fire!' would be easily heard by all occupants

If one or more of these statements does not apply to your business, then you probably need a fire alarm system.

If you are in any doubt, then your Fire Risk Assessment should specifically state whether you should or shouldn't install automatic fire detection.

17.9.3 Different types of fire safety alarms

There are different categories of fire alarm systems.

Category M	Manual systems, and therefore incorporate no automatic fire detectors	
Category L	Automatic fire detection systems intended **for the protection of life**. They are further subdivided into subcategories	Category L1: Systems installed throughout all areas of the building.
		Category L2: Systems installed only in defined parts of the building, including all parts necessary to satisfy the recommendations of the code for a Category L3 system. The additional areas protected, over and above those protected in a Category L3 system, are those in which there is either high likelihood of fire starting or a high risk to life if fire does start.
		Category L3: Systems designed to give warning of fire at an early enough stage to enable all occupants other than, possibly those in the room of fire origin, to escape safely, before the escape routes are impassable due to the presence of fire, smoke or toxic gases. To satisfy this objective, other than in the case of very short corridors,

		fire detectors need to be installed in all rooms or areas that open onto the escape routes.
		Category L4: Systems installed within those parts of the escape routes comprising circulation areas and circulation spaces, such as corridors and stairways
		Category L5: Systems in which the protected area(s) and/or the location of detectors is designed to satisfy a specific fire safety objective (other than that of a Category L1, L2, L3 or L4 system)
Category P	Automatic fire detection systems intended **for the protection of property**. There are two subcategories	Category P1: Systems installed throughout all areas of the building
		Category P2: Systems installed only in defined parts of the building

Information from this table has been taken from the Fire Industry Association's Guidance Document on SELECTION AND SPECIFICATION OF FIRE ALARM CATEGORY IN ACCORDANCE WITH BS 5839-1

17.9.4 Grades of fire alarm systems

Fire alarm grades run from 'A' through to 'F', with 'A' being the highest grade and 'F' being the lowest.

Residential buildings can usually meet UK fire alarm regulations with a lower-grade system (D-F). These are not wired into a central control panel, and may not have back-up battery power.

Businesses generally need a more substantial system to comply with UK fire alarm legislation – from 'A' through to 'C' grade. At a very simplistic level, these higher-grade systems are wired into a central fire alarm panel, connected to the mains power supply, and also have a back-up power supply.

Which grade and category of fire alarm system you need depends on the nature of your business and the size and layout of your premises.

The grade and category of fire alarm system you need should be specified in your Fire Risk Assessment, or advised by whoever is designing your fire alarm system (don't forget to make sure this conforms to British Standard BS 5839)

17.9.5 Who can Install a Fire Alarm?

UK fire alarm regulations make no requirement as to who can install a fire alarm, other than that they must be 'competent'.

This therefore means that the person or company who installs your fire alarm should:

➢ understand the various types of fire alarm system and how they work
➢ be familiar with the main makes and model of fire alarm
➢ be able to identify which grade and category of fire alarm system you need
➢ be able to design a fire alarm system to meet the grade and category requirements
➢ have a good understanding of British Standard BS 5839
➢ be able to design a system to meet BS 5839 requirements
➢ have sound electrical knowledge

17.9.6 How Often Should a Fire Alarm be Serviced?

UK fire alarm regulations only state that your fire alarm system must be 'adequately maintained'.

BS 5839 recommends that a fire alarm system should be inspected by a competent person at least every 6 months and the government recommends following this standard.

If you work out of large premises, a quarterly service is recommended, as there are many more components to your fire alarm system, and therefore more opportunities for something to go wrong.

Why is Servicing Important?

There are two main reasons to keep your fire alarm in working order:

1. To alert occupants in the event of fire and so prevent loss of life
2. To prevent false alarms

False alarms account for a huge number of fire brigade call-outs. This incurs a lot of expense and, more importantly, could mean that the fire brigade is otherwise occupied when a real emergency arises.

The fire brigade has now imposed charges for call-outs at premises which have a high number of false alarms, as an incentive for businesses to keep their fire alarms better maintained.

What is Weekly Fire Alarm Testing and do I have to do it?

Weekly testing is different to fire alarm servicing. Both are required.

Whilst a fire alarm service is a thorough investigation of the whole fire alarm system, weekly testing is a 'spot check'. Its purpose is to quickly test that your fire alarm is in working order and help identify any issues.

Having a fully operational fire alarm is a regulatory requirement for those premises that need them, which is why regular testing is important.

The guidance to test weekly comes from British Standard BS 5839. This the standard that the UK government recommends should be followed with regards to fire alarm maintenance.

You could decide to test less frequently, however you would need to explain why you've deviated from BS 5389 to any investigating fire officers, should they pay a visit.

How do you Carry out a Weekly Fire Alarm Test?

The 'responsible person' can carry out your weekly fire alarm test, although if you look after a number of properties, you may prefer to ask your fire alarm company to do this for you.

In each weekly test, you should activate at least one fire alarm call-point and check that the alarm sounds and the panel receives the signal.

Each week you should test a different call-point.

Once you've performed a successful check, you can re-set your fire alarm panel (if you encounter a problem, contact your fire safety company).

Finally, record the test in your fire alarm log book, including the location of the call-point(s) that you tested.

What Should I do if Something Goes Wrong with my Fire Alarm?

If your fire alarm goes wrong, for example:

∅ an alarm is sounding but there's no fire
∅ a light on your fire alarm panel says there is a fault
∅ your fire alarm panel is beeping
∅ there's no power going to your fire alarm panel

then you must report it immediately to your fire protection company. This is because the system can't be considered to be 'adequately maintained' if there is a fault and you would therefore be non-compliant with fire alarm regulations.

Your fire alarm company should attend site within 24 hours at the very latest, or for major faults where the fire alarm is disabled, within 4 hours.

17.10 Fire Safety Training

According to the 2005 Fire Safety Order, if you run a business that employs at least one other person, you are legally required to provide fire safety training.

17.10.1 What Fire Safety Training do I need to Provide?

As a guide, your fire safety training should give your team general fire safety awareness. You can break this down into four key areas:

➢ **Fire prevention, and company regulations** – General fire safety compliance points. Business-specific issues, such as the safe storage and disposal of chemicals. Company smoking policy.
➢ **What to do in the event of a fire** – What will happen should a fire break out. Where the fire exits and assembly points are. Who the appointed fire marshal is, and their role in the event of a fire (roll call).

➢ **Equipment use and care** – What fire safety equipment you have on the premises. How it should be used and by whom. Who is responsible for its upkeep. And what to do if potential faults are spotted.

➢ **Fire alarms** – Where your alarms are. How they operate. Fire alarm testing information and who is responsible for conducting testing.

17.10.2 Who Should Receive Fire Training?

Any new employee should learn about fire safety in their induction training.

Certain staff members should receive more regular training such as:
❖ Department heads
❖ Fire marshals or wardens
❖ Firefighting teams in large workplaces
❖ Floor supervisors
❖ Security staff
❖ Receptionists

17.10.3 When Should Fire Safety Training be Delivered?

All employees should receive fire safety training in their induction. This ensures that they are as safe and prepared for a potential fire as they can be right from the start.

But employers should also ensure that all employees receive an annual fire safety refresher.

However, training should happen more frequently if any of the following are true for your place of business:
• There is a high staff turnover
• There is a high risk of fire
• Your employees are responsible for the safety of others

17.10.4 Training by Pochat Training

At Pochat Training, we run regular fire safety courses. Ofqual regulated levels 1 and 2, a CPD accredited $^1/_2$ day course covering all the basics, and a CPD Accredited Annual Refresher. These are all available via virtual classroom, to save on traveling and time taken out of work.

17.11 Resources

For more information, see

Fire safety risk assessment: offices and shops (GOV.UK)

Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 (GOV.UK)

Fire safety equipment, drills and training (GOV.UK)

Fire safety: guidance for those with legal duties (GOV.UK)

Fire safety risk assessment: means of escape for disabled people (GOV.UK)

Guide to tests and inspections (Fire Industry Association)

Infographic: How to cut false alarm costs (Fire Industry Association)

L64, Safety signs and signals (HSE)