

Balancing Budget & Fire Safety

For Busy Business Owners

Get the right system at the right price



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Introduction



What you need to do

As a business owner, you need to ensure that you comply with the Regulatory Reform Order, often referred to as the Fire Safety Order or FSO.

This means you're required to take action to prevent fires and protect the relevant people (e.g. staff and visitors in your building) from death and injury, should a fire occur.

How do I do this?

You need to ensure:

- People are alerted in the event of a fire
- They have the means to escape
- They have the means to put out small fires

Installing the relevant fire safety systems and ensuring that they adhere to British standards is the best way to comply with the Law and meet these needs.

The British Standards are as follows:

- Fire Alarm - [BS 5839](#)
- Emergency Lighting - [BS 5266](#)
- Fire Extinguishers - [BS 5306](#)



Blake's say

The information in this guide is not intended to replace Government guidelines on business Fire Safety Law available at www.gov.uk.

We encourage you to seek expert help to ensure your business complies with legislation and fulfils your duty of care to staff and other building occupants.

Ian Blake, Managing Director

As the Responsible Person or business owner, the prospect of getting this wrong can send chills down your spine:

- Risk of imprisonment
- Heavy fines

But the cost of these systems can often present a problem, so finding a way to accommodate both the demands of your Fire Risk Assessment and your finances is a top priority for your business.

It's a fine balance, yet it is achievable – and, with the right help, you can avoid the mistake of choosing a less expensive option which could end up costing you double.

Why this guide? What you will learn:

For each Fire Safety System, **you'll learn our guidelines on the minimum requirements you'll need to comply with** the Law and our top professional tips on:

- Where you might be able to save money
- The common pitfalls that businesses fall into

As well as...

- Our guidelines on minimum requirements for Fire Alarms, Fire Extinguishers & Emergency Lighting
- How to fulfil on the legal requirements
- How to ensure you're getting a qualified professional
- How a professional can bring value & help you balance your budget
- The expensive mistakes businesses often make
- What could go wrong if you don't get it right

Why it's critical for your business that you know this

- You need to comply with the Law or you risk jail / a large fine
- You don't want to blow the budget on a system that doesn't meet your requirements - so get the system that's right for your circumstances

Emergency Lighting

Legal requirement

You need to ensure people can safely find their way out of your commercial building in the event of power loss due to fire.

What's the minimum I can do to stay legal?

A qualified professional is fully versed in the requirements of the current legislation and can work with you to:

- Phase in certain recommendations to spread the cost AND still stay legal
- Ensure any deviations are proportional to risk

As long as you are taking steps and can show you're working towards a solution to the issues raised in your Fire Risk Assessment, **within a reasonable timeframe**, your Fire Safety Inspector can be sympathetic.

Minimum Requirement Guide:



Provide escape routes and with sufficient lighting.



Install and illuminate signs to help people identify escape routes, find firefighting equipment and emergency fire telephones.



All equipment must be installed and maintained by a competent person



NSI Fire Gold

BAFE SP 203-4
Emergency Lighting

The exact requirements depend on your building and the risks uncovered in your Fire Risk Assessment

What You Should Do

Always check that your installer has the NSI Gold accreditation covering [BAFE SP203-4 Emergency Lighting Scheme](#)

The Design, Installation, Commissioning and Handover, Verification and Maintenance of Emergency Lighting Systems to BS 5266-1:2016

What To Avoid!!!

The less expensive option is often the wrong choice.

For example, we recently encountered a North Essex school who attempted to save money by using a fireman to install an Emergency Lighting system for £7,000 instead of the £14,000 we quoted.

This system was faulty and almost useless – the emergency lights didn't come on. Everything needed to be ripped out and a new system installed.

An NSI Gold accredited installer will help you get the right system for your circumstances. Otherwise, you could end up paying twice too...

Added Value of Using an Accredited Professional

Expertise

Professionals confirm their design with specialist software – there are no assumptions, everything is checked!

Compliance

Accredited installers will always work to British Standards, with deviations, if appropriate.

These deviations are always included in the Fire Risk Assessment to stay legal.

Equipment

A professional will only use ICEL approved equipment that will hold up in a fire.



Blake's say

"A quick rule of thumb test: If you turn the lights off, can a first time visitor get out safely? If not, you need more emergency lighting!"

Simon Blake, Emergency Lighting Manager

Fire Extinguishers

Legal requirements

You need to ensure suitably trained people have the equipment available to fight small fires.

What's the minimum I can do to stay legal?

As a rule of thumb you should have one A Class Foam or Water Extinguisher for every 200 metres squared (m²) of floor space - with at least two on each floor.

A qualified professional is fully versed in the requirements of the current legislation and can work with you to:

- Phase in certain recommendations to spread the cost AND still stay legal
- Ensure any deviations are proportional to risk

As long as you are taking steps and can show you're working towards a solution to the issues raised in your Fire Risk Assessment, **within a reasonable timeframe**, your Fire Safety Inspector can be sympathetic.

Minimum Requirement Guide:

- ✓ Correct No. of extinguishers
- ✓ Correct size
- ✓ Correct location
- ✓ Correct type of extinguishers
- ✓ Staff training on how to use them
- ✓ Maintenance once yearly on extinguishers



NSI Fire Gold

BAFE SP 101
Contract Maintenance of
Portable Fire Extinguishers

The exact requirements depend on your building and the risks uncovered in your Fire Risk Assessment

What You Should Do

Look for an installer with the NSI Gold accreditation covering [BAFE SP101 Portable Fire Extinguishers Scheme](#)

This covers Contract Maintenance of Portable Fire Extinguishers to BS EN 3, BS 5306-8 and BS 5306-3

What To Avoid!

Skip maintenance at your peril!

A first visit and inspection to one Essex site revealed unmaintained Extinguishers that were over 10 years old and so potentially dangerous for at least the previous 5 years!

For this company, the replacement of all the equipment in one go was an expensive lesson. If maintained properly, these units would have been replaced as and when they emptied.

As well as prolonging the life of your extinguishers, professional maintenance ensures they work in an emergency, thereby fulfilling your duty of care obligations. Professional installers know this, and would have helped the company avoid this situation

Added Value of Using a Professional

Expertise

Professionals plan and install the right fire extinguishers for your situation - everything is checked as per BAFE SP101.

Compliance

The extinguishers will work and be maintained to British Standards.

Equipment

You'll get the correct extinguisher type for the circumstances, serviced annually by an accredited professional - so they will operate as expected when required.

Blake's say

"Use a pro, for peace of mind"

Rory Foster, Fire Extinguisher Manager



Fire Alarms



Legal requirements

You need a suitable fire detection and warning system that can alert occupants in all circumstances.

What's the minimum I can do to stay legal?

A qualified professional is fully versed in the requirements of the current legislation and can work with you to:

- Phase in certain recommendations to spread the cost AND still stay legal
- Ensure any deviations are proportional to risk

As long as you are taking steps and can show you're working towards a solution to the issues raised in your Fire Risk Assessment, **within a reasonable timeframe**, your Fire Safety Inspector can be sympathetic.

Minimum Requirement Guide:

- ✓ Fire alarm system: system category you need; L or P
- ✓ Correct No. and layouts of Detection & Alarm zones
- ✓ Correct No. and placement of Manual Call Points
- ✓ Adequate system components
- ✓ Communication with the Fire & Rescue Service/Monitoring
- ✓ Audible/visual alarm requirements
- ✓ Monitoring, integrity and reliability of circuits external to control equipment
- ✓ Maintenance twice a year



NSI Fire Gold

BAFE SP 203
Fire Detection And Alarm
Systems

The exact requirements depend on your building and the risks uncovered in your Fire Risk Assessment

What You Should Do

Look for a company with the NSI Gold accreditation covering [BAFE SP203-1 Fire Detection and Alarm Systems](#).

This ensures the Design, Installation, Commissioning and Handover, Verification and Maintenance of Fire Detection and Alarm Systems provided will conform to BS 5839 Part 1:2017.

Buy cheap, buy twice!

In one instance, we were called in to commission a troublesome Fire Alarm system installed by local Electrical Contractors. While they are good electricians, they aren't NSI Gold accredited for Fire Alarm installations.

And, when we arrived, we discovered their new system was actually 10 years old! Not to mention, the cabling was not installed to British Standards. The system required an expensive re-install, which had not been budgeted for!

With an NSI accredited company, this could have been avoided.

Added Value of Using a Professional

Expertise

Professionals can offer free advice on what your Fire Risk Assessment is asking for and steps you can take to show you are working towards a solution to the issues raised.

Compliance

Accredited installers always work to British Standards.

Equipment

You'll get the correct system for the circumstances, serviced annually by an accredited professional - so it will operate as expected when required.



Blake's say

"All our installation engineers are experienced with Fire Alarm Installation and will work alongside other users of the building in a tidy and courteous way. Once the works are complete, we offer full staff training of the new system."

Rory Foster, Fire Alarm Manager

Key Takeaways



Key takeaways:

- You MUST comply with the Fire Safety Order or risk jail/fines.
- Look for NSI Gold Accreditation for BS compliance.
- Look for companies that offer finance options if budget is an issue.
- Look for full staff training on your new Fire Safety Systems.
- Ask for advice on what your Fire Risk Assessment is asking for. It will usually cost you nothing and could save you money!
- Sometimes your system can be phased in, only a professional will be able to determine this.



Blake's say

Whether the business next door has a Fire Alarm or not is irrelevant.

At the end of the day, YOU are responsible for YOUR business – and you now know how to protect it.

However, just knowing the information isn't enough. The next step is to choose the right company to install your Fire Safety Systems.

Choosing A Fire Safety Systems Installer

First, check if they're qualified to do the job.



Luckily, it's easy to find accredited businesses like Blake Fire & Security Systems. Simply check for the NSI Gold accreditation and you'll know that the system they'll install will meet the required British Standards.



Then, check testimonials and case studies to see if they're the right company for you.



Finally, you're ready to book a free site survey where an accredited professional can provide you with a quote that's right for your circumstances.

Remember, basing your choice of installer on price alone is almost a sure fire way to get an inadequate system!

FIRE SAFETY HORROR!

Cautionary tales of local businesses that chose the cheap option

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