

The layperson's guide to **means of escape**

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The Fire and Safety Centre is a responsible online retailer committed not only to the supply of the best approved fire protection equipment, but also to providing impartial and honest advice so that all organisations, customers or not, can be aware of their responsibilities under fire legislation.

With our friendly, knowledgeable staff, you can be assured that we want to have your best interests at heart at all times – and that's my promise to you.

Barrie Holden
Owner

**For more
information,
click here:**



How to use this guide

Everyone knows what to do if an alarm sounds in the workplace, don't they?

Actually, you might know less than you think.

Do you know of at least two emergency exits from where you are at this very moment?

Do you know where your assembly point is?

Do you know your responsibilities for getting others out of the building?

Do you actually have a responsibility to help others?

Do you know who'll check to see if everyone has arrived at the assembly point?

The list goes on. This guide is intended to be a starting point to help get everyone safely from the building should the need arise. It's not intended to explain everything involved, but to act as a reference guide and raise awareness about what everyone needs to know in everyone else's interests as well as their own. Doing so will highlight gaps in knowledge, and show where to find information to fill those gaps.

The burgundy text will show the 'must know' facts on every topic we cover. This will be supplemented by the green instant reference panel at the right of each page.

The green panel concludes with a 'more' button. That's a link to further invaluable reading. What it links to will be appropriate to the topic being featured.



Key facts:

1. These green panels will contain an at a glance reference to the topic being featured.
2. The guide is intended to be a quick reference resource offering an 'executive summary' of key points.
3. Further guidance and reading will be found by clicking the green 'more' button and other topic-specific links on each page.

**For more
information,
click here:**



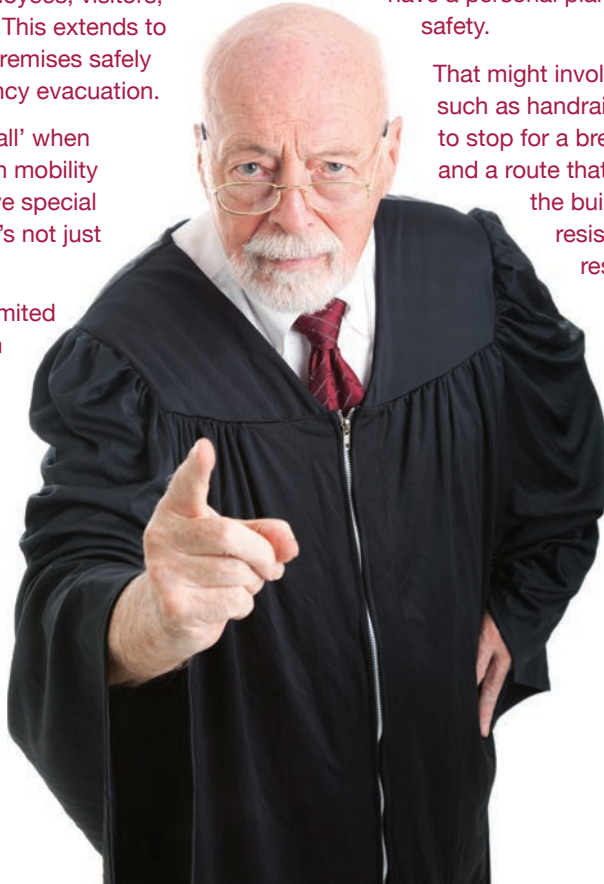
What the law says – 1

Owners and managers of buildings have a duty of care towards everyone on the premises, including employees, visitors, clients, and contractors. This extends to helping them leave the premises safely when there's an emergency evacuation.

But 'one size doesn't fit all' when that happens. Those with mobility impairments need to have special arrangements – and that's not just about wheelchair users.

What about those with limited or no sight, or those with heart disease?

The Fire Service is no longer responsible for extracting people from safe havens within a building; that job lies fairly and squarely with the building's occupiers or nominated safety officers – which could be you.



Anyone who can't get out of the building in two or three minutes, for whatever reason, should have a personal plan to get them to safety.

That might involve walking aids such as handrails, the opportunity to stop for a breather on the way, and a route that involves parts of the building more resistant to fire... It's the responsibility of the building occupier to put those plans in place, and make sure everyone is aware of them – and that includes reminding the people affected by them.

Key facts:

1. Think of every possible 'mobility impairment' and make personal plans for all those affected.
2. Fire Service responsibility has shifted to building occupiers.
3. Review and refresh training about escape plans.
4. Consider modifications to buildings to make escape plans work.

**For more
information,
click here:**



What the law says – 2

Lifts are out of bounds during a building evacuation, so anyone unable to walk unaided down the stairs must have special treatment.

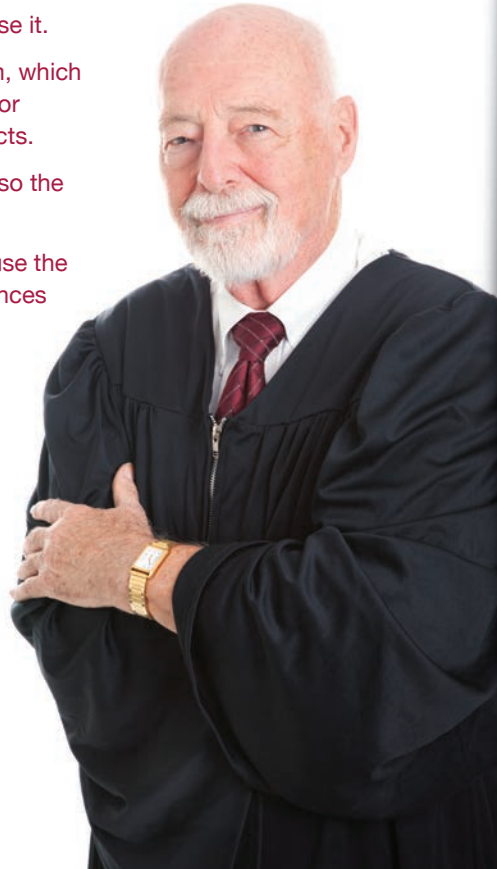
That will need an evacuation chair and people trained to use it.

There's lots of information in the regulations covering them, which are the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (RRO for short), BS9999 and PUWER, but these are the headline facts.

Proper training and regular refreshers must be completed so the right way to use an evacuation chair is clearly understood.

The law requires that sufficient operators are available to use the chairs. Train more people than you need to cover for absences due to holidays and sickness.

Chairs also need to be examined regularly and maintained when necessary, and work done should be recorded.



At a glance:

1. No lifts. You'll need at least one evacuation chair.
2. Various types exist. Do your research to identify the kind you need.
3. Train enough operators.
4. Maintain the chairs, or have someone do it for you.
5. Find evacuation chairs here.

**For more
information,
click here:**



Evacuation chairs: The only way?

Legislation doesn't directly instruct anyone to buy and install evacuation chairs and train employees in their use.

However, the requirements of certain legislation point to them being the only possible choice for effective compliance with the law.

The duty of care implied by the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 means there must be a means of evacuation for people who are less mobile. This could mean that they're a wheelchair user, or have a broken leg, have suffered a heart attack, or even be pregnant.

Article 4 (1)(b) of the RRO explains the responsibility in detail, and Article 4 (1)(c) explains that safe and effective means of escape must be available for everyone.



The order requires everyone to know what to do in the event of a fire. What's more, when the decision has been taken to provide at least one evacuation chair, Article 21 of the RRO gives a duty to teach staff to use it.

There are numerous types of evacuation chair. All offer the same function, for a person with mobility impairment to be moved safely and securely down stairs by people trained in the chair's use.

Models exist to get people downstairs using gravity, upstairs (from basements), alone or in wheelchairs, and down any kind of staircase.

Carrying someone in their wheelchair is not acceptable; it adds to the fire risk by putting the chair user, and anyone trying to move it, in greater danger than they already are.

At a glance:

1. You don't HAVE to buy an evacuation chair, says the law.
2. But you do, in a way, because you DO have to make sure anyone with any disability can get out of the building in the event of an evacuation, so you may have no other choice.
3. People with special needs must have their own Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan, or PEEP, covered elsewhere in this guide.

**For more
information,
click here:**



Restricting access based on disability? Sorry, that's not allowed...

Those considering avoiding purchase of an evacuation chair by restricting access to parts of a building to disabled people put themselves at risk of breaching disability legislation.

Although neither the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 nor the Equality Act 2010 have anything to do directly with the provision of evacuation chairs, such provision might be seen as a necessary consequence of them.

Disability legislation means it is illegal to limit access to parts of your premises based on any potential difficulties of employees or visitors to reach them. Therefore, the onus falls on

the owner or occupier to use all parts of the building. It is also worth remembering that if anyone requires the assistance of a stair lift to reach upper floors, they are very likely to need the use of an evacuation chair to leave in the event of an emergency.

And don't overlook the fact that some people may be working on floors below the ground floor of a building – there may be a need to get them up the stairs.

A helpful Government guide called 'Means of Escape for Disabled People' looks at these points in far more comprehensive detail.



At a glance:

1. Restricting access based on disability is illegal.
2. Make sure everyone knows how to get out.
3. Remember that some might need to get up stairs, rather than down.
4. Look at the Government guide for further reading.

**For more
information,
click here:**



Fire doors: Protecting the means of escape

When is a door not a door? In terms of protecting means of escape for people in a building, the answer has to be 'When it's a fire door'. At that point it becomes an 'engineered safety device'.

Fire doors are part of what the Fire Service calls a building's 'passive fire protection system'. As such they are a key element of fire safety in a building, and play a vital role in protecting means of escape for those inside.

Their role is to hold back fire to provide the time necessary for people to get clear of the building. As such they should never be blocked or propped open (except where the mechanism holding them open is released automatically in the event of an emergency).

Millions of new fire doors are sold in the UK every year. The ones you fit should be sourced from a reputable supplier, and should have third party certification to BS 476 Part 22 or BS EN 1634 Part 1. The supplier will be able to advise on the

type of fire door appropriate to your particular premises, and the place it's to be installed.

Installation must be done by trained people, who are required to use the correct components to suit the door and its purpose. That means the parts will have a CE mark.

Once a fire door is installed, you should never cut vision panels and other holes on site, or patch them up, or try to save a few pennies by reducing the spec of the fire door you choose.

If it opens onto the outside, and needs to be secure to stop people getting in, the door must be fitted with a quick release mechanism or 'panic bolt'.

And finally, just as you should never block or wedge a fire door open, you should never disconnect its automatic closure mechanism.



At a glance:

1. Fire doors are much more than 'doors'.
2. Use only products with third party approval.
3. Have them maintained properly.
4. Never wedge them open, lock them shut, or block them.

For more information, click here:



One size doesn't fit all: Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans

People who can't use the same means of escape as everyone else must have arrangements that meet their needs – their Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan, or PEEP. It must be tailored to their particular needs, and is likely to give detailed information on their movements during an escape. It is also possible that the building may need some modification to help them get out in a way that reduces the need for assistance. This might cover adding handrails or building ramps, for instance – which might need to be done in any event.



There are lots of options for getting mobility impaired people safely out of a building. Parts of them may be 'standard', but they can be adapted to suit your premises.

A standard PEEP will take account of:

- the disabled person's movements within the building
- the operational procedures within the building
- the types of escape that can be made available
- systems like the fire alarm
- the existing evacuation plan

This will all need to be covered for visitors with mobility limitations, who need to be told about it when they sign in.

Where access is 'open' – such as in a shopping centre – staff will need to be trained not only in standard PEEPs, but in disabled escape etiquette too. This training needs to be part of the fire risk assessment.

At a glance:

1. Anyone with any kind of mobility impairment needs a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan.
2. You may need to modify the building as part of developing these plans.
3. Make allowance for 'one-off' mobility-impaired visitors by changing their signing-in procedure.
4. If you have an 'uncontrolled entry' building extra staff training will be necessary.

**For more
information,
click here:**



Emergency: Which way now?

The law requires that there should be an emergency exit sign wherever anyone can get out of the building, be it door, window, or any other exit point. (These places will be highlighted in your fire risk assessment).

To meet Building Regulations signs should conform to BS 5499 Part 4:2014, and meet the requirements of the Health and Safety 1996 – Safety Signs & Signals Regulations.

Signs must be installed to direct people to their nearest emergency exit. The regulations say this is wherever there is a perceived risk to the health and safety of employees, customers or the general public. Perhaps better to err on the side of caution; when an emergency happens there is the possibility of confusion, and anything you can do to mitigate its consequences will be helpful. Signs must be of the right size and design, and must incorporate arrows to send people in the correct direction.



Signs must be visible at all times, so lighting will need to be incorporated. Some have internal lighting; others need external lamps. Bear in mind that a discrete power source will be needed. A sign whose lighting goes off when the main power fails might as well not be there at all.

When buying, seek to maximise your spend by looking out for ceiling mounted double-sided signs which will provide information in two directions.

Emergency exit signs are also available in Braille.

At a glance:

1. You must have signs.
2. They need to be on every door, window, or other opening leading to a safe means of exit.
3. Direction signs are needed inside the building.
4. They must be illuminated.
5. Buy only approved ones from reputable suppliers.

**For more
information,
click here:**



Fire-fighting equipment: Don't endanger yourself by using it

Effective use of fire-fighting equipment starts long before a fire breaks out. For a start, the right kind of equipment needs to be provided in the first place – because not all fire-fighting equipment is effective on all kinds of fires. We have more information about that on our website and in our free Layperson's Guide to Fire Safety in the Workplace eBook.

Your building should contain equipment that's appropriate to what goes on inside it. That will include extinguishers of more than one type, alarms, smoke detectors, blankets and hoses, as well as facilities for professional fire fighters.

Fire-fighting equipment should never be moved (its location was carefully selected), hidden behind furniture, or covered with curtains, bags or coats.

If you discover a fire, sound the alarm. Check how to do that today, if you don't already know. Several kinds are available, like the break glass one

shown here. Call the emergency services.

This may be the Fire Service, but it could be an in-house team where one exists, and summoned by its own emergency number. Only when you've done that should you think about fighting the fire yourself. Use an extinguisher appropriate to the fire. The wrong kind could make matters worse.

Don't be a hero. Don't continue to fight the fire when it's clear that you're fighting a losing battle. Leave yourself time to get clear. And make sure everyone else does the same. Extinguishers will

be discharged quickly, so when they stop working it's probably time to leave. A hose reel will continue to deliver water long after the fire has the upper hand. Don't be fooled.

Above all, get out.



At a glance:

1. Pick fire-fighting equipment to suit the hazards and size of your premises.
2. Get advice from a reputable supplier.
3. Maintain it properly and regularly.
4. Train people in identifying and using the right kind of extinguisher.
5. Never endanger yourself by spending too long fighting a fire that's out of control.

Link to further information:

How to pick a fire extinguisher.

**For more
information,
click here:**



How to prepare for evacuation: Do you know what you don't know?

Just as understanding how to use fire fighting equipment, and where it is stored, is important, you should spend time understanding things that will help you in the event of an emergency that requires the building to be evacuated.

This is especially true if you're new to a building, and therefore unfamiliar with it.

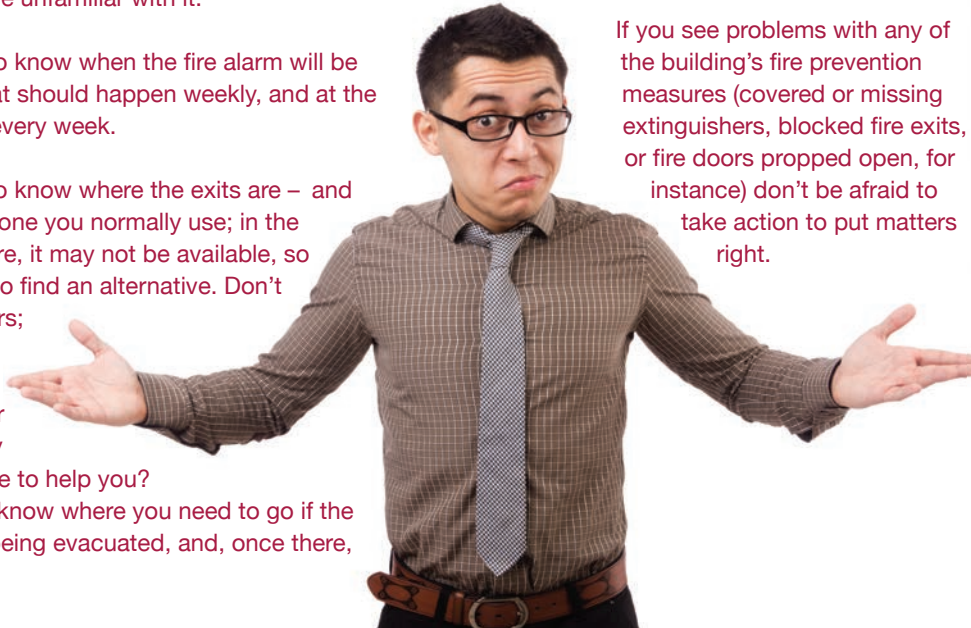
You ought to know when the fire alarm will be tested – that should happen weekly, and at the same time every week.

You ought to know where the exits are – and not just the one you normally use; in the event of a fire, it may not be available, so you'll have to find an alternative. Don't rely on others; what would you do if, for whatever reason, they weren't there to help you?

You should know where you need to go if the building is being evacuated, and, once there,

make sure the Fire Warden knows you're clear of the building. Failing to do that means lives may be put at risk when people go to look for you. You should be given the chance to practice this every year, as part of fire drills. More detail of those can be found in our eBook entitled *Fire and Safety in the Workplace*.

If you see problems with any of the building's fire prevention measures (covered or missing extinguishers, blocked fire exits, or fire doors propped open, for instance) don't be afraid to take action to put matters right.



At a glance:

1. Know your building. Where are the exits?
2. When is the fire alarm tested?
3. Everyone should know where the assembly points and refuges are.
4. Take action if you spot a problem with fire protection measures.

**For more
information,
click here:**



Can't move quickly? Safe havens are the answer

There are degrees of safety when it comes to building evacuation. 'Ultimate safety' means being outside the building away from any danger posed by the reason for the evacuation. 'Comparative safety' means you're not yet out, but you're in a protected zone, otherwise known as a refuge or safe haven. Their purpose is to buy time for you.

If you have a mobility issue, and can't move as quickly as you'd like, you'll need to use a refuge or safe haven. It should have been detailed in your PEEP or Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan. If it wasn't, you need to investigate that at once. The building's 'Responsible Person' (law requires that there is one) will know where refuges are, and will record detail in the Emergency Plan Box (see next page).

They are often to be found on staircase landings or lobbies, where you can be protected from smoke and flames in relative safety for longer than would otherwise be the case elsewhere in the building.

In the case of the man shown here during an evacuation, can you spot the deliberate mistake? He shouldn't have gone back for that briefcase; doing so is delaying his evacuation even longer than the crutches. This kind of thing can be highlighted in evacuation drills, which should be held annually.



At a glance:

1. Create refuges for people with mobility impairment.
2. Potential users should know where they are.
3. Record details in the Emergency Plans Box for firefighters.
4. Run evacuation drills every year.

**For more
information,
click here:**



The need for information: Store it in an Emergency Plans Box

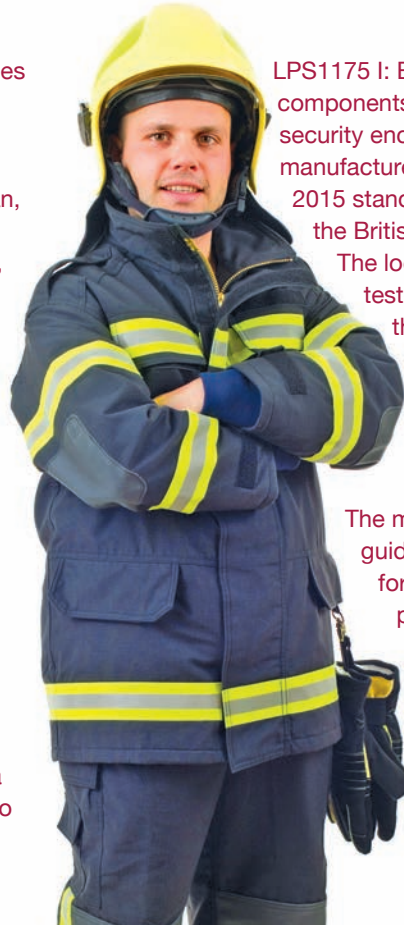
Knowledge is power – and when it comes to the need for a building evacuation, it becomes even more powerful.

Vital data needed by people like this man, should be stored in Emergency Plans Boxes and Premises Information Boxes, making any fire-fighting efforts more effective because the professionals know exactly what they're dealing with.

The boxes should provide information and plans about the premises for the Fire and Rescue Service, in a format that they recognise and understand.

That will include the building layout, the escape routes, the activities undertaken in various areas, and what is stored there – particularly in the case of flammable materials.

Emergency Plans Boxes sourced from a reputable supplier should be designed to



LPS1175 I: Burglary resistant building components, strongpoints and security enclosures. They will be manufactured to ISO 9001:2008 & 2015 standards and certified with the British Standards Kitemark.

The lock cylinder should be tested to EN1303:2005, and they should include a guidance manual prepared carefully by experienced fire service professionals.

The manuals should offer guidelines for best practice for preparing premises plans and collating information, including sections on orientation plans, layout and contents, as well as safety and emergency features.

At a glance:

1. Get an Emergency Plans Box.
2. Buy it from a reputable supplier.
3. Fill it with information the Fire Service professionals need to know.
4. Keep its contents up to date.



**For more
information,
click here:**



All fires are the same, right?

(Important information from our [Fire and Safety in the Workplace eBook](#))

Not all fires are the same. All might have similar consequences, but they're sub-divided into different classes based on the material that's burning – because they'll need fighting with different equipment. Here's a brief rundown of various types of fire, and the extinguishers you'll need to bring them under control.

Class A: Burning solids like wood, paper and plastic.
Extinguisher types: water, foam, dry powder and wet chemical units.

Class B: Burning liquids, such as paraffin, petrol, oil.
Extinguisher types: foam, dry powder, CO2 gas.

Class C:
Burning gases, such as propane, butane, methane.
Extinguisher type: dry powder.

Class D: Burning metals, such as aluminium, magnesium, titanium etc.
Extinguisher type: M28/L2 dry powder.

Class E: Fires involving electrical equipment.
Extinguisher type: dry powder (but these may leave a residue damaging electrical equipment), CO2 gas.

Class F: Burning cooking oil or fats (kitchen fires).
Extinguisher type: wet chemical.

It may also be appropriate to consider fire blankets and hose reels as well as extinguishers.



At a glance:

1. Fires are categorised by the fuel that's burning.
2. Different fires need the appropriate fire-fighting equipment.
3. If in doubt, consult experts. That may be a reputable and qualified supplier or your own Fire Service.

Further advice:

Classes of fire
Types of extinguisher
Hose reels
Fire blankets

For more information, click here:



Know your extinguishers

Fire extinguishers are usually red, but a small proportion of them are in different colours and finishes depending on application (for instance, high-end locations and clean areas like kitchens may have ones in a silver finish).

All are identified with coloured labels. Here's a guide to which is which. Each line below links to more information about that type of extinguisher.

WATER: Red label
FOAM: Cream label
DRY POWDER: Blue label
CO2 GAS: Black label
WET CHEMICAL: Yellow label
WATER MIST: White label

Extinguishers come in different capacities too. Seek advice about which is appropriate to your hazards.



At a glance:

1. Coloured labels tell you which fire can be fought with which extinguisher.
2. Match risks to the extinguishers you select.
3. If in doubt, consult experts. That may be a reputable and qualified supplier or your own Fire Service.

Further advice:

Classes of fire
Types of extinguisher
Hose reels
Fire blankets

For more
information,
click here:



The Fire and Safety Centre: Supporting you with means of escape

Having read this guide, you may feel a tiny bit intimidated by the details of what you thought was a simple process of finding, and using, your means of escape.

If you are, then please don't be. That was never our intention. We wanted to provide information that, when acted upon, provides reassurance that in the event of an emergency, things that would help to control it would be in place, protecting life and property. After all, when an emergency happens it's too late to realise what you don't know.

Remember, expert advice is available. Everyone at The Fire and Safety Centre knows about the products you may need to protect everyone's mean of escape, how they work, and how to get them to you quickly.

As a major online retailer we have created a website packed with comprehensive detail about the products themselves, the standards to which they are approved, and links to 'companion products' you may also need.

We offer comprehensive advice pages putting a considerable amount of information at your fingertips in an easy-to-access-and-understand format. We are enthusiastic bloggers too, and have built a library of material covering, at one time or another, the principal topics of fire safety.

We understand that you may have lots of questions not only about our products, but also about how they work and how to service them, and you will no doubt need assurances about what you're buying from us.

All of those points are covered in our Frequently Asked Questions section, and we'd be happy to go through them using our live chat facility or over the phone.

We also offer service and maintenance packages throughout Lincolnshire, South Yorkshire and northern Nottinghamshire.

**The Fire and Safety Centre:
A product division of Right Action, your friend
in the fire protection business.**

At a glance:

1. Don't be intimidated by what you've read in this guide.
2. The Fire and Safety Centre is here to help you.
3. Our website and our staff advise about products and their use through product pages, an advice library, FAQs, and a comprehensive blog.

www.fireandsafetycentre.co.uk



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information,
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