

South Gloucestershire Council

Fire Safety Standards for Licensable Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

Number of Storeys	1 or 2		
Level of Risk*	Low		Medium (Normal)
* see 'Definition of Risk Levels'			
Number of Persons Sharing	3 or 4 (subject to 'Level of Risk')	5 or 6 (subject to 'Level of Risk')	3 or more (subject to 'Level of Risk')
Type of HMO Shared house = sharing of one or more basic amenities Bedsit = room used for sleeping and containing cooking facilities	Shared houses	Shared houses	Bedsits and shared houses
Fire Alarm System	Grade D: LD3 BS5839: Part 6	Grade D: LD3* BS5839: Part 6 *plus shared areas	For bedsits: Grade D: LD2 BS5839: Part 6 For shared houses: Grade D: LD3* BS5839: Part 6 *plus shared areas
Detection DS = smoke detector DH = heat detector All detectors should be interlinked, mains-powered with integral battery standby supply unless specified otherwise	DS to hall and landing at each level.	DS to hall and landing at each level and to lounge. DH to kitchen.	DS to hall and landing at each level and to any shared lounge. DH to kitchens and bedsits. For bedsits, a stand-alone 10 year life sealed battery DS will be required in addition to the DH.
Doors * doors to comply with BS476-22 and will include self-closing devices Existing fire doors which have combined smoke and intumescent seals will be accepted where an interlinked detector is provided to the room.	All doors should be sound, well-constructed and close fitting. Non-fire-resisting glazed doors, doors of flimsy construction or hollow infill-type doors will not be accepted. OR Provide escape windows to all rooms used for sleeping (as per specification in paras 9.7, 9.8 & 14 of LACORS document below).	Individual bedsits should have a 30-minute fire door* as well as any separate kitchens (all with combined smoke & intumescent seal). All other doors should be sound, well-constructed and close fitting. Non-fire-resisting glazed doors, doors of flimsy construction or hollow infill-type doors will not be accepted. OR Provide escape windows to all rooms used for sleeping (as per specification in paras 9.7, 9.8 & 14 of LACORS document below).	
Walls / Partitions – Escape route (refer to paragraph 9 of LACORS)	Walls and floors to be of sound, traditional construction.	30-minute protected route is required with 30-minute fire-resisting construction.	
Walls and Floors – Separation between units (refer to paragraph 19 of LACORS)	Walls and floors to be of sound, traditional construction.		
Emergency Lighting	Not required.		
Fire Blanket	Required in all shared kitchens.	Required in all shared kitchens and bedsits.	
Fire Extinguishers	Only required if there are staff that work / sleep at a property. Staff need to be trained / qualified to use.		
Security Locks	Any security lock provided should have a thumb-turn or be capable of being immediately opened without the use of a key (except where that room has an escape window).		
Items in Means of Escape	Means of escape should be maintained free of any obstructions and fire risks.		
Key, card or coin meters	Not permitted for fire alarm power supply to ensure there is no interruption.		
Boilers	N/A		
Cupboards in Means of Escape	N/A		
Electricity / Gas Meters	Allowed on means of escape if up to current standards.		
Washing Machine / Tumble Dryer Utility Room	N/A		
Properties with Basements / Lower Ground Floors	If a basement/cellar is present, 30-minute separation between cellar and the ground floor escape route is the ideal (but see paragraph 19.6 LACORS regarding existing construction).		

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Fire Safety Standards for Licensable Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

Number of Storeys	3	3 or 4	
Level of Risk*	Low	Medium (Normal)	High
* see 'Definition of Risk Levels'			
Number of Persons Sharing	Up to 6 (subject to 'Level of Risk')	Subject to 'Level of Risk'	
Type of HMO	Shared houses	Shared houses	Bedsits and shared houses
Shared house = sharing of one or more basic amenities			
Bedsit = room used for sleeping and containing cooking facilities			
Fire Alarm System	Grade D: LD3* BS5839: Part 6 *plus shared areas.		Grade A: LD2 BS5839: Part 6
Detection	DS to hall and landing at each level and to lounge and dining room. DH to kitchen.		DS to hall and landing at each level and to lounge, dining room and bedrooms. DH to kitchens and bedsits. For bedsits, a stand-alone 10 year life sealed battery DS will be required in addition to the DH.
DS = smoke detector DH = heat detector All detectors should be interlinked, mains-powered with integral battery standby supply unless specified otherwise			
Doors	30-minute fire door* to kitchen (with combined smoke & intumescent seal). Other doors should be sound, well-constructed and close fitting. Non-fire-resisting glazed doors, doors of flimsy construction or hollow infill-type doors will not be accepted.	30-minute fire door* to all rooms (except bathrooms). Kitchen doors to have combined smoke & intumescent seal.	30-minute fire door* to all rooms (except bathrooms). Kitchen doors and bedsit doors to have combined smoke & intumescent seal.
* doors to comply with BS476-22 and will include self-closing devices Existing fire doors which have combined smoke and intumescent seals will be accepted where an interlinked detector is provided to the room.			
Walls / Partitions – Escape route (refer to paragraph 9 of LACORS)	Walls and floors to be of sound, traditional construction.	30-minute protected route is required with 30-minute fire-resisting construction.	
Walls and Floors – Separation between units (refer to paragraph 19 of LACORS)	Walls and floors to be of sound, traditional construction.		
Emergency Lighting	Only required if means of escape has no borrowed light or route is long or complex.		Required
Fire Blanket	Required in all shared kitchens.		Required in all shared kitchens and bedsits.
Fire Extinguishers	Only required if there are staff that work / sleep at a property. Staff need to be trained / qualified to use.		
Security Locks	Any security lock provided should have a thumb-turn or be capable of being immediately opened without the use of a key.		
Items in Means of Escape	Means of escape should be maintained free of any obstructions and fire risks.		
Key, card or coin meters	Not permitted for fire alarm power supply to ensure there is no interruption.		
Boilers	N/A	Not allowed in means of escape.	
Cupboards in Means of Escape	N/A	Storage cupboards should not be located in protected routes unless they are 30-minute fire resisting with an interlinked DS or emptied and locked shut.	
Electricity / Gas Meters	Allowed on means of escape if up to current standards.		30-minute fire-resisting cupboard required if on means of escape.
Washing Machine / Tumble Dryer Utility Room	Any room containing a washing machine or tumble dryer should have a 30-minute fire door and DH.		
Properties with Basements / Lower Ground Floors	Require 20-minute separation from the rest of the property. Option 1: 20-minute door at the top or bottom of stairs and 20-minute vertical separation. Option 2: DS to each bedroom and 20-minute door to each bedroom.	Require 30-minute separation from the rest of the property. Option 1: 30-minute fire door at the top or bottom of stairs and 30-minute vertical separation. Option 2: DS to each bedroom and 30-minute fire door to each bedroom.	

Risk Assessment Provisions

You should provide fire precaution facilities and equipment to reduce fire risk and to ensure the safety of people in the premises as far as is practicable in accordance with the LACORS (Local Authorities Coordinators of Regulatory Services) publication 'Housing – Fire Safety: Guidance on Fire Safety Provisions for Certain Types of Existing Housing'. Alternatively, the fire precaution facilities and equipment described in this document will need to be provided.

Please note – the fire detection and emergency lighting requirement above may be in excess of what is needed following a fire risk assessment and/or, in some cases, additional fire provisions may be required.

It should be noted that LACORS does not set prescriptive standards but provides recommendations and guidance for use when assessing the adequacy of fire precautions. Often alternative solutions are available that will provide an equally acceptable level of fire safety for a particular property, and sometimes identical properties need different approaches due to differences in the types of occupation or the needs of the occupant. The above standards are not prescriptive, and alternatives will be accepted providing a fire risk assessment is undertaken.

Definition of Risk Levels

Low Risk Property

Low risk is defined in LACORS 'Housing – Fire Safety: Guidance on Fire Safety Provisions for Certain Types of Existing Housing' (<https://www.cieh.org/media/1244/guidance-on-fire-safety-provisions-for-certain-types-of-existing-housing.pdf>) and may include premises with all of the following characteristics:

- A low occupancy level (SGC view: for up to and including 3 storeys, this is deemed as being 6 or less people, where all occupants are able-bodied and capable of using the means of escape without assistance);
- Very little chance of a fire occurring and few, if any, highly combustible or flammable materials or other fuel for a fire;
- Where fire cannot spread quickly throughout the property and will be quickly detected so people can make their escape;
- Where there is more than one acceptable escape route (not normally required)

Medium (Normal) Risk Property

According to LACORS, most residential premises covered in the guidance will be considered as 'normal' risk. This is based on the general assumption that the occupants are able-bodied and will be capable of using the means of escape unaided to reach a place of ultimate safety, and that there are no unusually high-risk elements. If this is not the case or there are other factors that present a higher than normal risk, then additional measures may be required.

High Risk Property

Additional fire precautions may be required for high risk properties, which include some bedsits and hostels, as well as consideration of the other factors listed below. If your property does not fit within the standard document, due to it being higher risk or larger, please contact us to discuss the requirements.

Other Factors To Be Considered When Deciding The Risk Level Of A Property

- Occupancy level and profile;
- Layout and complexity of escape route
- Travel distance to a place of safety
- Type of construction and state of repair
- Confidence in management
- Vulnerability of occupiers
- Social interaction in the house
- Tenancy
- Type of heating
- Number of storeys

Definition of Storeys

LACORS states that when counting the number of storeys, all floors from the level of the final exit to the top most floor (including mezzanines as storeys) should be counted. Where the final exit is located on the ground floor (or raised ground floor), any lower ground floor / basement / cellar should not be counted. Therefore, a house with a basement, ground and 2 upper floors with its entrance / final exit at ground level should be counted as a three-storey property.

Further Information

If you require any further information or wish to discuss the requirements, please contact your case officer. Alternatively, please email psechousing@southglos.gov.uk or call 01454 864503.