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## Background

Fire Safety is regulated by the Fire & Rescue Service under legislation called the 'Fire Safety Order'. Owners and managers must take reasonable measures to prevent fires occurring by maintaining a current Fire Risk Assessment. Homes must also have well-maintained fire alarms, fire and smoke stopping compartmentation, fire doors, emergency lighting, evacuation aids, fire extinguishers and suitable escape routes to protect visitors, residents and staff when a fire does occur. This briefing focusses on the importance of pre-planning the fire evacuation process and the importance of Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP).

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## Why it matters

Fires can cause death or serious injury to multiple residents, staff and visitors. Infirm residents are particularly vulnerable because they are unlikely to escape without effective pre-planning long before a fire occurs and assertive assistance by well trained staff during one. Every resident should have a PEEP which pre-plans how they will be safely moved, using suitable evacuation aids, by staff trained in their use. Failing to effectively pre-plan and train staff to safely facilitate the escape of vulnerable residents is deemed to be serious non-compliance with fire safety law and could lead to enforcement action.

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## Information

Effective Fire Risk Assessment will identify who is most at risk (*and what measures are needed to protect them*), things that could cause a fire (*that must be reduced or eliminated*) or defects in the building, its layout or systems (*that must be fixed*). Fire risk assessments must be undertaken by a competent person. See [Finding a Fire Risk Assessor](#) and [Fire Risk Assessor Search](#). Pre-determining which rooms are suitable for people with different levels of mobility is essential.

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This is directly linked to the number of vulnerable people that can safely be accommodated in the same corridor (zone) and in-turn the number of staff and evacuation aids that will be required to undertake an initial horizontal evacuation of that zone to an unaffected one in around 2m30s. Trained staff should be able to read the fire alarm panel and quickly locate the fire detector that has activated.

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A nominated manager should initiate and co-ordinate the evacuation. Although the Fire Service will take over, staff must be able to start the evacuation both horizontally to an unaffected compartment (1<sup>st</sup> stage) and then horizontally or vertically to a place of relative safety (2<sup>nd</sup> stage) and then finally to absolute safety outside, if required. As the final stage may expose vulnerable residents to harmful weather this must only be undertaken when absolutely necessary. Best practice is to pre-plan a warm dry location residents can immediately be moved to.

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## What to do

Ensure your Fire Risk Assessment is up to date.

Ensure every resident has a PEEP and evacuation aids are in place which staff are trained to use

**If in doubt seek guidance.**

[Fire safety risk assessment: means of escape for disabled people](#)

[Fire safety risk assessment: residential care premises](#)

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## Questions to consider

Does your home have a current fire risk assessment undertaken by a competent person?

When allocating rooms do you consider the fire escape implications?

Are your safety systems in good working order, checked regularly and serviced by competent engineers?

Do you have suitable PEEPs, Evacuation Aids and staff that are trained to use them?

