

Unlimited fines for those who breach fire safety regulations

Government announces new regulations to boost building safety and £16 million for fire and rescue authorities.

From: Home Office and Lord Stephen Greenhalgh
Published: 17 March 2021



Building owners could face unlimited fines following new measures being brought in to strengthen fire safety, the Home Office has announced today.

As part of the government's work to ensure people are safe in their homes, these limitless fines will be handed out to anyone caught obstructing or impersonating a fire inspector as well as to those who breach fire safety regulations under the Fire Safety Order.

These new measures, announced as part of the government's response to the Fire Safety Consultation, will come into force as part of the legislation in the Building Safety Bill.

The measures will amend the Fire Safety Order and will include a requirement for fire risk assessments to be recorded for each building and improve how fire safety information is handed over throughout the lifetime of a building.

The Home Office have also announced a further cash boost of £10 million for Fire and Rescue Authorities across England, on top of the £6 million already announced in the Fire Covid-19 Contingency Fund. This will help with additional tasks related to managing the pandemic – such as driving ambulances and assisting at testing and vaccination centres.

Fire Minister Lord Greenhalgh said:

- Everyone should be safe in the buildings where they live, stay or work.
- Our new measures will improve fire safety and help save lives, but will also take firm action against those who fail in their duty to keep people safe.
- Our incredible Fire and Rescue Services have played a crucial role in our response to the pandemic, from assisting at vaccination centres to driving ambulances. That is why we are giving them this cash boost, so they can continue their life-saving efforts.

Roy Wilsher, National Fire Chiefs Council Chair, said:

- The NFCC welcomes the extra funding to support Covid activities carried out by fire and rescue services across England. Firefighters are responsible for administering around 1 in 240 vaccinations to the public.
- We also welcome the government's response to its own fire safety consultation and the continued investment in fire and rescue services protection work.

- Ultimately, we want to see safer buildings for residents and are committed to working constructively with the Home Office and other partners on the Grenfell Tower Inquiry recommendations and other key fire safety policy areas.

The new measures announced today will:

- improve the quality of fire risk assessments and competence of those who complete them
- ensure vital fire safety information is preserved over the lifespan of all regulated buildings
- improve cooperation and coordination amongst people responsible for fire safety and making it easier to identify who they are
- strengthen enforcement action, with anyone impersonating or obstructing a fire inspector facing unlimited fines
- strengthen guidance issued under the Fire Safety Order so that failure to follow it may be considered in court proceedings as evidence of a breach or of compliance
- improve the engagement between Building Control Bodies and Fire Authorities in reviewing plans for building work
- require all new flats above 11 metres tall to install premises information boxes

The Fire Safety Consultation took place last year to inform government work on improving fire safety. The government received feedback from over 250 stakeholders with an interest in building and fire safety, including residents, Responsible Persons and enforcing authorities, which we have used to inform our response.

The government intends to launch a further consultation on personal emergency evacuation plans this spring to seek additional views on implementing the relevant Grenfell Tower Inquiry recommendations.

The Home Office intends, subject to the Fire Safety Bill receiving Royal Assent, to lay regulations before the second anniversary of the Grenfell Inquiry Phase 1 Report which will deliver on the Inquiry's recommendations.

The Fire Safety Bill clarifies that the scope of the Fire Safety Order (FSO) and changes to the FSO outline above will be delivered through it. The Building Safety Bill will create the first national Building Safety Regulator and overhaul the way buildings in scope of the new regime are designed, built and managed when occupied.