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Built environment – Framework for competence of individual fire risk assessors – Code of practice

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Foreword

Publishing information

This British Standard is published by BSI Standards Limited, under licence from The British Standards Institution, and came into effect on 31 August 2025. It was prepared by Technical Committee CPB/1, *Competence in the built environment*. A list of organizations represented on this committee can be obtained on request to the committee manager.

Relationship with other publications

This British Standard addresses competence for individual fire risk assessors. A methodology for undertaking fire risk assessments is set out in [PAS 79-1](#) for non-residential buildings and [BS 9792](#) for residential buildings. A methodology for undertaking fire risk appraisals of external wall construction and cladding of existing blocks of flats (FRAEWs) is set out in [PAS 9980](#).

This British Standard is based upon the recommendations regarding competence (i.e. skills, knowledge, experience and behaviours) and assessment given in the Fire Sector Federation's approved code of practice [1] and industry benchmark standards [2], and [BS 8670-1](#).

Information about this document

A key component of fire safety in most buildings and workplaces is undertaking a fire risk assessment to identify hazards and situations that could lead to fires starting, developing or spreading, to help prevent harm to people or buildings. Fire risk assessment is therefore a vital part of the whole process to identify, remove, control or mitigate fire hazards.

In the United Kingdom, the importance of undertaking a fire risk assessment has resulted in the task being made a legal requirement in many premises to protect health and safety of occupants and visitors. This importance has been underlined by investigations, reports and changes to building safety systems arising from the tragic Grenfell Tower fire.

This British Standard supports anyone undertaking a fire risk assessment by providing clear recommendations that will enable them to recognize defined levels of competence. The basis for these recommendations is the fundamental principle of a duty of care not to exceed personal competence when undertaking fire risk assessments.

This publication can be withdrawn, revised, partially superseded or superseded. Information regarding the status of this publication can be found in the Standards Catalogue on the BSI website at knowledge.bsigroup.com, or by contacting the Customer Services team.

Where websites and webpages have been cited, they are provided for ease of reference and are correct at the time of publication. The location of a webpage or website, or its contents, cannot be guaranteed.

Use of this document

This British Standard can be used as a benchmark against which to assess the competence of individual fire risk assessors.

More generally, it is expected to be of use to, for example:

- persons or organizations needing to appoint a fire risk assessor;
- dutyholders or those with a responsibility for fire safety undertaking fire risk assessments;
- organizations that will assess the competence of fire risk assessors, including professional bodies, trade bodies and those that regulate by statute or facilitate voluntary self-regulation;
- training providers and awarding organizations;

- national accreditation and national qualification authorities;
- government agencies;
- enforcement authorities;
- employers, including those who use in-house fire risk assessors; and
- insurers.

It is anticipated that this British Standard can be used to assure stakeholders, including residents, that persons undertaking fire risk assessments are assessed by common and directly comparable methodologies and processes.

Those who do not have a duty under legislation to assess the risk from fire in their premises might still wish to do so, and are encouraged to follow the principles outlined in this British Standard.

As a code of practice, this British Standard takes the form of recommendations and guidance. It is not to be quoted as if it were a specification. Users are expected to ensure that claims of compliance are not misleading.

Users may substitute any of the recommendations in this British Standard with practices of equivalent or better outcome. Any user claiming compliance with this British Standard is expected to be able to justify any course of action that deviates from its recommendations.

It has been assumed in the preparation of this British Standard that the execution of its provisions will be entrusted to appropriately qualified and experienced people, for whose use it has been produced.

Presentational conventions

The provisions of this document are presented in roman (i.e. upright) type. Its recommendations are expressed in sentences in which the principal auxiliary verb is “should”.

Commentary, explanation and general informative material is presented in smaller italic type, and does not constitute a normative element.

Where words have alternative spellings, the preferred spelling of the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* is used (e.g. “organization” rather than “organisation”).

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Compliance with a British Standard cannot confer immunity from legal obligations.

0 Introduction

0.1 Levels of competence

The objective of this British Standard is to provide individual fire risk assessors with performance criteria to assure conformity to recognized and demonstrable standards of competence.

The criteria recognize three levels of competence, which are expected to support individuals who undertake fire risk assessments across a wide range of occupied buildings, temporary structures and workplaces, from small shops to larger public entertainment venues and from low occupancy non-residential workplaces to buildings under construction, multi-occupied large residential premises and specialized housing.

Each level of competence requires certain skills, knowledge, experience and behaviours to enable the fire risk assessor to adapt dynamically and operate successfully to meet the specific situation and circumstances presented. This British Standard sets out minimum criteria for each of the core levels in a way that assumes that the previous level's criteria have been met.

The core levels provide a tiered career pathway. Initially, it is expected that a fire risk assessor will participate in supervised learning and development in order to achieve the competence associated with Foundation level. The fire risk assessor can then demonstrate their ability to operate competently before progressing to the next level.

The primary purpose of this British Standard is to define the competence required to undertake a systematic process for fire risk assessment, taking into account a building's construction, use and occupation, with the primary aim of securing life safety in the event of fire. The process of undertaking fire risk assessments is covered in other standards (e.g. [PAS 79-1](#) and [BS 9792](#)).

NOTE Legal requirements to undertake a fire risk assessment apply to many buildings. In England and Wales, these requirements are imposed by the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (as amended) [3]. In Scotland, similar requirements are imposed by the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 [4] in conjunction with the Fire Safety (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (and subsequent amendments) [5]. In Northern Ireland, the requirements are imposed by the Fire and Rescue Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 [6] in conjunction with the Fire Safety Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010 [7].

All of the criteria described rest on the fundamental principle that no individual fire risk assessor ought to exceed their own competence when undertaking a fire risk assessment. Recognizing this personal responsibility is imperative to achieving safe outcomes.

The primary purpose of this British Standard, and the fundamental principle on which it is based, enable other benefits to be gained. Securing life safety can often assist in protecting property and the environment from fire, and identifying competency criteria at different levels provides a personal development pathway.

In addition, an understanding and knowledge of the fire risk assessor's tasks and activities allows a better awareness of the role and provides the basis for the creation of training, learning, development and quality assurance activities.

The primary tasks and activities of the fire risk assessor are to assist the dutyholder (see [BS 4422:2024](#), 3.57) in achieving compliance with legislation by:

- a) identifying hazards and risks associated with fire in both general and specialist buildings and processes;
- b) explaining solutions and providing answers to questions from dutyholders and people who have responsibility for fire safety management;
- c) taking immediate action to inform the dutyholder where hazards and risks are identified as being intolerable and presenting a serious risk to life;

- d) reporting on issues relating to fire risk (including, in relation to residential risks, awareness of reporting arrangements for residents and occupants);
- e) examining previous fire risk assessments and the actions taken, to determine whether these actions remain appropriate;
- f) auditing management of fire safety systems; and
- g) recommending fire safety measures to manage residual risks (including temporary measures that might be required to reduce the risk of fire spread until permanent measures can be implemented).

There is no predetermined level of fire risk for any specific type of building or premises, although terms such as “high”, “moderate” and “low” are frequently used and occur in this British Standard to provide context. Fire risk assessments are based upon the probability of a fire occurring and its likely consequences, with factors such as the number and nature of occupants, the use to which the premises are put, and hazards, construction and complexity all being taken into account during the assessment process.

Having three core levels of competence, which broadly relate to “high”, “moderate” and “low” levels of risk, can assist dutyholders in appointing a suitable fire risk assessor; and further guidance in this regard can be found, for example, on Government or industry websites. It is, however, emphasized that appointment of a fire risk assessor always remains the responsibility of the dutyholder. This British Standard does not therefore cover the selection process used to appoint a fire risk assessor.

0.2 Invasive and non-invasive fire risk assessments

Fire risk assessments can be invasive, requiring destructive actions in their undertaking, or non-invasive, being undertaken without recourse to any destructive actions or the need for specialist contractors. This British Standard sets out competence criteria relating to non-invasive fire risk assessments.

Non-invasive assessments could include, for example, inspections involving the removal and replacement of fixed hatches, access panels or suspended ceiling components (other than fire-resisting ceilings), or the creation of very small easily repaired access holes for specialized cameras and probes. The conditions assessed in this way might, in turn, prompt the need for invasive fire risk assessments to enable detection of structural or other vulnerabilities. However, this British Standard does not cover the invasive aspects of such an assessment.

0.3 Conventional materials and systems

The competence criteria set out in this British Standard apply predominantly to buildings constructed using traditional materials and traditional construction methods, collectively known as conventional materials and systems.

Conventional materials and systems have been used consistently for many years due to their load-bearing, weather-resisting and structural integrity properties. They include systems that incorporate masonry, stone, brick and timber, and that conform to common construction practices in the United Kingdom. Their fire-related performance has been researched and is well documented.

In the built environment, there is continuous innovation in materials and methods of construction, and using materials in new and novel ways, as for example in “modern methods of construction”. Additional specialized knowledge might be required to undertake fire risk assessments in buildings using such methods.

1 Scope

This British Standard gives recommendations for competence criteria to be met by individuals undertaking general fire risk assessments, i.e. assessment of the probability and consequences of fire and the identification and evaluation of fire risk, in premises. It also gives guidance on the skills, knowledge, experience and behaviours expected of a competent fire risk assessor.

The recommendations in this British Standard are based on the recommendations and core competence criteria set out in [BS 8670-1](#), with specific regard to life safety fire risk assessment of the measures for fire precautions provided within a building.

The competence criteria recommended in this British Standard are applicable to non-invasive fire risk assessments of existing general fire safety measures that can be confirmed without recourse to any destructive actions requiring specialist contractors.

The fire risk assessments within the scope of this British Standard take into account relevant records (which could include details of previous destructive processes) and the measures for fire prevention, fire protection and fire safety management.

This British Standard gives the criteria for three core levels of competence: Foundation, Intermediate and Advanced, where Advanced is the highest level. This British Standard recognizes that some criteria might not always be applicable to all fire risk assessors, and sets out which criteria are always expected and which are conditional upon specific circumstances.

The criteria apply predominantly to buildings constructed using conventional materials and systems, recognizing that additional specialized knowledge might be required for buildings using different materials and/or systems.

This British Standard does not cover:

- a) the process for undertaking a fire risk assessment;
NOTE 1 Recommendations for undertaking a fire risk assessment are given in [PAS 79-1](#) and [BS 9792](#).
- b) fire risk appraisals of external wall construction and cladding (FRAEWs);
NOTE 2 Recommendations for undertaking an FRAEW are given in [PAS 9980](#).
- c) destructive inspections to assess structure and building materials;
- d) competence of organizations;
- e) responsibilities of dutyholders, e.g. liaising with enforcing authorities, mandatory reporting, developing emergency plans, engaging with residents or commissioning structural investigations;
- f) compliance and conformity audits or assessment of building or system design, or of product performance and installations;
- g) assessment of specialized fire safety engineering measures going beyond the criteria of the Advanced level;
- h) fire risk assessments in buildings and installations that require additional competence beyond the Advanced level to assess fire hazards and risks (e.g. in high hazard industries such as offshore, chemical or nuclear installations);
- i) conformity of specific fire safety measures to relevant standards, or the performance by practical tests of fire safety measures;
- j) fire safety engineering;
- k) design of maintenance procedures, structures, fire strategies and installations; and
- l) product verification and testing.

2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes provisions, or limits the application, of this document¹⁾. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

[BS 4422](#), *Fire – Vocabulary*²⁾

[BS 8670-1](#), *Competence frameworks for building safety – Part 1: Core criteria – Code of practice*³⁾

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in [BS 4422](#), [BS 8670-1](#) and the following apply.

3.1 people with specific evacuation requirements

people with characteristics that might require specific arrangements to support them to respond to a fire or to a fire alarm, and to evacuate when necessary

3.2 specialized housing

housing designed for occupants who live independently, or with an element of support, and with characteristics that might require specific additional arrangements to support them to prevent or suppress fire, to respond to a fire or fire alarm operating, and/or to evacuate when necessary

NOTE The primary typologies for specialized housing are sheltered housing, extra care housing and supported housing. They are also sometimes referred to by different terms such as retirement villages, close care, very sheltered, independent living and assisted living. However, a range of housing types can be present on the same site or in the same building.

4 Professional and ethical behaviours

COMMENTARY ON CLAUSE 4

Ethical practices are a key trait of professional behaviour, as outlined in [BS 8670-1:2024](#), Clause 5. Such practices are therefore expected of all fire risk assessors, regardless of the competency level within which they operate.

It is expected that fire risk assessors will at all times operate in a manner that promotes life safety, and that their behaviours will actively promote and support a high standard of ethics. To support this position, a culture which believes in safeguarding life and property is essential and not to be compromised.

Diversity, equality and inclusion are fundamental to ensuring that everyone is valued and respected, regardless of their background, identity or perspectives, and fire risk assessors are expected to act and behave in the workplace to demonstrate personal commitment to these objectives.

A model code of conduct, which outlines the principles of ethical behaviour that can be followed by fire risk assessors, is set out in [Annex A](#). It is expected that persons assisting, supervising or mentoring the fire risk assessor will support and encourage them in following this code of conduct.

Fire risk assessors should demonstrate professional and ethical competence across all core levels of activity, whether at Foundation, Intermediate or Advanced level.

¹⁾ Documents that are referred to solely in an informative manner are listed in the Bibliography.

²⁾ This document also gives informative references to [BS 4422:2024](#).

³⁾ This document also gives informative references to [BS 8670-1:2024](#).

5 Limits of competence

Fire risk assessors should understand the limits of their competence and should only undertake fire risk assessments at the level appropriate to their ability. Where it is determined that a particular fire risk assessment is likely to be beyond the competence level of an individual fire risk assessor, that individual should not continue with the activity unless they are supervised and supported by another appropriately competent fire risk assessor.

NOTE 1 The skills, knowledge, experience and behaviours expected of a competent fire risk assessor are defined in [Annex B](#) for each level.

NOTE 2 Some examples of premises that might typically fall within the Foundation and Intermediate levels of competence are given in [Annex C](#).

Where a need for specialist advice arises, a fire risk assessor should be aware of where to source such advice and the steps required to obtain it.

NOTE 3 A fire risk assessor is not expected to be an expert in all subjects that might have a bearing on the outcome of their assessment, such as electrical installations or the detailed construction of external wall systems. However, it is expected that they will possess an awareness of such matters and recognize where specialist advice is required.

A fire risk assessor should also be aware of where to find and how to interpret relevant standards and guidance.

6 Foundation fire risk assessor – Competencies

COMMENTARY ON CLAUSE 6

The Foundation level is the entry point into the tiered pathway of competence covered by this British Standard.

A person undertaking fire risk assessments at Foundation level should possess the following competencies.

a) Principle and scope of fire risk assessments

- 1) Explain the principles and methodologies used in fire risk assessment and describe their application in buildings.
- 2) Apply recognized fire risk assessment methodologies to complete a comprehensive fire risk assessment.

NOTE 1 This may follow the principles of [PAS 79-1](#) or [BS 9792](#) and include the nine steps to fire risk assessment, but may also follow other benchmarks based on relevant approved codes of practice, British Standards or industry standard documents.

- 3) Identify and apply relevant information and guidance in the undertaking of the fire risk assessment.
- 4) Plan the undertaking and reporting of fire risk assessments.
- 5) Identify and deploy the necessary resources to complete a fire risk assessment and manage outcomes effectively.
- 6) Assess the adequacy of existing fire risk assessments (including any associated information and records). Evaluate the outcomes of such assessments, and demonstrate confidence in challenging the findings where appropriate and if circumstances dictate.
- 7) Explain how individual and group behaviours can be influenced during a fire event.

NOTE 2 This includes understanding perception of risk, personal requirements and behaviours.

- 8) Identify individuals with specific evacuation requirements, including people considered to be especially at risk, and describe appropriate strategies to support their safe evacuation.