



MANAGING FIRE SAFETY

Fire safety regulation is regularly spoken about and often misunderstood. This guide provides an overview of what is required of you as a business owner in terms of managing fire safety risks faced by your employees, customers and contractors.

1. INTRODUCTION

Main principles

Your obligations to your employees, customers and contractors with regard to fire safety are contained in the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

The most important thing to know about fire safety legislation is that the responsibility for ensuring the safety of others lies with the Responsible Person.

The Responsible Person can be:

- The employer of the staff that work in the store.
- The leaseholder.
- The owner of the store.

Getting started

Before starting you should identify who the **Responsible Person** is in your store and ensure that they are the person who implements the advice in this guide.

The **Responsible Person** should look through the store and consider what the risks are to employees, customers and contractors.

Getting outside help

In almost all cases you should be able to manage your fire safety issues yourself, or through a person appointed by you who should be competent to manage fire safety in your business. You can also seek advice from your local fire authority or download additional advice at: <https://www.gov.uk/workplace-fire-safety-your-responsibilities>

Fire Risk Assessment

From 1st October 2023, Section 156 of the Building Safety Act 2022 made changes to The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 that affect ALL RESPONSIBLE PERSONS.

It is a legal requirement to carry out a Fire Risk Assessment; for your premises. You must carry out a written Fire Risk Assessment, the conditions for which, are given on page 9 of this booklet.

The aim of your Fire Risk Assessment is to:

- Identify the fire hazards.
- Identify people at risk.
- Reduce the risk of those hazards causing harm; to as low as reasonably practicable.
- Decide what physical precautions and management arrangements are needed to assure the safety of people in your premises; if a fire were to start.

2. TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Look closely at your shop and stock room area and think about what the risks are that someone might injure themselves; think about how and where items are stacked; what, if any, trip hazards there are, the lighting in the shop and security for staff.

Identifying these risks and having in place measures to manage them is what is required of you in managing health and safety.

EMERGENCY LIGHTING

If you have emergency lighting in your stockroom or elsewhere then this should be tested at least once a month and best practice observed by recording the test results.



SMOKE ALARMS

If you have smoke detectors fitted, you should ideally have one fitted in the main shop and if people work alone or remotely a smoke detector should be fitted to protect their means of escape; for example, a store room, basement or first floor office. Any fitted fire alarm system should be tested once a week and best practice observed by recording the test results.



DOOR HANDLES

Door handles for fire doors must work with a single action (for example a push pad or thumb turn).



FIRE EXIT SIGNS

If the doors are to be used as fire exits, then green signs like the one illustrated should be placed above them to inform staff and customers in the event of an emergency.



MANUAL CALL POINTS

If you have manual call points, where the alarm can be activated from, these should ideally be as close as possible to the final exits for your premises. These should be tested once a week and best practice observed by recording the test results.



FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

Do not use water on electrical fires or fires involving chemicals. You should have at least one water (or foam) and one CO₂ fire extinguisher in your store. The **Responsible Person** should check all fire extinguishers are correctly located and in apparent good working order; once a week. Good practice would be to record the results of these checks.

More information on the requirements around fire extinguishers is available on page 8.



INFORMATION SIGNS

General information signs must be displayed.



FIRE DOORS

Door stops or wedges should not be used to wedge doors open, they should be kept shut at all times unless held open by an approved device which is linked to the fire alarm. Fire doors should offer a minimum of 30 minutes protection.

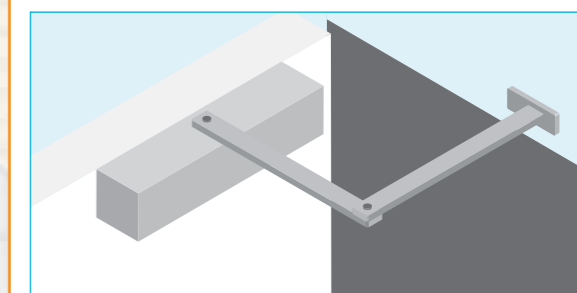


FIREWORKS

Fireworks are regulated by Trading Standards, require a licence and a separate risk assessment. Your Fire Risk Assessment should review quantities and storage.

DOOR CLOSERS

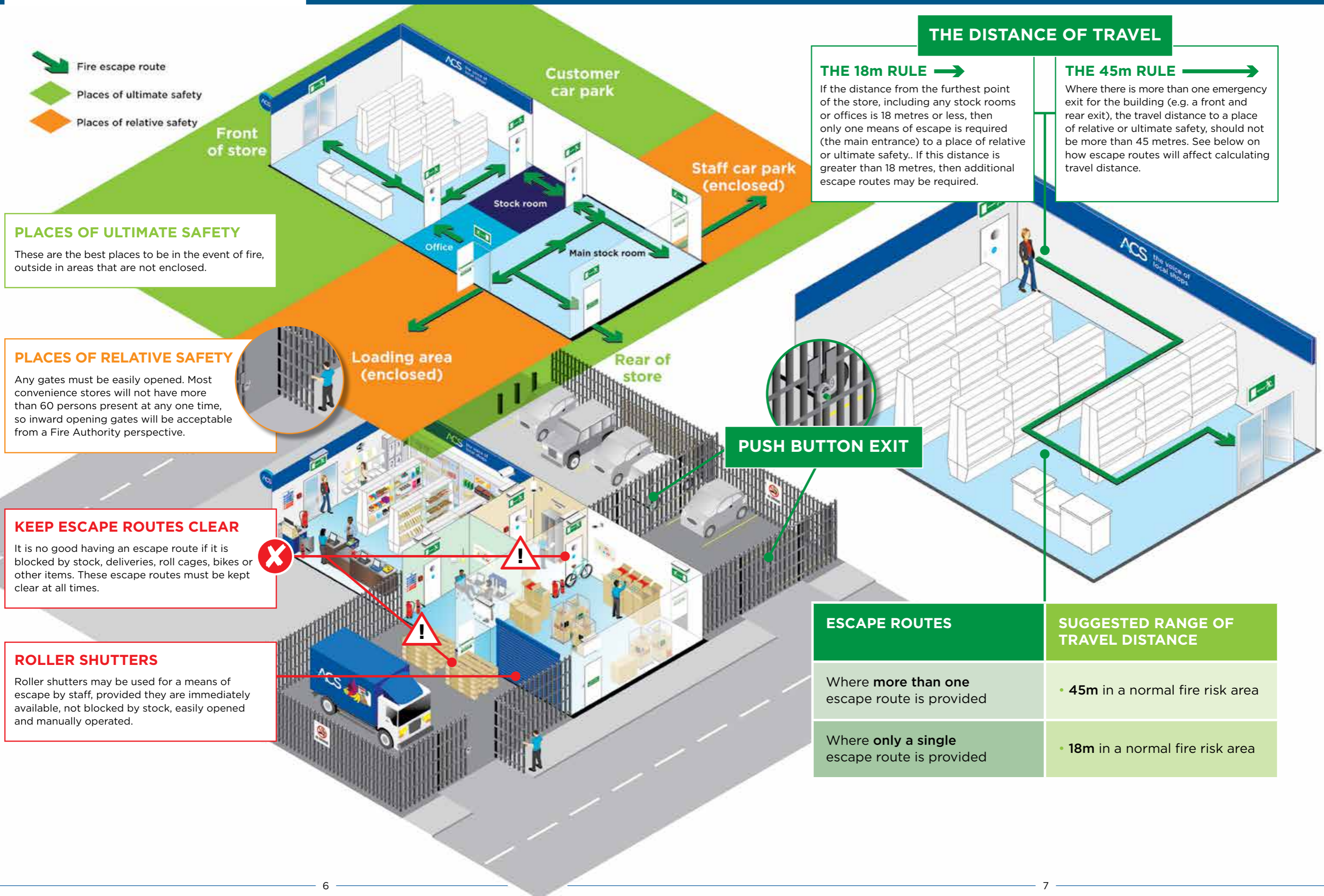
Door closers assist doors to close and fire doors should have these fitted.



3. ESCAPE ROUTES

A key part of your risk assessment will be how you expect staff and customers to escape from the store if a fire breaks out. You should not only document how people will escape, but where they will escape to and prevent these routes from being blocked.

These illustrations set out the main areas that a convenience store must address regarding fire safety and is meant to be used for training purposes. It is not intended to be a definitive list.



THE DISTANCE OF TRAVEL

THE 18m RULE →
 If the distance from the furthest point of the store, including any stock rooms or offices is 18 metres or less, then only one means of escape is required (the main entrance) to a place of relative or ultimate safety. If this distance is greater than 18 metres, then additional escape routes may be required.

THE 45m RULE →
 Where there is more than one emergency exit for the building (e.g. a front and rear exit), the travel distance to a place of relative or ultimate safety, should not be more than 45 metres. See below on how escape routes will affect calculating travel distance.

PLACES OF ULTIMATE SAFETY
 These are the best places to be in the event of fire, outside in areas that are not enclosed.

PLACES OF RELATIVE SAFETY
 Any gates must be easily opened. Most convenience stores will not have more than 60 persons present at any one time, so inward opening gates will be acceptable from a Fire Authority perspective.

KEEP ESCAPE ROUTES CLEAR
 It is no good having an escape route if it is blocked by stock, deliveries, roll cages, bikes or other items. These escape routes must be kept clear at all times.

ROLLER SHUTTERS
 Roller shutters may be used for a means of escape by staff, provided they are immediately available, not blocked by stock, easily opened and manually operated.

ESCAPE ROUTES	SUGGESTED RANGE OF TRAVEL DISTANCE
Where more than one escape route is provided	• 45m in a normal fire risk area
Where only a single escape route is provided	• 18m in a normal fire risk area






4. FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

You should have the correct types, size and rating of fire extinguisher, in the right location in your store. They should be inspected, tested and maintained regularly (see table on page 11 for more information). Appropriate members of staff should be trained in their use and limitations to enable them to feel confident in using them in the event of a fire.

A. WATER FIRE EXTINGUISHER 13A RATED

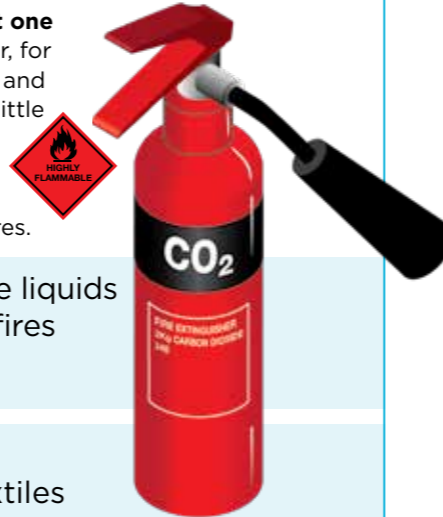
You should have **at least one** 13A rated water (or foam) fire extinguisher, these can contain 4.5 or 9 litres; depending on the manufacturer. They are for use on wood, fabric and paper fires. Water fire extinguishers should not be used on electrical fires, flammable liquid or metal fires.








-  • Wood
-  • Fabric/textiles
-  • Paper
-  • Electrical fires
-  • Flammable liquids or metals

B. CARBON DIOXIDE FIRE EXTINGUISHER 34B RATED (2kg)

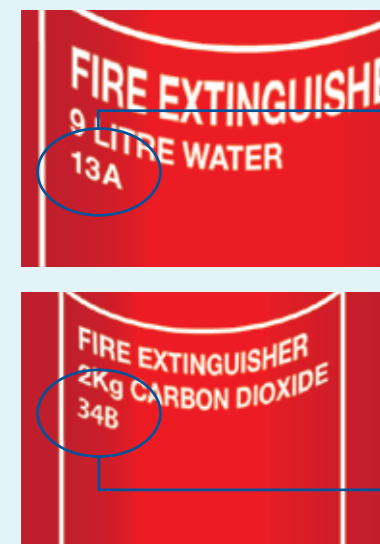
You should have **at least one** 2kg CO₂ fire extinguisher, for use on flammable liquid and electrical fires. CO₂ has little cooling effect and there may be the risk of re-ignition if used on wood paper or textile fires.



-  • Flammable liquids
-  • Electrical fires
-  • Wood
-  • Fabric/textiles
-  • Paper

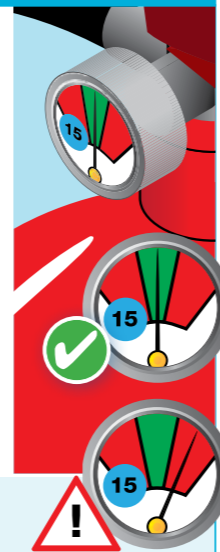
C. CHECK FOR THE CORRECT RATING






Water fire extinguishers should be marked 13A, CO₂ extinguishers should be marked 34B.



D. SERVICING AND PRESSURE CHECKS

Fire extinguishers should be serviced annually by a qualified person, in addition, the **Responsible Person** should, on a weekly basis, check the pressure of the water fire extinguisher, ensuring the pressure is in the green zone, not the red zone. Best practice is to record the findings. Any extinguishers with readings in the red, are damaged or appear to have been tampered with (missing pins or tags), should result in an engineer being called out, to inspect and where necessary, repair or replace the extinguisher.



-  • Engineer service annually.
-  • Check pressure weekly.
-  • Check for damage or for tampering; weekly.
-  • Best practice to record findings.
-  • Call out engineer for 'red' readings, damage or possible tampering.

5. THE FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT

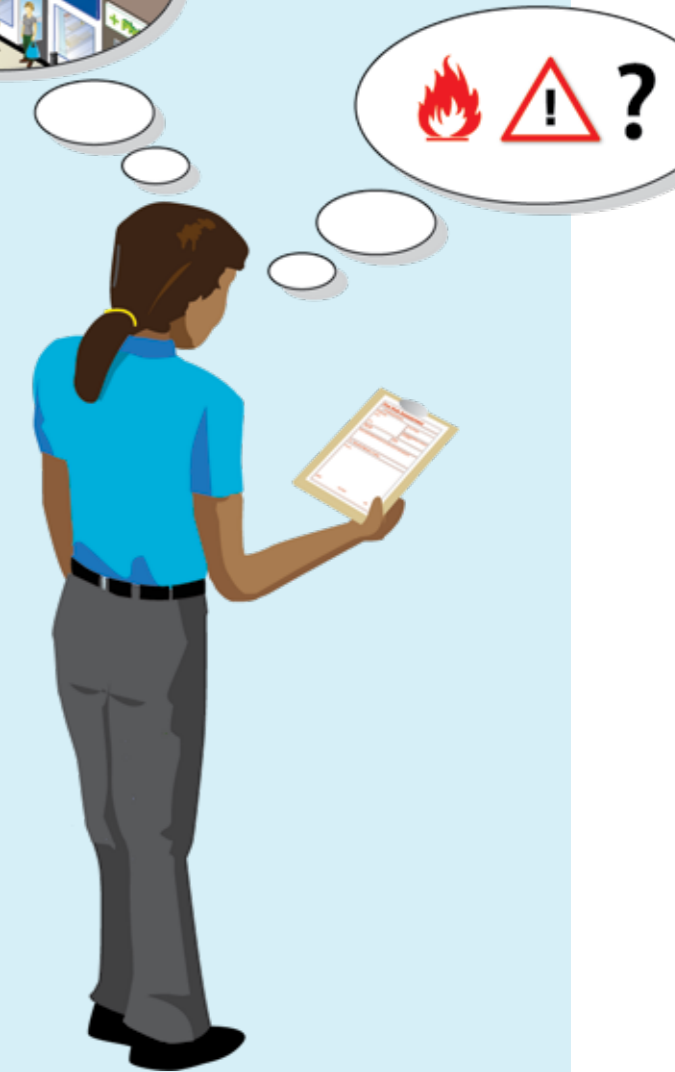
All Responsible Persons must now record their Fire Safety Arrangements.

All Responsible persons must now **record all findings** the fire risk assessment, **regardless of the size or purpose of the business premises or the number of employees.**

A Fire Risk Assessment should be completed for each property you are responsible for. It is a good idea to have a printed copy of the current risk assessment on the premises as well as keeping a digital copy. Best practice will also involve reviewing the Risk Assessment, ideally; once a year. If however, there is a change of use within the building, material changes to the building or other significant changes occur, the Fire Risk Assessment should then be reviewed and appropriate changes made to the document.

The Fire Risk Assessment should include areas such as;

- Are the escape routes unobstructed and exits clearly marked and visible.
- Are the final exits easy to use and allow for quick exit from the building or place of reasonable safety.
- Arson; are wheelie bins located away from the premises, locked shut at night and collections are regular.
- Staff training; is appropriate for the size of your business and they are trained in the procedures they need to follow.
- Assess effectiveness of fire safety active measures - alarm, emergency lighting, fire fighting equipment.
- Assess robustness of fire safety passive measures - fire doors, escape routes, and fire rated windows, partitions, ceilings.
- Assess procedures - Housekeeping, rubbish storage, emergency action plan, electrical testing.

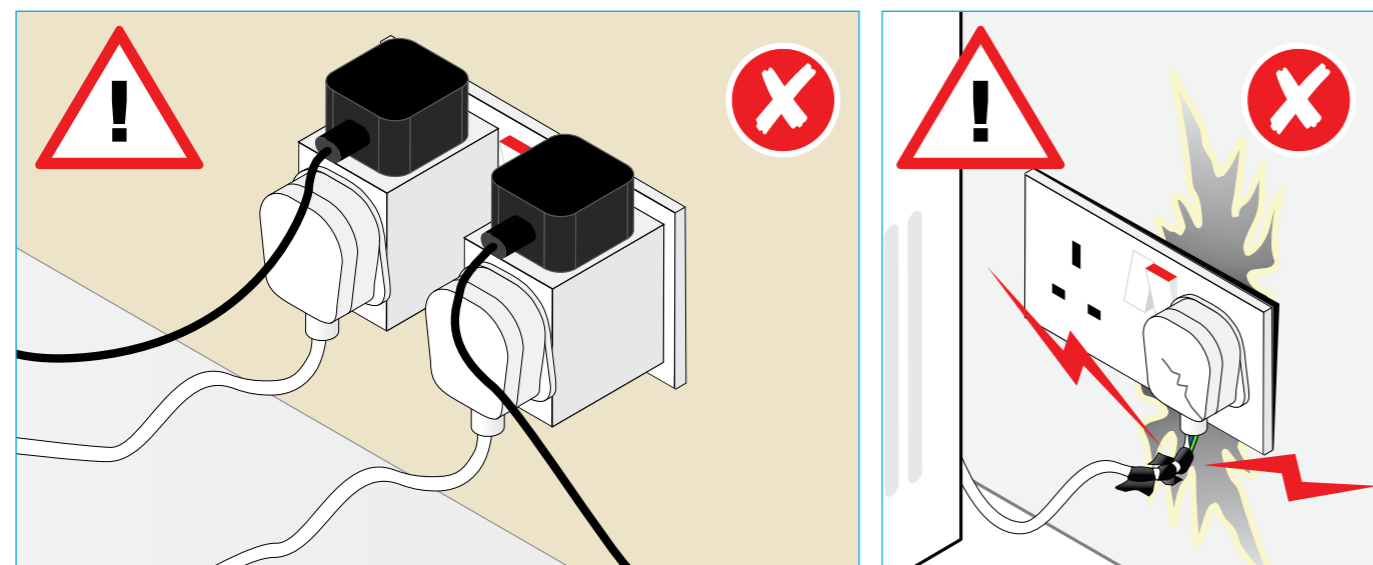



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6. STAFF TRAINING

It is vitally important that all of your staff are trained on fire safety procedures and feel confident that they will know what to do in the event of a fire. This includes temporary staff and should form a key part of each employee's induction process. Staff should be trained in the following areas:

- What to do in an emergency.
- How to instruct customers in an emergency.
- How to operate the fire alarm panel if the store has one.
- How and when to use fire extinguishers.
- What fire extinguishers to use for different types of fires
- Avoiding overloading plug sockets and general electrical safety.
- An evacuation drill should take place at least once a year. This can be outside of normal opening hours.



7. RECORD KEEPING

It is not enough to just carry out checks and have equipment maintained. In order to benefit from the protection that assured advice brings, best practice would be to keep accurate records for the following:

Record to be retained	Frequency of inspection/ check by Responsible Person	Frequency of maintenance by external party
• Smoke alarms	Weekly	6 monthly
• Fire extinguishers	Monthly	Annually
• Fire alarms	Weekly	6 monthly
• Staff training records	Upon induction, annually	N/A
• Emergency lighting	Monthly	Annually
• Gas boiler	N/A	Annually
• Electrical installation	N/A	Every five years
• Evacuation drill	To be carried out and recorded at least annually	N/A

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide is provided by the Association of Convenience Stores in consultation with Surrey Fire and Rescue Service. It was last updated in January 2026. Please refer to the ACS website for the most current version of this guidance.

ACS Primary Authority Scheme

This advice was developed by ACS and Surrey Fire and Rescue Service; as part of a dedicated primary authority scheme. This means that all the advice that has this mark against it is 'Assured Advice'.

Assured Advice means that if you adopt this policy in your business, then it must be respected by all other local authorities and they cannot ask you to adopt a different policy.



This guide covers a range of different issues of best practice and law. Those that qualify as assured advice are marked by this hallmark.

To benefit from assured advice you must sign up to the ACS scheme. All ACS members can sign up to the ACS Primary Authority Scheme for details of how to join up visit www.acs.org.uk/advice

CONTACT

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