

## Fire Safety Guidance for Small B&Bs and Self Catering Consultation

December 2009

### Background

- The FSB was at the forefront of and instrumental in calling for changes to the interpretation and implementation of new fire regulations, following concern about the impact on B&Bs and self-catering premises. The guidance was suspended last year pending the establishment of a working group and development of new guidance.
- The FSB participated in the working group and new guidance is now out for consultation. Anyone may respond and submit views, the consultation can be found on the Scottish Government's website, under 'current consultations'. It runs until 18<sup>th</sup> February 2010.  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/consultations>

### Key Points

- The new guidance is far shorter and simpler than before, offering a clearer set of steps to be taken in B&Bs and self-catering premises.
- The Scottish Government is committed to consistent application of this guidance across all of Scotland. FSB wants more focus on better inspection and enforcement practice by fire officers.
- The new guidance removes the need for disproportionately expensive measures which some businesses had been told were necessary under the old guidance, including; mains wired smoke alarm systems, hard wired escape lighting, illuminated signage, fire extinguishers, sprinkler systems, and installation of fire doors throughout.
- Proposed measures for B&Bs can be summarised as: battery operated radio interlinked alarms in hall (plus landing for 2 storey buildings), bedrooms and living areas (heat detector in kitchen); installation of self-closers on doors leading on to escape routes; plug-in emergency light source; fire blanket & dry powder extinguisher in the kitchen; fire evacuation notice displayed in bedroom. The measures required for self-catering premises vary slightly from the above.
- For most premises, the costs of complying with the new guidance will be significantly less than the old guidance **but** if none of the above measures have previously been installed then some costs will be incurred. FSB has pushed for a transition period (minimum of 18 months has been suggested

by the Government) and will ask for phased introduction of measures to spread costs because we know businesses may not be in a position to afford additional costs just now.

### Main Points of Contention

- While others on the group favoured a 6 bed definition the FSB has successfully negotiated a more inclusive area of not over 200 m<sup>2</sup> internal floor space on two storeys and at the moment applying an upper limit in a B&B of eight bed spaces and ten in a Self Catering accommodation. The CFOA are content with the area benchmark on its own, providing that adequate action has been taken to ensure detection, containment and safe evacuation. The FSB would therefore rather see the bed space restriction removed.
- Differing views about the level of risk and associated action required in B&Bs, particularly in relation to the need for door closers and smoke alarms in bedrooms.
- Accuracy of cost projections for work – some claim there will be regional variations and that tradesmen will be required for some of the work.

### FSB View

- The FSB has tried to develop a realistic set of measures, steering a line between the strong belief in a cast-iron set of safety measures requested by the fire service representatives, and the understandable feeling of accommodation providers that such measures are unnecessary in their homes. **Otherwise** we believe the Scottish Government would opt to go with the fire service view of what should be contained in guidance.
- On balance we think there have been major compromises and the new guidance is certainly much easier to understand and provides more certainty for business owners and clarity for the Fire Service.
- We continue to push the Scottish Government to iron out any sticking points and to introduce a fair transition period to allow businesses to plan and implement any necessary changes. We also want more focus on working with frontline fire officers to ensure they better understand small businesses and work with businesses in a helpful manner to introduce new guidance, rather than to unfairly target and penalise small businesses.
- The FSB and Ministers are committed to ensuring that all those likely to be affected by or, interested in the draft guidance, should be given the opportunity to comment. While the guidance has been written, as far as possible, to take into account views of the working group, the consultation is above all an opportunity to provide comment and that it would be most beneficial if participants were to do so with an open mind, rather than at this stage allowing themselves to be influenced by any particular views in one direction.

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For more information and a more detailed note on the consultation email:  
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