Jonathan Tedd Associates

Glossary

This glossary sets out definitions to understand some of the technical terms used in Fire Risk Assessments. The definitions are not exhaustive. More precise definitions may be available in other guidance (source: Colin Todd Associate – Fire Safety in Purpose Built Blocks)

Access Room	A room through which the only escape route from an inner room passes
Alternative escape routes	Escape routes sufficiently separated either by direction or space, or by a fire-resisting construction, to ensure that one is still available, irrespective of the location of a fire.
AOV (automatically opening vent)	A vent provided for smoke control in common parts, which opens automatically by smoke detectors. These are silent detectors to avoid confusion to residents in a stay put policy building.
Approved Document B	Guidance issued by the government in support of the fire safety aspects of the Building Regulations
Cavity barrier	Construction provided to close a concealed space against penetration of smoke or flame, or provided to restrict the movement of smoke or flame within such a space.
Cluster flat	A flat in multiple occupation, typically occupied by a particular group of people, such as students or key workers.
Common balcony	A walkway, open to the air on one or more sides, forming part of the escape route from more than one flat.
Common parts/ communal areas	Those parts of a block of flats used by occupants for access and egress. Responsibility of landlord (freeholder) or their managing agent
Competent person	A person with enough training, experience or knowledge and other qualities to enable them to undertake a fire risk assessment
Compartmentation	Sub-division of a building by fire resisting walls or floors for the purpose of limiting fire spread within the building
Compartment wall or floor	A fire resisting wall or floor that separates one fire compartment from another.
Corridor access	Design of a block of flats in which each flat is approached via a common horizontal access for circulation space, which may include a common entrance hall.
Dead end	Area from which escape is possible in only one direction.

Destructive fire risk assessment	A fire risk assessment in which, by means of destructive exposure, access is obtained to view concealed construction.
Emergency escape lighting	Lighting that provides illumination for the safety of people leaving the building when the normal lighting fails.
Escape route	Route forming part of the means of escape from any point in the building to the final exit.
Evacuation lift	A lift that may be used for the evacuation of people with disabilities, or others, in a fire.
Final exit	An exit from a building from which people can disperse in safety and beyond which they are no longer at danger from fire or smoke.
Fire compartment	A part of the building constructed to prevent the spread of fire to or from another part of the building.
Fire damper	Mechanical or intumescent device within the duct or ventilation opening, which is operated automatically in the event of fire, to prevent the passage of fire (where there is a need to prevent the passage of smoke, the fire damper needs to satisfy additional criteria).
Fire-fighting lift	A lift, designed to have additional protection, with controls that enable it to be used under the direct control of the fire and rescue service when fighting the fire.
Fire-fighting shaft	A fire-resisting enclosure containing a fire-fighting stair, fire mains, fire-fighting lobbies and, if provided, a fire-fighting lift.
Fire load	Quantity of heat that could be released by the complete combustion of all the combustible materials in a space.
Fire main	Water supply pipe installed in a block of flats for fire-fighting purposes, fitted with valves at each storey. The main may be ‘dry’, in which case it is fitted with inlet connections at fire service access levels, so that it can be charged with water from pumping appliances. In tall blocks, the main is ‘wet’ and is permanently charged with water from a pressurised supply.
Fire resistance	The ability of a component or construction of a building to satisfy, for a stated period of time, some or all of the appropriate criteria of relevant fire test standards.
Fire stopping	The seal provided to close and imperfection of fit or design tolerance between elements or components, to restrict the passage of fire and smoke.

Fire-resisting door	A door, together with its frame and furniture, provided for the passage of people, which, when closed, is intended to restrict the passage of fire and smoke to a predictable level of performance.
Fire-resisting door-notional FD30 door	A door assembly that satisfied the current specification, or fire resistance test for 30 minutes at the time of construction/installation
Fire-resisting door-replacement FD30S door	A door assembly that has been certificated by a UKAS-accredited fire test laboratory as satisfying the relevant test requirements for 30 minutes
Fire-resisting door-upgraded FD30S door	A 'notional FD30' door, fitted with intumescent strips and smoke seals, and with any other work carried out such that it may be reasonably anticipated that it uphold fire integrity for 30 minutes
General needs block	A residential block for members of the general public only and not those who have specific needs or have vulnerabilities
Habitable room	Room within a flat, used or intended to be used for dwelling purposes
Inner room	A room from which escape is possible by passing through another room (the access room)
Material alteration	An alteration to the building that significantly affects (by lowering or potential to lower) the level of risk to people from fire.
Means of escape	Route(s) provide to ensure safe egress from the premises or other locations to a place of total safety
Non-destructive fire risk assessment	An FRA that does involve destructive exposure (but will include opening of doors, risers, hatches, inspection above suspended ceilings)
OV (openable vent)	Vent provided for smoke control in the common parts, which is operated by the fire service by means of a switch locally, or remotely.
Protected corridor or lobby	Corridor or lobby that is adequately protected from fire in adjoining rooms/spaces by fire-resisting construction.
Protected entrance hall or landing	A hall or space in a flat enclosed in fire-resisting construction.
Protected route	An escape route that is adequately protected from the rest of the building by fire-resisting construction.
Protected stairway	A stairway that is adequately protected from the rest of the building by fire-resisting construction.

PV (permanent vent)	A permanently open vent provided for smoke control in the common parts.
Reasonably practicable measures	Measures that reduce fire risk to an extent where the cost and effort to reduce the risk further would be grossly disproportionate to the remaining risk.
Relevant person	Any person lawfully on the premises and any person in the immediate vicinity (but not fire-fighters carrying out operational duties).
Self-closing device	Device that is capable of closing the door from any angle and against any latch fitted to the door.
Sheltered housing	A block of flats in which each flat is designed and constructed for the purpose of providing residential accommodation for vulnerable or elderly people, who receive, or are to receive, a support service – not to be confused with a care home for the elderly
Simultaneous evacuation	Procedure in which all parts of a block of flats are evacuated if the communal fire alarm is activated
Smoke containment	A method of smoke control involving physical barriers to the spread of smoke, usually in combination with vents, primarily to prevent the passage of smoke into escape to stairways.
Smoke dispersal	A method of smoke control frequently used in older blocks of flats at the time of their construction (but now deprecated). Vents were sited in such a way as to achieve uninterrupted natural cross-ventilation of corridors and lobbies in an endeavour to dilute and disperse any smoke in these areas.
'Stay put'	An evacuation strategy based on the principle that only the residents of the flat of fire origin need to escape initially, while other residents may remain in their own flats.
Travel distance (within a specified area, such as a flat, the hallway of a flat or a common corridor)	The actual distance to be travelled by a person from any point within the specified area, to the nearest exit leading to a place of relative safety in which the person is in no immediate danger from fire.
Unventilated corridor or lobby	Corridor or lobby with no vents or other means of smoke control.
Ventilated corridor or lobby	Corridor or lobby with means of smoke control.