News

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Fire safety burden on B&Bs relaxed

Guidance will aid 7,000 bed and breakfast and self catering businesses

New fire safety guidance will significantly reduce the financial and administrative burden on many of Scotland's estimated 7,000 bed and breakfast and self catering businesses.

The new guidance will simplify requirements and reduce the average cost of safety equipment by over 90% while maintaining high safety standards.

As a result of the review, the cost to businesses of installing the required fire safety equipment has fallen from an average of £19,690 to just £960.

Businesses in the sector had raised concerns that the previous guidance was both complex and prohibitively expensive with many also concerned that the requirements were often disproportionate to the size of establishments.

Announcing the new guidance, Minister for Community Safety Fergus Ewing said:

"The Scottish Government moved quickly to address business owners' concerns around the cost and complexity of the previous fire safety guidance.

"The new measures reduce costs and red tape while helping businesses continue to provide a safe environment for their paying guests.

"This is legislation that will help the people who need it most – small businesses – during what has been a challenging economical climate, and will allow them to focus resources on providing the best service they can."

Hamish Fraser, the Federation of Small Businesses' (FSB) Highlands and Islands Chairman said:

"New fire legislation meant new responsibilities for the entire business community, including bed and breakfasts. However, how the legislative guidelines for this sector were being enforced caused real distress.

"B&B and self-catering owners are determined to ensure the safety of their guests but a better system needed to be found. The FSB engaged with government and fire officials with aim of finding a solution; protecting the safety of guests while ensuring the tourism industry stayed competitive. Today's publication is another step towards that goal."

Steven McKenzie, Head of Fire Safety Legislation of the Chief Fire Officers Association (Scotland), said:

“We have worked closely with the Scottish Government to develop straight forward guidance that enables owners to comply with fire safety legislation while at the same time significantly reducing their costs.”

Amanda Frazer, owner of Larick House Bed and Breakfast in Newtonmore, said: ‘As an owner of a bed and breakfast business, I am pleased that the Government has listened to the sector’s concerns and moved swiftly to introduce this new guidance.”

Background

The scope of the new guidance covers B&Bs with up to eight paying guests and self catering establishments providing accommodation for up to 10 people.

Under the previous guidance, introduced in 2007, proprietors had responsibility for conducting their own risk assessment. Fire services then had the powers to enforce the introduction of additional measures should they deem it necessary.

The new guidance requires bed and breakfast owners to apply an agreed level of fire safety cover, consistent with the size and risk profile of the property. On average, a bed and breakfast business would be required to install around £960 of safety equipment. With equipment expected to have a lifespan of at least ten years, this equates to less than £100 per year.

Independent analysis by cost management specialists Turner and Townsend compared the average cost of compliance under both the previous and new guidance:

New Guidance -	£960
Previous Guidance -	£19,690
Difference -	£18,730

The public consultation ran for 12 weeks between 26 November 2009 and 4 February 2010

Contact

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