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This circular is	<b>For information</b>	No response required	
This circular is	<b>Relevant to the National Framework</b>		
Status	<b>This Circular provides information on managing the risk associated with fire in timber framed buildings and is relevant to firefighter safety</b>		

# Timber Framed Buildings

## Issued by:

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Office of the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser

## Addressed to:

**The Chair of the Fire and Rescue Authority  
The Chief Executive of the County Council  
The Clerk to the Fire and Rescue Authority  
The Clerk to the Combined Fire and Rescue Authority  
The Commissioner of the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority  
The Chief Fire Officer**

## Please forward to:

**Chief Executive Fire Service College  
Relevant FRS Departments**

## Summary

This circular provides information on managing the risk associated with fire in timber framed buildings, and on further guidance that will be issued on this subject.

## For further information, contact:

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## Timber Framed Buildings

### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Fire and Rescue Circular brings to the attention of England's Fire and Rescue Services the hazard and risks associated with fires in timber framed buildings. The Circular also identifies control measures that seek to reduce risk to firefighters and the wider community.

### 2.0 Background

- 2.1 In recent years there has been an increase in significant fires involving large timber framed buildings especially during the construction phase, which has highlighted the potential for rapid fire growth and fire spread.

### 3.0 Firefighting

- 3.1 At incidents involving timber framed buildings, particularly during the construction phase, fire spread is likely to be extremely rapid and the unprotected structure liable to early collapse. High levels of radiated heat are also likely, constituting a hazard to firefighting personnel with the possibility of offsite fire spread to adjacent structures. Evidence relating to a number of fires in large timber framed buildings under construction indicates that once the fire is established, firefighting tactics are likely to be in the defensive mode.
- 3.2 To reflect this concern, a project to produce operational guidance on firefighting in timber frame buildings has been initiated within the Operational Guidance Programme. In the meantime it is considered appropriate to provide interim information to assist FRSs in assessing the potential risks associated with this type of construction within their communities, together with information on operational planning and firefighter safety.

### 4.0 Training package

- 4.1 The Office of the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser will distribute, in an electronic format, a training package on modern methods of building construction to all Fire and Rescue Services in England.
- 4.2 The training package has been produced by the London Fire Brigade, and is designed to familiarise personnel with the hazards, risks and operational considerations associated with timber framed structures and other advanced building technologies. The London Fire Brigade has agreed to make the training package available to all Fire and Rescue Services.

### 5.0 Hazards during construction

- 5.1 During construction, timber framed buildings may present a significant hazard in terms of potential fire growth and size of fire, mainly because of the inherent large fire load, and the fact that the fire safety measures planned for the finished building are not in place. FRAs should make use of information for operational planning gained from visits by operational crews under Section 7(2)(d) of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 and by fire safety staff during fire safety audits. FRAs will also wish to consider using their normal consultation processes with Building Control Authorities to gain information about proposed large scale timber framed developments.

### 6.0 Fire Safety Enforcement

- 6.1 Where the building is occupied solely by a workforce engaged in the construction process, fire precautions are enforced by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) using both the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, (FSO) and the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007, (CDM). Where a building under construction is also occupied by other people not involved in construction activities, the FRA is responsible for enforcing the general fire precautions for those parts of the premises that are wholly or partially occupied using the appropriate articles of the CDM Regulations and the FSO.
- 6.2 Fire and Rescue Authorities may wish to use their legislative powers where they are the enforcing authority and equally work closely with the HSE in relation to premises which fall within their respective legislative responsibility.
- 6.3 Further guidance can be found in both the recently updated Code of Practice: Fire Prevention on Construction Sites 7<sup>th</sup> edition jointly produced by the Fire Protection Association and the Construction Federation; and in the HSE's guidance (HSG 168), Fire Safety in Construction Work. The joint Code of Practice specifically draws attention to the need to carry out a risk assessment on high risk sites where arson is considered to be a threat.

### 7.0 Data Collection

- 7.1 Fires that occur within a timber framed building should be recorded within the Incident Recording System (IRS) and do not, in themselves, give reason to record them as a fire of special interest. However, if there are any instances where there are unusual aspects to the fire behaviour or building performance, this should be reported using the standard Fires of Special Interest process.

### 8.0 Interoperability

- 8.1 A copy of this Circular has been sent to the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser in each of the Devolved Administrations, to ensure all FRSs across the UK are aware of the risks associated with fires in timber framed buildings.

**Peter Wise**

**Office of the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser**