



Changing to a temporary Simultaneous Evacuation strategy.

A Triton Security White Paper

**Guidance for owners and managers
of purpose-built blocks of flats.**



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Introduction



Triton Security and Facilities Management Limited is a national firm providing professional security and facilities management services to businesses of all types and sizes, throughout the UK.

As experts in risk management, we know the importance of sharing information that promotes the safety and wellbeing of people, property and facilities.

This document has been created to help owners and managers of purpose-built blocks of flats understand what is required to make a temporary change from a Stay Put fire policy to a Simultaneous Evacuation strategy.

The buildings concerned are those that have a Stay Put policy as part of their original design, but are now considered to have considerable risk issues such as combustible external facades.

Our intention is to encourage the carrying out of a comprehensive risk assessment by a competent person to determine if making a change is the correct course of action. Guidance for choosing a competent person is available here. <http://www.cfoa.org.uk/19532>

The content of this white paper is based on a NFCC (National Fire Chiefs Council) document for premises in England and Wales: Guidance to support a temporary change to a Simultaneous Evacuation strategy in purpose-built blocks of flats.

We recommend that you read the NFCC guidance document in full and it is available to download here.

<https://www.nationalfirechiefs.org.uk/Simultaneous-evacuation-guidance>

Although this guidance is specific to high-rise residential properties, some of it can be applied to other buildings such as hotels or hospitals.



2. What is a Stay Put strategy?

According to the NFCC:

The fire safety strategy in purpose-built blocks of flats normally comprises an arrangement whereby only residents from flats directly affected by fire, heat or smoke need evacuate.

Residents in other unaffected flats should be protected by general fire precautions provided in the building, such as the structure of the building, the front doors of individual flats, smoke ventilation provisions, etc. Those other residents should therefore be safe to 'stay put' during a fire in their building unless otherwise directed by the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS), and, in many cases, may not even be aware of a fire elsewhere in the building.

This kind of strategy will only apply to buildings that are installed with fire separation measures to stop fire and smoke from spreading. These measures could include fire-resisting doors and walls as well as floors and ceilings separating individual flats.

It's because of this that common fire alarm systems tend not to be installed. Instead, purpose-built blocks of flats often include smoke alarms within each flat to alert the residents of a fire in that flat only.

3. What is a Simultaneous Evacuation strategy?

This is defined simply as the:

procedure in which all parts of a building are evacuated in the event of fire at one time.





4. Reasons for adopting a temporary Simultaneous Evacuation strategy

There are a number of critical lookouts and the NFCC guidance document states:

Buildings that have, for example, been identified as having an external wall system that does not adequately resist the spread of fire over the walls (e.g. ACM identified as hazardous by MHCLG because of large scale fire tests carried out on their behalf) is one example of circumstances where a Simultaneous Evacuation strategy may be needed.

A Stay Put strategy relies on the fire separation between each flat to ensure that the fire and smoke does not spread throughout the building unrestricted and uncontrolled. It also relies on ensuring that the external walls of the building adequately resist the spread of fire over the walls.

Where there is a significant failing in the general fire precautions and/or other issues such as combustible external facades, a competent fire safety specialist may consider that these failings could contribute to uncontrolled and, potentially, unrestricted fire spread in the building, and therefore the building can no longer support a Stay Put strategy.

A temporary change to a Simultaneous Evacuation strategy may provide a level of confidence that, while there are clear risks that must be addressed, continued occupation of the building is possible with the adoption of a change to an evacuation strategy and a clear definition of the management strategy of the building, which should be communicated to residents.

In a building that was originally designed for a Stay Put policy, a change to simultaneous evacuation should only be temporary;

NFCC do not consider that a permanent change of this nature is likely to be appropriate, particularly in buildings over 18m in height, in which the number of persons who evacuate simultaneously may be considerable.



5. Possible measures

The following suggestions are intended as a guide and are not comprehensive nor suitable for every property. The NFCC guidance document states:

Change alarm systems

NFCC strongly recommends that where a change to a simultaneous evacuation is deemed appropriate and will be required for medium to long periods of time, that a temporary common fire alarm system is installed.

The common alarm and/on-site staff should only be removed when the required remedial works have been completed, a competent fire safety specialist has been consulted and the FRS has been notified that the Simultaneous Evacuation strategy has ceased and the building has returned to the Stay Put strategy.

Flats that do not have their own smoke alarms should be fitted with them, regardless of the other fire safety provisions in the building. These are independent of any communal fire alarm and detection system specified as an interim measure.

Prepare for an evacuation

The management of the evacuation is a key part of change to a Simultaneous Evacuation strategy. On-site staff will be required to facilitate a rapid, effective and coordinated evacuation. Contact the FRS to provide an essential link with them during operations.

Consideration should be given to the capacity of the staircase and whether it is able to accommodate the expected population in the building. This is not expected to be an issue in most cases.



Communicating with residents

It is essential that residents are informed as soon as practicable about the reasons for the change of the evacuation strategy, the purpose of it, and what actions will be taken in the event of a fire. It is unlikely that relying on a simple mail drop or information on communal notice boards will be sufficient.

It is important that, as part of this process, occupants understand the evacuation strategy as well as the evacuation procedures and what action they should take upon leaving the building.

Update fire and rescue procedures

Where a temporary Simultaneous Evacuation strategy is adopted, the responsible person must notify the fire and rescue service, as it may need to amend its operational procedures. It is expected that FRS operational crews will visit the premises to update their tactical plans.

6. How Triton can support you

Triton Risk Management services

Triton provides a host of professional risk management services including fire risk assessments. We know that every building has its own individual needs, which must be reviewed, updated and maintained to keep up with changing legislation and best practice.

Fire Wardens and Waking Watch services

Since the dangers posed by certain external building systems, also known as cladding, have become known, we have expanded our Fire Warden services and created Waking Watch to enable us to protect more buildings.

Triton has built a reputation as one of the most trusted providers of fire wardens. We offer a full range of services for purpose-built blocks of flats as well as other building types.

Walking Watch is a direct response to the emergence of fire safety issues highlighted by the Grenfell fire disaster in 2017.

The purpose of the service is to be alert to any safety issues around the clock. Personnel include fire wardens, fire marshals and fire watchmen and we are able to provide qualified and highly skilled fire safety teams to ensure buildings are safe and secure 24 hours a day.

In the event of a fire, our team will alert the emergency services, then ensure everyone in the building is fully aware of the emergency and able to evacuate safely.

Speed of response is crucial

The speed with which we are able to provide services to new clients is something that we pride ourselves on.

Triton staff are often on site as soon as the same day, providing peace of mind for property owners and managers that safety measures are in place.



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