

Means of Escape

Building regulations ensure that new buildings, renovations, extensions and conversions both in domestic and/or commercial structures are going to be safe, healthy and high-performing. Regulations also cover specific topics within the built sector: structural integrity, fire protection, accessibility, gas safety, electrical, energy performance, acoustic performance and protection against falls.

Standards which are particularly aimed at basements and below ground structures are: protection against the ingress of water, protection against contamination (including methane, carbon dioxide, volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and radon gas), ventilation, drains, along with others.

Building regulation approval is required for the construction, adaptation and extension of all basements and below ground structures.

Fire Safety –The Importance of Fire-Resistant Construction Materials

It is essential for building products to meet a variety of performance requirements. Depending on the type of material and its intended application, specific fire performance properties are tested.

The Building Research Establishment (BRE) offer a wide range of fire resistance testing (from British to European fire test standards) for construction industries for the purpose of complying to UK Building Regulations or for European Classification and CE Marking.

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Habitable rooms in basements require a safe means of escape. The maximum distance that people must travel, from any point in a building to a place of safety, is usually termed the "travel distance". A safe means of escape from a basement could be provided by the main staircase of a structure, provided it is protected and connected to a final exit. Alternatively, escape can be provided by an additional stair offering an alternative final exit. Escape through windows is permissible if designed to permit escape as defined by the building regulations.

It is worth noting that non-habitable rooms in basements, such as kitchens, utility rooms and bathrooms can be classed as inner rooms and depending upon the layout of the structure may not require separate means of escape.

It is permissible to exit into gardens or courtyards, provided they have an exit to a place of safety or are greater in area than the height of the structure.

