Fire risk reduction rules in tourism facilities

Statistics show that fire kills more people every year than any other force of nature. Fire is a terrifying weapon with unlimited destruction that if not well managed can cause massive damage in a matter of minutes! Fire can wreak havoc on the environment destroying biodiversity, millions of shillings in infrastructure and property while also leading to loss of human lives, injuries and causing permanent disabilities.

Fire poses a risk to any and all facilities / industries including our own homes. The very nature of tourism facilities makes them especially prone to a fire hazard. Accommodation facilities have activities that directly handle fire such as cooking and camp bonfires. Tented facilities and lodges are at an even a greater risk of fire where the tents and wooden structures are flammable. Guests may also increase fire risks to accommodation facilities through carelessness such as poorly disposed cigarette butt.

With the imminent fire risks, it is of utmost importance to ensure that a facility ensures fire safety standards. The Ecotourism Kenya Eco-rating Certification Scheme has a set standard on health and safety that emphasizes on;
• Presence of an adequate and effective emergency procedures / plan; Remember it is not only important to have the plan in place, but the staff should be aware of it and thoroughly conversant on what to do in case of a fire. Guests should also be briefed upon arrival on the emergency procedures.

• Compliance with relevant legislation on health and safety, in this case the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) of 2007

• Adequate training of staff on health, safety and emergency response this includes training on first aid and firefighting skills. The staff should also have refresher training on an annual basis. This can be attained through licensed and registered experts.

• Effective, duly serviced and strategically placed firefighting equipment should be in place. This includes fire extinguishers and fire blankets which should be put in the kitchen. For the case of fire extinguishers, a facility should ensure that it has the proper fire extinguishers for different kinds of fire (water, form, Carbon (IV) Oxide).

• Well-marked fire exits, and fire assembly points

• Conducting annual fire drills and ensuring improvement orders are implemented.

• Use of precautionary and safety signage in appropriate areas e.g. No smoking, Out of bounds, highly flammable

• Presence of effective and adequate health and safety measures both to guests and staff such as fire alarms

Other safety standards are included in The Factories and other places of work (Fire Risk Reduction) Rules 2007. These apply to factories and other places of work including tourism destinations. The rules states that;

1. Every occupier shall ensure a fire safety audit of the work place is undertaken at least once every twelve months by an approved fire auditor

2. All fire equipment should be well stored in a place with easy accessibility.

Figure 1 fire extinguisher storage:
3. Every occupier shall provide in every workroom, facilities for free flow of fresh air, including windows, doors, vents, louvers or any other suitable ventilation facility to ensure that flammable fumes, vapor, gases or dust do not accumulate in the workroom.

Figure 2 ventilation

4. It is necessary to ensure that a workplace is kept in a clean state.

5. Every work room should be fitted with an emergency exit, situated as far away as possible from the ordinary exit, and located in a manner that the exit will not lead any person to a trap in the work place in the event of a fire breaking out.

Figure 3 fire exit

6. Every occupier should ensure that any door of any store where flammable substances are stored are constructed in a manner that the door shall be self-closing, opening outwards or sliding and capable of containing smoke from within the work room, in event of a fire.

7. Where a work place is a storied building, every occupier shall ensure that a work place is constructed in such a manner as to enable workers have access to other suitable outlet or exit for evacuation other than the emergency exits.

Figure 4 fire assembly point
8. Every occupier should establish a firefighting team that shall consist of well-trained firefighting personnel.

![Figure 5: Firefighting training in Kenya](image)

9. Ensure that all firefighting appliances, fire detection systems, fire alarm and any other facility for fire safety are in place and are regularly serviced.

10. Ensure that the workplace has access to water and water storage facility capable of storing at least 10,000 liters of water;

11. Fire-drills should conducted at least once in every period of **twelve months** and a record of such drills kept available for inspection.

![Figure 6: First aid equipment](image)

12. Fire alerts should provide suitable means of alerting persons in the workplace, in the event of a fire, and such means shall be made known to all workers.

13. Establish and implement a written fire safety policy, outlining the organization and arrangements for carrying out the policy.