

# Self-monitoring of fire protection

Guidlines for institutions and companies



[ELDVARNA]  
bandalagið

Fire Protection Association



## Good reasons for self-monitoring

Self-monitoring of fire protection is a natural part of the operations and quality and safety activities of companies and institutions. There are good reasons for this:

- Fire protection significantly reduces the risk of fire and smoke damaging your operations and property.
- Fire protection reduces the risk of fire and smoke harming staff, clients and customers.
- A lot of money is invested in fire protection in buildings. Regular monitoring and maintenance is required to ensure fire protection is effective and investment is returned.
- Last but not least, monitoring your own fire protection arrangements is a regulatory obligation.

## A lot at stake

Every year, the health and property of people and businesses is seriously damaged by fire. In recent years, compensation for fire damage to property has cost billions of ISK. There are other incalculable costs for which there is compensation.

In recent decades, dozens have been killed in fires in Iceland. Even more have suffered mental and physical injury, many permanently.

## Can your company handle a stoppage?

Even small fires can disrupt or halt operations. Experience has shown that companies forced to halt operations because of a fire are highly likely to fold.

Because where do your customers go when your company is closed due to a fire? And what happens to customer loyalty and trust which has taken a great deal of work and money to build up?

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## **Main aspects of fire protection self-monitoring**

Self-monitoring refers to companies and institutions conducting regular monitoring of their own fire protection arrangements by their own efforts and at their own cost. Careful self-monitoring raises awareness among owners and staff of the importance of fire protection. This can significantly reduce the risk of a fire occurring. If a fire does occur, proper fire protection and rapid response arrangements greatly increase the chances of controlling the fire and reduce any damage caused.

**This guide sets out ten main aspects which should be implemented in order to make fire protection monitoring as effective as possible. These are:**

### **1. POLICY AND OBJECTIVES**

### **2. METHODS**

### **3. RESPONSIBILITY OF OWNERS AND TENANTS**

### **4. ANALYSING AND REDUCING RISK**

### **5. REVIEW OF FIRE PROTECTION**

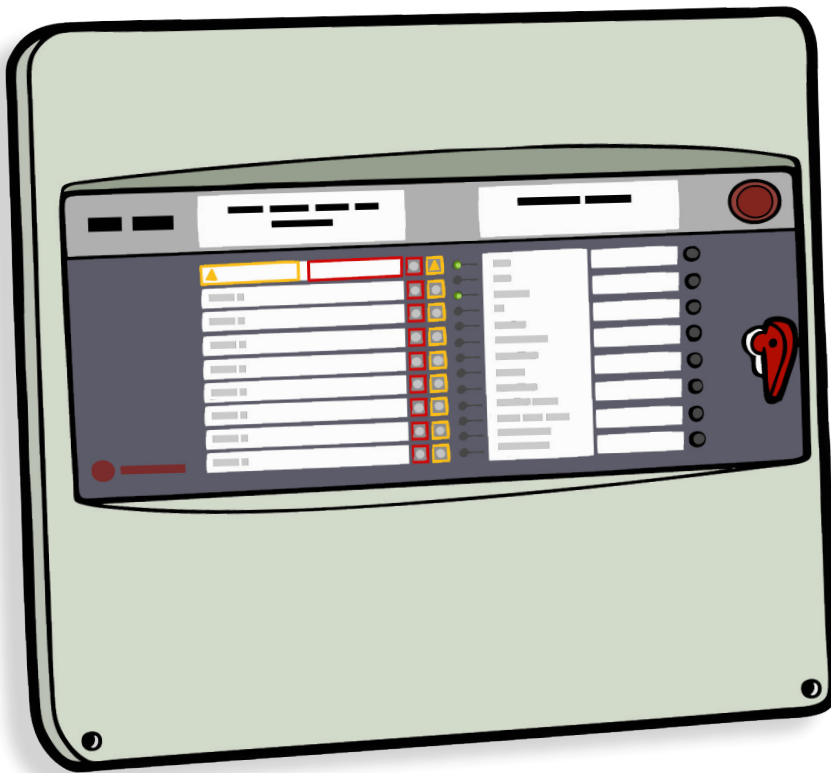
### **6. EDUCATING AND TRAINING STAFF**

### **7. RESPONSE AND EVACUATION PLAN**

### **8. FIRE PROTECTION OFFICER**

### **9. MONITORING BY CHECKLIST**

### **10. FOLLOW-UP AND IMPROVEMENTS**



## 1. Policy and objectives

A fire protection policy is a statement and undertaking to maintain fire protection arrangements by means of regular monitoring and maintenance. The aim is to increase safety for staff, customers and clients; reduce the likelihood of damage to operations and property; and protect the investment made in fire protection equipment. A fire protection policy should be presented to staff, highlighting the responsibility of all staff members to monitor fire protection.

Fire protection is chiefly based on building regulations and regulations governing self-monitoring by company or institution managers. The relevant regulations can be found on the website of the Iceland Construction Authority: [www.mvs.is](http://www.mvs.is).

## 2. Methods

**How best to monitor fire protection depends on the scale and nature of the operations. There are three methods:**

1. Organising and conducting monitoring yourself.
2. Hiring a consultant to organise monitoring and conducting it yourself.
3. Hiring a consultant to organise and conduct monitoring.

Many companies specialise in fire protection and fire protection monitoring. We recommend bringing in professionals if the nature and scale of your operations require such assistance.

You must put together a fire protection manual. This manual should contain all information on fire protection arrangements in your workplace – plans, drawings, checklists and all other information which needs to be available in the same place.

### 3. Responsibility of owners and tenants

Under regulations on self-monitoring of fire protection arrangements in commercial premises, responsibility is shared between the owner and the manager (tenant) when these are not the same person.

Monitoring should ideally be the responsibility of whoever is best placed to conduct it. Experience has shown that it is best for the actual user of the premises to see to fire protection monitoring, even if the cost and responsibility for improvements is shared.

#### Legal responsibility for the main aspects is shared in the following way:

##### Responsibilities of the owner:

- The owner is responsible for ensuring that fire protection arrangements correspond to the type of activities conducted in the premises. They may not, therefore, rent out the premises for any other usage than is covered by the fire protection arrangements in place.
- The owner may rent out the premises only if the fire protection arrangements are in perfect order.
- The owner is responsible for ensuring that the necessary fire and warning systems exist and that the service contract for such systems is valid. The owner is also responsible for ensuring that these systems receive the required maintenance.

##### Responsibility of the manager (tenant):

- The manager may not use the premises in any other way than is covered by the fire protection arrangements in place.
- The manager shall ensure that work practices are in accordance with the fire protection arrangements for the premises in question and do not affect the premises in any way.
- The manager shall ensure that escape routes are easy to find and unobstructed.
- The manager shall immediately inform the owner of the premises if they detect any deficiency or failure of the fire protection arrangements for which the owner is responsible.

### 4. Analysing and reducing risk

It is important to analyse fire risks so that managers and staff are aware of them and possible consequences. Risk then needs to be reduced to within acceptable limits.

Some degree of risk is inherent to all activities. However, risk can only be considered to be acceptable once efforts have been made to reduce it and the necessary equipment is available.

It may be necessary to consult the designers of the building, fire protection authorities or certified professionals when analysing risk.

## 5. Review of fire protection

When adopting self-monitoring, it is vital to inspect existing fire protection arrangements and draw up a plan for any necessary improvements. This will ensure that fire protection is acceptable from the outset, on the basis of the age and type of the building. Fire protection must also be maintained. It is natural to consult fire protection authorities or specialised consultants (e.g. engineering firms) when assessing the state of your fire protection arrangements.

### You should consider the following when assessing the fire protection arrangements in your building:

**Are the fire doors in order?** They should have sealing strips in sockets and pumps to ensure that they close automatically.

**Are the escape routes in order?** In most cases, there should be at least two easy-to-find and unobstructed escape routes.

**Is the exit and emergency lighting in order?** Exit lighting should be permanently lit, and emergency lighting should function even in the event of a power cut.

**Are the ceiling and walls covered with non-combustible or flame-retardant materials?** Special attention should be paid to escape routes and staircases. For instance, if coverings are made of wood, special measures may need to be taken to ensure safety.

**Is the firefighting equipment in order?** Firefighting equipment is, for example, portable fire extinguishers, fire hoses and sprinkler systems. A maintenance contract for firefighting equipment should be signed with a certified service provider.

**Are the warning systems in order?** A maintenance contract for warning systems should be signed with a certified service provider. If a warning system is not required, there must be smoke detectors (preferably inter-connected), and these must be tested monthly.

**Are fire-securing walls and closures between floors in order?** The main plans of the building show where fire-securing walls and closures should be. Pay special attention to the finishing of pipes.

**Is the building in accordance with the approved drawings?** If any changes have been made which may affect the building's fire protection, permission should be sought from the building authorities.

### You must have available information on and an overview of the functioning of the fire and warning systems and how to detect and respond to malfunctions. The systems which must be covered include:

- Fire warning systems
- Sprinkler systems
- Other fire extinguishing systems, e.g. in kitchens
- Automatic smoke release systems

Descriptions of systems must be detailed, and the manual should contain overviews and drawings of the systems and give details of annual tests and how they should work.

## 6. Educating and training staff

Effective fire protection is based to a large extent on the day-to-day care and alertness shown by staff, both inside and outside the premises, as appropriate. It is important to inform staff of the risk factors present and train them in responding to fire. This also applies to workers who are present only for short periods, such as maintenance or building workers.

Special care must be taken if fire-securing walls and closures need to be temporarily breached for works or maintenance. Special care must also be taken in the event of 'hot work', i.e. when naked flames are in use or if there is a heightened fire risk due to the use of tools generating sparks. Fire-extinguishing equipment must always be at hand whenever such work is being done. We recommend hiring contractors who have taken courses in 'hot work'. Further information can be found at [www.mvs.is](http://www.mvs.is).

It is especially important that staff is encouraged to ensure that escape routes are always unobstructed and that rubbish accumulation is kept to a minimum. Where appropriate, information should be given on handling flammable materials and the risks they pose. In the areas outside the building, it is important to prevent the storage or accumulation of flammable materials where fire could find its way into buildings or equipment. The aim should be for such materials to be at least ten metres away from any wall.

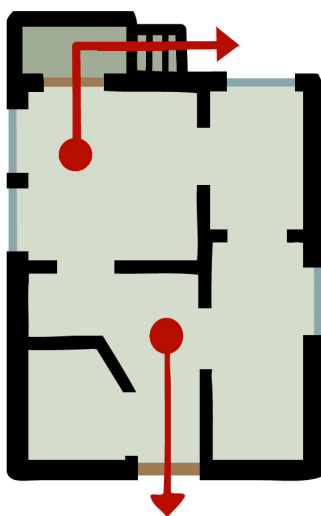
Staff should receive training in using firefighting equipment, such as portable fire extinguishers, at least every three years. All new staff members should receive such training as soon as possible after their arrival.



## 7. Response and evacuation plan

All workplaces should have a response and evacuation plan. The aim of such plans is to better ensure the safety of those within the building in the event of a fire. The plan should cover all persons present, with special focus on evacuating children, elderly persons and the disabled.

An evacuation plan giving an overview of the available escape routes must be accessible to staff, customers, clients and all those present in the premises at any given time. Meeting points should be indicated outside and on the drawings. It is advisable for provision to be made for people to take shelter in a nearby building, and details of this should be given in the plan.

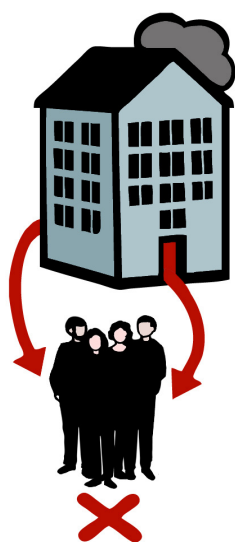


The response and evacuation plan should be the subject of a yearly drill. It is important to present the plan to all new staff members as soon as possible after their arrival.

The response and evacuation plan should be adapted to circumstances, e.g. taking into account the number of staff, the size and type of building and the nature of the activities. In large buildings, it may be necessary to appoint a special evacuation officer from among the management team. All managers and staff members should always know in advance what they are supposed to do in the event of a fire.

### The following may be used as a reference for a simple response plan:

- Upon discovering a fire, if the building has a fire alarm system, activate the nearest alarm button. Let everybody you can find know of the fire.
- Leave by the most accessible escape route. If there are guests or other strangers in the building, guide them out. Pay special attention to children, elderly persons and the disabled. Do not use the lifts.
- Call 112 and give as precise information as possible.
- Try to put out the fire with a portable fire extinguisher or fire hose if the fire appears to be controllable.
- Do not put yourself in any danger by attempting to put out the fire or rescue valuables.
- Do not traverse spaces where there is a lot of smoke or other dangers.
- People should congregate at the designated meeting point outside. Let the fire brigade know if you fear that somebody has not been able to get out of the building.
- Do not enter the building again until the fire brigade has indicated that it is safe to do so.





## 8. Fire Protection Officer

One of the main ways to ensure successful and effective fire protection is to appoint a Fire Protection Officer who is responsible for overseeing fire protection and monitoring.

The owner or managing director is responsible for fire protection and may assume the role of Fire Protection Officer themselves. Alternatively, they may appoint a responsible and competent staff member as Fire Protection Officer. The remit of the Fire Protection Officer to make any necessary improvements must be clear.

The role of Fire Protection Officer should be linked to the role of safety representatives, security guards and security committees, as appropriate.

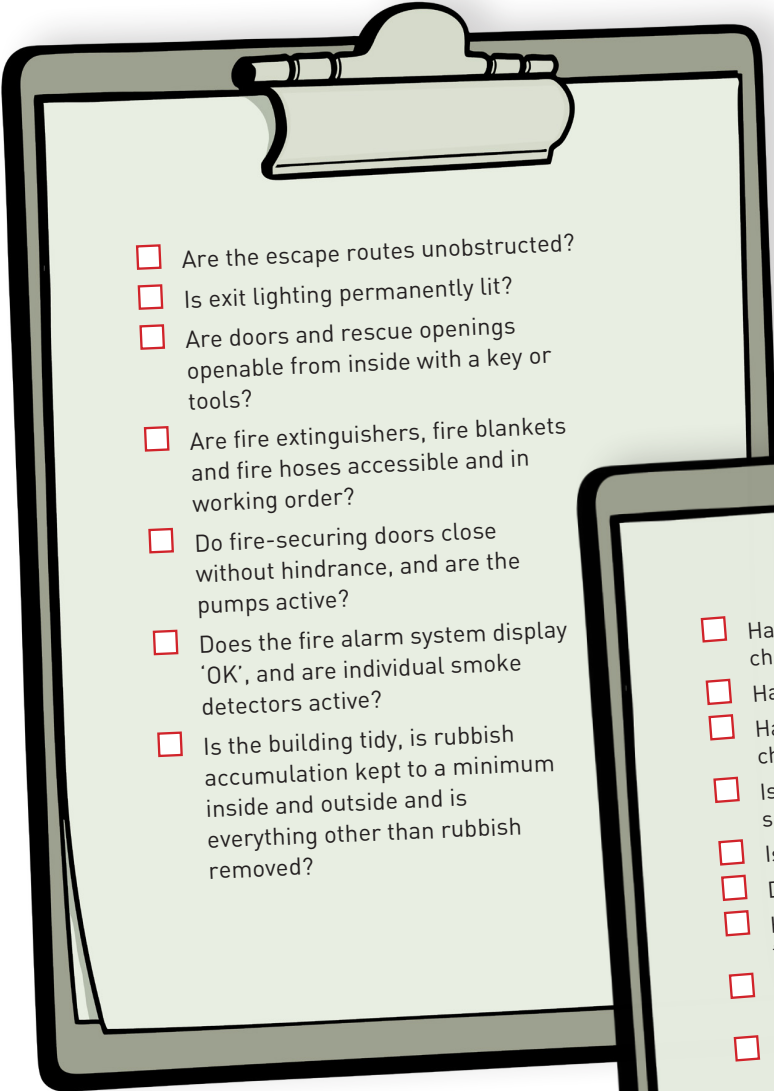
The Fire Protection Officer should have good knowledge of all risk factors in the building and know who would be in danger in the event of a fire. He or she shall see to it that staff receive the required education and training. If your company uses external consultancy or assistance with self-monitoring, the Fire Protection Officer shall be the contact person for that party. The Fire Protection Officer is responsible for overseeing the fire protection manual.



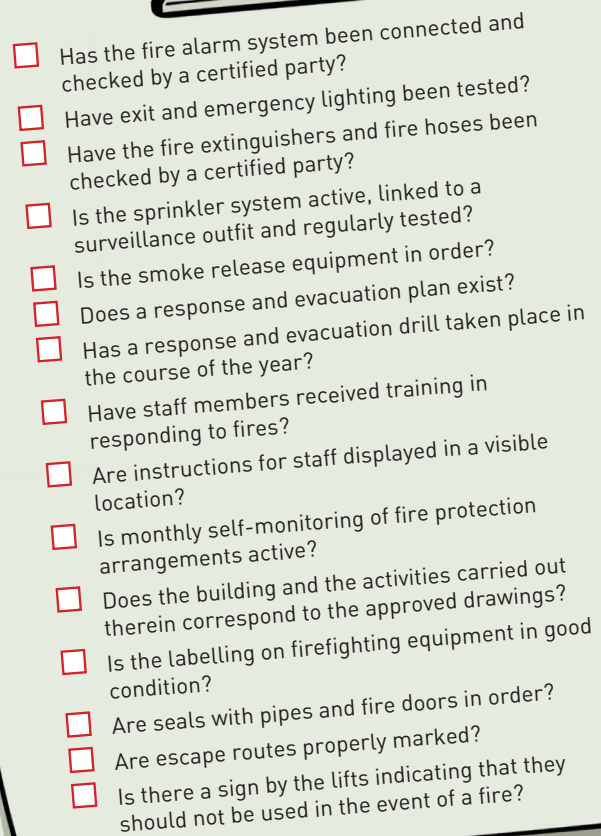
## 9. Monitoring by checklist

The Fire Protection Officer shall regular monitor fire protection using checklists. Some things need to be checked daily, such as the condition of escape routes, but as a rule, fire protection arrangements should be monitored using checklists monthly or yearly.

### Examples of things which should be monitored using checklists monthly:

- 
- Are the escape routes unobstructed?
  - Is exit lighting permanently lit?
  - Are doors and rescue openings openable from inside with a key or tools?
  - Are fire extinguishers, fire blankets and fire hoses accessible and in working order?
  - Do fire-securing doors close without hindrance, and are the pumps active?
  - Does the fire alarm system display 'OK', and are individual smoke detectors active?
  - Is the building tidy, is rubbish accumulation kept to a minimum inside and outside and is everything other than rubbish removed?

### Examples of things which should be monitored using checklists yearly:

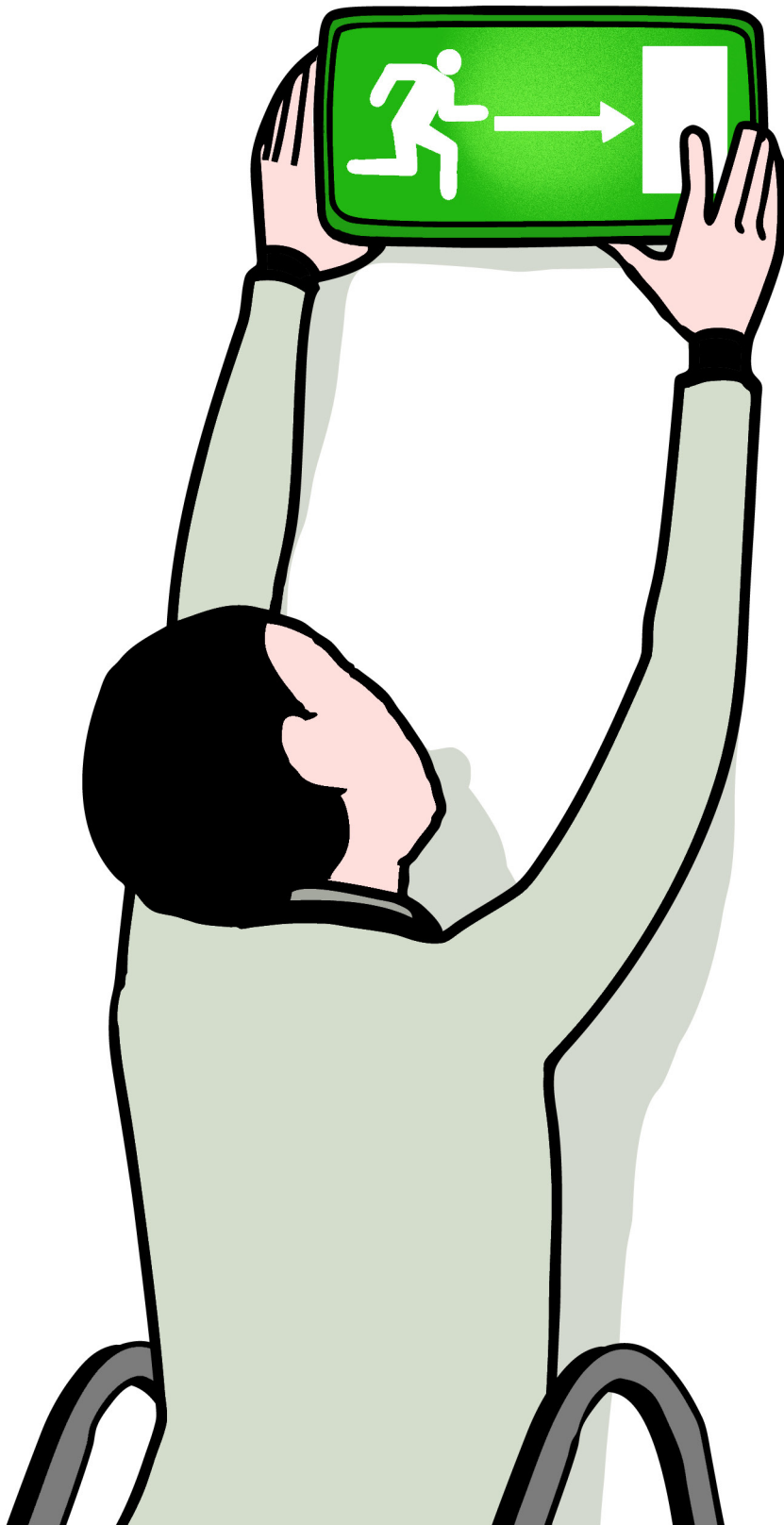
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- Has the fire alarm system been connected and checked by a certified party?
  - Have exit and emergency lighting been tested?
  - Have the fire extinguishers and fire hoses been checked by a certified party?
  - Is the sprinkler system active, linked to a surveillance outfit and regularly tested?
  - Is the smoke release equipment in order?
  - Does a response and evacuation plan exist?
  - Has a response and evacuation drill taken place in the course of the year?
  - Have staff members received training in responding to fires?
  - Are instructions for staff displayed in a visible location?
  - Is monthly self-monitoring of fire protection arrangements active?
  - Does the building and the activities carried out therein correspond to the approved drawings?
  - Is the labelling on firefighting equipment in good condition?
  - Are seals with pipes and fire doors in order?
  - Are escape routes properly marked?
  - Is there a sign by the lifts indicating that they should not be used in the event of a fire?

Checklists for monthly and yearly monitoring can be found at [www.eldvarnabandalagid.is](http://www.eldvarnabandalagid.is)

## 10. Follow-up and improvements

If checks reveal the need for improvements, the Fire Protection Officer shall take action as soon as possible. They shall subsequently indicate in the relevant checklist when the improvements were made and sign to confirm.

**If adjustments need to be made to systems or other equipment, there must be an overview of contact persons and service partners.**





**GOOD LUCK AND DON'T HESITATE TO  
CONTACT THE FIRE BRIGADE OR YOUR  
INSURANCE COMPANY IF WE CAN BE OF  
ANY FURTHER ASSISTANCE!**



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**Fire Protection Association**

**The Fire Protection Association** is a co-operative forum for better fire protection. It is made up of the following members: The Icelandic Fire Insurance Holding Company, the Association of Fire Brigade Commanders, the National Association of Firefighters and Paramedics, the Iceland Construction Authority, Sjóvá Insurance, ICE-SAR, the Greater Reykjavík Fire Brigade, TM Insurance, VÍS Insurance and Vörður Insurance.

**[www.eldvarnabandalagid.is](http://www.eldvarnabandalagid.is)**