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State Safety Law Update: Fire Prevention in Goa

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Goa Fire Safety: Why a 1986 Law Needs a Modern Update

By Express Labour Law | 19 October 2026 | Reading time: about 6 minutes

Goa's fire law dates from 1986, and much of today's fire compliance sits in notifications and circulars. A compliance firm has recommended a rewrite along national model lines, with tougher rules for nightclubs and bars. Here is what is proposed and what operators should do now.

Why the question is urgent

On the night of 6 December 2025 a fire at the Birch by Romeo Lane nightclub in Arpora, North Goa, killed 25 people, most of them staff members, along with five tourists. Officials said the blaze likely started when fireworks were set off indoors, and reports said the club allegedly had no fire department NOC. Firefighters were reportedly delayed by the narrow access to the venue. The government suspended officials, arrested club managers and began inspecting and sealing other establishments.

In this context, compliance service provider Aparajitha has sent the State Government a letter of recommendation on strengthening Goa's fire safety legislation. The recommendations are the firm's own proposals, not government policy.

The present legal framework

According to the letter, the main state-level instruments are:

- The Goa, Daman and Diu Fire Force Act, 1986 (Act 9 of 1986), in force from 1 February 1987.
- The Goa State Fire Force (Amendment) Rules, 2009.
- Notification dated 26 December 2014 under section 13(1) of the Act.
- Notification dated 23 June 2025, which extended NOC renewal to five years for both low-risk and high-risk buildings as classified under the state's building regulations.
- A Fire and Emergency Services circular dated 10 December 2025.

The firm's observation is that the Act is almost 40 years old and mainly deals with constituting and running the fire force, while actual fire-prevention requirements are being imposed through notifications and circulars rather than through an updated Act and Rules.

What national benchmarks exist

- National Building Code of India (revised 2016): Part 4 covers fire and life safety, including prevention, protection systems and life-safety requirements.
- Model Building Bye-Laws, 2016: a guide for states and local bodies to update their own building bye-laws.
- Model Bill on maintenance of fire and emergency services (2019): approved by the Ministry of Home Affairs and circulated to states and Union Territories, with a request to align their laws.

The letter argues that the 1986 Act lacks detailed occupancy-based standards, periodic inspection, clear duties and liabilities for owners and occupiers, and a structured penalty regime, all of which a Model Bill-aligned law could supply.

The general recommendations

Proposal	What it would do
Call approvals a Fire Safety Certificate	Replace the mix of NOCs and licences with the Model Bill's term, with a standard provision for issuing the certificate.
Fire safety officer	Amend section 13 so owners or occupiers of certain high-risk premises appoint a designated fire safety officer, making responsibility traceable.
Inspection powers	Allow the Director of Fire Services and fire officers to inspect premises on three hours' notice, with a duty on owners and occupiers to cooperate.

Special proposals for nightclubs, pubs and bars

Because of Goa's hospitality and entertainment footfall, the letter adds proposals for what it calls High Risk Entertainment Occupancies, covering nightclubs, pubs, live performances, resto-bars and bars with dance floors.

- Recognise them as a separate occupancy category, with extra fire-prevention and emergency-management conditions the government can add from time to time.
- State the maximum permitted occupancy on the NOC application to prevent overcrowding and enable orderly evacuation.
- Move from five-year NOC renewal to risk-based renewal, suggesting annual renewal for these occupancies.
- Require fresh clearance after structural or interior changes that could affect fire protection, and event-based clearance for events above capacity, using fireworks or flammable decor.
- Make designated officers or managerial staff, not only the owner or person in charge, answerable for fire accidents and non-compliance.

Our view

Three of these ideas stand out. Putting the permitted headcount on the certificate turns a vague duty into a number inspectors and staff can check. Event-based clearance addresses the exact scenario of fireworks or decor added to a venue that was cleared for ordinary use. And naming an accountable person helps because many compliance failures arise where everyone assumes someone else is responsible.

The proposals also raise practical questions. Annual renewals and short-notice inspections need enough inspectors and a transparent process, otherwise they create delay or discretion without improving safety. Personal liability for managers should be defined carefully, so that it targets real control over safety measures. These are matters for the legislature to weigh; the firm's letter is a contribution to that discussion.

What Goa operators should do now

- Confirm that your fire NOC is valid and matches the premises' current use, layout and capacity.
- Display the permitted occupancy and enforce it at the door.
- Keep exits clear, signed and lit, and check access for fire tenders.
- Do not use fireworks, sparklers or pyrotechnic effects indoors; seek written clearance for any special effect or large event.
- Service extinguishers, alarms and sprinklers on schedule and keep dated records.
- Re-clear with the authorities before any structural or interior alteration.
- Train staff, including seasonal and contract staff, in evacuation, and run drills.
- Name an internal fire safety lead now, even though the law may not yet require it, and keep inspection logs.

Bottom line: whether or not the Act is rewritten, the expectation on operators is already higher. A valid certificate, a headcount limit, clear exits and an accountable person are the basics that every venue can put in place today.

This article is general information based on public material available as of 19 October 2026 and is not legal advice or fire engineering advice. The recommendations discussed are those of a private compliance firm and are not government policy. Confirm requirements with the Goa Directorate of Fire and Emergency Services and a qualified adviser before acting.