

MANAGEMENT OF FIRE SAFETY

Identification of fire hazards is a vital part of risk assessment and will aid managers in deciding upon prevention and control measures. Fires and explosions usually occur with little or no warning therefore the formulation of safety arrangements and written procedures will help to prevent loss of life and injury in an emergency, as well as minimising damage to buildings and property.

The Head of every establishment is responsible for ensuring that fire risks and fire hazards have been assessed, that written fire procedures have been produced and that a staff member has been appointed to implement them. In a workplace occupied by one or more departments there will need to be a joint agreement on appointing one person to co-ordinate the arrangements. Once in place, these arrangements for fire emergencies need to be referred to in the workplace health and safety policy.

IWC Health, Safety and Welfare Assistance Section can provide further advice and assistance with written procedure.

The appointed persons/co-ordinators role is to ensure that the following areas have been addressed either by themselves or as a delegated responsibility to other persons such as floor marshals. If the latter, they would need to monitor the situation.

- Undertake fire risk assessments.
- Organise fire drills (It is recommended that fire evacuation drills be carried out once a term in schools and twice a year in other establishments).
- Check continued suitability of pre-determined assembly points.
- Review fire procedures (Special arrangements might be needed for disabled persons).
- Check that fire notices are displayed in prominent positions throughout the building.
- Check that fire exits open easily and are free of obstructions on both sides; and that emergency vehicle access is not obstructed.
- Co-ordinate fire arrangements with contractors working on site.

Ensure that:

- Fire alarm systems are tested on a weekly basis.
- Smoke detectors are tested weekly.
- Emergency lighting is tested monthly and that a competent person carries out a service and tests six monthly.
- Fire fighting equipment is visually inspected monthly and tested annually.
- The fire alarm system is serviced and tested annually (in accordance with the current contract).
- Maintain log book of all tests, inspections, checks, fire drills and training etc.
- Ensure that newly appointed staff receives induction training in the emergency procedures.
- Identify other training requirements for example the need for training in the use of fire extinguishers, the role of fire marshals etc.

The appointment of fire marshals will be of particular value to those premises where accurate roll calls are difficult and will help to ensure that all ancillary areas are cleared on hearing the alarm. Such persons should not be travelling officers.

Fire safety legislation is a complex subject and managers seeking advice should contact the Fire Safety Officer in the Fire Safety Department IW Fire and Rescue Service. The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order came into effect in October 2006, replacing over 70 previous pieces of fire safety law. Under the Order, the responsible person must carry out a fire safety risk assessment; as well as implement and maintain a fire management plan.

The risk assessment process should be initiated by identifying the fire hazards which are present in the workplace. These may be materials which will burn, such as paper or wood etc. specific flammable substances such as L.P.G. and some solvents or articles which could provide a source of ignition for the above such as smoking materials, electric fires or sparks from grinding or welding etc. Decide if there is a real risk of a fire or explosive occurring. If so, ensure that suitable measures and precautions are introduced to reduce the risk to an acceptable level.

The following checklist might assist managers in monitoring workplace standards and reducing potential fire hazards.



FIRE AND SECURITY CHECK LIST HS2.14

	YES	NO	ACTION
Fire Prevention			
Have all parts of the premises been checked to see that all combustible materials including waste are safely stored?			
Are designated storage areas secured to restrict unauthorised entry?			
Is an adequate space maintained around storage heaters, are they free of obstructions (particularly on the top) and are they suitably guarded?			
Are portable heating appliances secured safely and suitably guarded?			
Are flammable and dangerous goods stored in purpose built storerooms or cupboards away from other combustible items?			
Are compressed liquefied gas cylinders which are not in use properly stored outside the building?			
Are plugs and portable electrical appliances regularly inspected by a competent person?			
Is paper and other waste prevented from accumulating, and are bins emptied regularly?			
Is waste outside kept secured so that vandals are less likely to set light to it and cause serious damage?			
Are no smoking areas clearly defined?			
Where smoking is permitted, are there suitable facilities for the disposal of lighted smoking materials?			
Are the main isolation points for electricity and gas clearly marked and made known to relevant staff?			
Is a final inspection of the premises carried out after closing hours to ensure that : 1. All electrical equipment not required to be in use is switched off and plugs removed from their socket outlets; 2. No smoking materials are left smouldering; and 3. All doors are shut?			

	YES	NO	ACTION
Fire Instructions			
Are staff aware of the action they should take if they discover or are informed of an outbreak of fire, and are they familiar with the method of raising the alarm?			
Are staff aware of the procedures which should be adopted for calling the fire brigade, and are they aware of the location of the nearest telephone outside the building should this be required?			
Are non-employees using the premises aware of what to do in case of fire (ie contract cleaners)?			
Are fire instructions clearly displayed throughout the premises?			
Means of Escape			
Are staff aware of the importance of fire doors and the need to close such doors, particularly at the time of a fire?			
Are staff familiar with all escape routes from the premises?			
Has a safe means of escape been devised for handicapped/disabled persons?			
Are all gangways and escape routes maintained free from obstruction and combustible storage?			
Are fire exit doors regularly checked to ensure that they open easily?			
Can all fire safety signs and fire exit notices be clearly seen at all times?			
Are all doors affording means of escape available for use when the premises are occupied, including out of hours use?			
Is the assembly area situated far enough away from the building to avoid danger from radiated heat and smoke; is it sufficiently large to accommodate all personnel and can it be safely reached in the dark?			
Fire Fighting			
Are portable fire extinguishers, fire blankets etc, readily available for use?			
Are portable fire extinguishers regularly maintained?			
Can staff identify the different types of extinguisher and state which classes of fire they can be used with?			