

The Loss Prevention Consultancy

FIRE SAFETY MANAGEMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

The probability of an industrial dispute which will affect the cover provided by UK fire brigades makes it essential for all organisations to review as a matter of urgency their levels of fire safety. This simple guide suggests things that you can do - at little or no cost - to reduce your chances of needing to call 999. You should also ensure that you comply with all your legal obligations and this may include the need to undertake a new fire risk assessment.

A. Undertake a fire hazard check of all parts of your premises

1. Portable heaters secure and not close to combustibles.
2. No light bulbs near combustibles or other stored materials.
3. Electrical wiring, equipment in good condition.
4. Sockets and extensions not overloaded.
5. Smoking controls being observed.
6. Proper controls of hot work, contractor operations and maintenance. In higher risk locations: consider deferring maintenance or refurbishment work if hot work cannot be controlled.
7. No accumulations of combustible waste. Increase the number of rubbish collections.

B. Check fire safety measures

1. Fire exits and exit routes unobstructed and available for use.
2. Fire doors closed at all times and fire shutters in correct position and unobstructed.
3. Emergency lighting on/charging and exit signs clear and unambiguous.
4. Fire points/extinguishers unobstructed and available for use.
5. Fire detection and alarm systems in proper working order.
6. Sprinkler valves set in correct position and system in good working order.

C. Staff Readiness

1. Check that fire wardens/fire marshals have been appointed for all areas and have not moved.
2. Has a fire drill been carried out within last 12 months ?
3. Have all staff received training in the correct fire procedures ? (Don't forget part-timers and new starters.)
4. Consider having a fire alarm test weekly rather than monthly until the dispute is resolved
5. Have key staff (security, catering, maintenance, fire wardens etc.) had recent 'hands-on' extinguisher training ?

D. Maintenance

1. Have all fire extinguishers/hose reels been inspected recently by a competent person ?
2. Has the sprinkler system been serviced and maintained in the last six months ?
3. Have fire pumps/generators been test run recently ?
4. Are diesel pump and generator fuel tanks full ?
5. Are dry/wet risers in working order and unobstructed ?

E. Other Factors

1. If your premises are a possible arson target check all your security measures.
2. Consider the need for additional security personnel (24/7) for critical areas such as unsprinklered warehouses.
3. Review your procedures for lift rescue - are the contractor contact details up to date ?
4. Larger premises may wish to consider forming an in-house fire team.
5. Review your crisis management and damage limitation plans. How would you cope with a fire or flood without a proper fire brigade response ?
6. Ensure that your reception procedures include recording visitor names and the provision of information regarding your fire procedures.