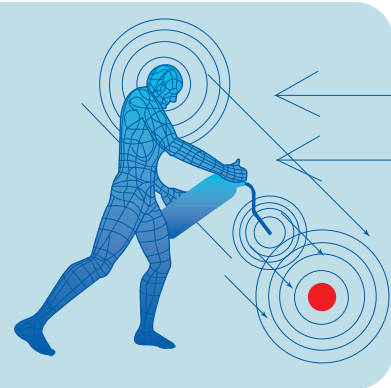


The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

The order requires the implementation of adequate fire precautions, a detailed risk assessment and sufficient arrangements to evacuate the building in an emergency. All employers are responsible for fire safety; this covers fire hazards, both from work processes and activities, as well as general fire safety in the workplace. Employers must carry out a fire risk assessment, although this can be done as part of their general risk assessment. This will identify all the fire hazards and risks in your workplace. Employers need to identify all fire risks and then take steps to eliminate, reduce or control them.

Fire risk assessments should be carried out by someone who has had sufficient training or has good experience or knowledge of fire safety.

All employers are responsible for fire safety; this covers fire hazards, both from work processes and activities, as well as general fire safety in the workplace.



Identifying the Fire Hazards

In order for fire to occur there must be a source of ignition (heat), fuel and oxygen. If all three are present and in close proximity in the workplace, then the fire risk could increase as a result. In the average workplace, fire hazards will fall into the first two categories, whilst generally the oxygen will be present in the air in the surrounding space. The risk assessment should list the potential sources of ignition (naked flames, gas/oil heaters, electrical equipment etc.) and fuels (packaging, paper, furniture, solvents etc.) that are present in your workplace.



Identifying People at Risk

If there is a fire, the greatest danger is the spread of the fire, heat and smoke throughout the workplace. Where a fire occurs, the main risk to people is from the smoke and products of combustion, which can very quickly incapacitate those escaping. There is always a danger that people may become trapped or overcome by heat and smoke before they can evacuate.

The assessment of risk to persons should include:

- The likely speed of growth and spread of any fire, and associated heat and smoke (some fuels burn much faster and produce more toxic products than others do).
- The number of persons working in the area, including contractors, visitors, and members of the public.
- Awareness of any fire that occurs - will any outbreak be conspicuous or will some form of fire detection and alarm system be required.
- Means of making their escape and insuring that the escape route is well signed (can they make their way out quickly, easily and safely?).



Evaluating the Risks

Once the hazards and the persons at risk have been recorded, it is necessary to:

- Assess the effect of any particular hazard on the occupants of the workplace.
- Take into account any existing control measures that are already in place.
- Assess whether any further control measures are needed in order to reduce the risk to an acceptable level.

Further control measures may act to reduce the possibility of ignition, minimise the potential fuel load in the workplace, or assist persons to escape from the effects of a fire, should it occur. These may include implementing fire safety management systems, fire warning systems means of escape, staff training and means of fighting fire.

Where risks still exist, an action plan must be included to show how the problem is being addressed. This should include time scales for achieving the required level of control and specify who is responsible for the action. A full understanding and evaluation of the existing control measures is essential – this is the starting point for deciding if any further action is necessary.

Recording the Findings

Organisations with five or more employees must record the significant findings of the risk assessment, together with details of any people who are at particular risk. More importantly, the record must show whether the existing control measures are adequate and, if not, what further action is required to reduce the risk to an acceptable level. All control measures should be tested and maintained regularly. For larger workplaces including a simple floor plan in the fire risk assessment is recommended – this can be used to record fire hazards and control measures in a simple format which is easily understood.

All control measures should be tested and maintained regularly.

Reviewing the Fire Risk Assessment

A fire risk assessment is a continuous process and as such must be monitored and audited regularly. New and existing control measures should be maintained to make sure they are still working effectively. Significant changes in the workplace must be addressed as they could generate new hazards or risks and a new fire risk assessment may be required in these circumstances.

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