

## S12 – Opening Statement

### Fire Safety

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Many people are seriously injured or die as a result of a fire in the workplace. In addition to personal injury claims, fire can also cost businesses many millions of pounds in lost production and revenue, and in increased insurance premiums. It has been shown that approximately 80% of businesses fail to recover from a significant workplace fire. It makes good sense therefore to protect yourself, your staff, and your business from the risk of fire.

In England and Wales, new rules introduced in October 2006 have replaced the majority of existing fire safety legislation. Fire certificates are no longer required, and the emphasis is on reducing risk and preventing fires. The new rules were introduced in Northern Ireland in 2007.

The wide variety of flammable substances found in the workplace range from the obvious, e.g. heating fuel, petrol, paint thinners and welding gases, to the less obvious, e.g. packaging materials, dusts from wood, flour and sugar. Fires can be avoided or the risk minimised by the implementation of effective controls and procedures.

Employers have a duty to take reasonable steps to reduce the risk of fire and to make sure people can escape safely in the event of a fire. The regulations apply to all non-domestic premises.

These Fire Safety procedures provide an overview of the new regulations and how to comply with them.

Please also read the following section:

- Emergency Preparedness



## S12 – Fire Safety

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### What is this?

This is a written procedure which covers all aspects of managing fire safety within the workplace and clearly defines the responsibilities under the fire order.

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### The person responsible for implementing this procedure is:

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### What is the Fire Safety Order?

The Fire Safety Order replaces previous fire safety legislation. Any fire certificate issued under the Fire Precautions Act 1971 will cease to have any effect.

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### What do responsible managers need to do?

The person responsible for implementing this procedure must:

- Undertake a fire risk assessment;
- Appoint one or more competent persons to carry out any of the preventive and protective measures identified in the assessment;
- Provide employees with clear and relevant information about risks identified by the fire risk assessment, about the measures taken to prevent fires, and how these measures will protect them if a fire breaks out;
- Consult employees (or their nominated representatives) about nominating people to carry out particular roles in connection with fire safety, and about proposals for improving the fire precautions;
- Co-operate and co-ordinate with contractors and other responsible persons who also have employees or premises in the building, and inform them of any significant risks identified and how they will be reduced/controlled;
- Establish a suitable means of contacting the emergency services and provide them with any relevant information about dangerous substances;
- Provide appropriate information, instruction and training to your employees;
- **You should** ensure that the premises and any equipment provided in connection with fire fighting, fire detection and warning, or emergency routes and exits, are suitably maintained.



## What about employees?

Employees must co-operate with you to ensure the workplace is safe from fire and its effects, and must not do anything that will place themselves or other people at risk.

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## What should my emergency plan cover?

The emergency plan should provide clear instructions on:

- The action employees should take if they discover a fire;
  - How people will be warned if there is a fire;
  - How the evacuation of the workplace should be carried out;
  - Where people should assemble after they have left the workplace, and procedures for checking whether the workplace has been evacuated;
  - The key escape routes, how people can gain access to them, and escape from them to places of safety;
  - The fire-fighting equipment provided;
  - The duties and identity of employees who have specific responsibilities in the event of a fire;
  - Arrangements for the safe evacuation of people identified as being especially at risk, such as contractors, those with disabilities, members of the public and visitors;
  - Where appropriate, any machines / processes / power supplies which need to be stopped or isolated in the event of fire;
  - Specific arrangements, if necessary, for high fire risk area of the workplace;
  - How the fire brigade and any other necessary emergency services will be called and who will be responsible for doing this;
  - Procedures for liaising with the fire brigade on arrival and notifying them of any special risks, e.g. the location of highly flammable materials;
  - The training employees require and the arrangements for ensuring that this training is given.
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## What about a site plan?

If you have a large or complex workplace, then it might be beneficial to include a simple line drawing. The drawing could show:

- Essential structural features such as the layout of the workplace, escape routes, doorways, walls, partitions, corridors, stairways, etc. (including any fire-resisting structure and self-closing fire doors provided to protect the means of escape);
- Means for fighting fire (details of the number, type and location of the fire-fighting equipment);
- The location of manually operated fire alarm call points and control equipment for the fire alarm;



- The location of any emergency lighting equipment and any exit route signs;
  - The location of any automatic fire-fighting system and sprinkler control valve;
  - The location of the main electrical supply switch, the main water shut-off valve and, where applicable, the main gas or oil shut-off valves.
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### **Who should undertake the assessments and training?**

Only competent people should undertake fire risk assessments or fire safety training. A competent person must have the relevant training, skills, knowledge and experience to deliver these requirements.

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### **Legislation**

- The Fire Safety Order 2005
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### **Associated documentation**

- Fire safety risk assessment H&SFS01

