

**SHROPSHIRE FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE
FIRE SAFETY DEPARTMENT**

FIRE SAFETY ADVICE SHEET

FIRE RISK ASSESSMENTS

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (the Order), requires the person having control of premises (the Responsible Person), to carry out a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks from fire to which persons who may be lawfully on, or in the vicinity of the premises (Relevant Persons) may be exposed, including those posed by the use or storage of dangerous substances.

The risk assessment is a structured assessment of the fire risk in premises and should identify the general fire precautions needed to ensure the safety of Relevant Persons. It must also take particular account of young persons who are, or will be employed and any group of persons identified as being especially at risk.

The term 'General Fire Precautions' means:-

- Measures to reduce or eliminate the risk of fire on the premises and the risk of the spread of fire on the premises
- The provision of suitable means of escape from the premises
- Measures for ensuring that the means of escape can be safely and effectively used at all times
- The provision of suitable and adequate fire fighting equipment
- The provision of suitable means for detecting and giving warning of a fire on the premises
- Measures for ensuring the maintenance and testing of fire precautions and equipment
- The provision of suitable arrangements for the action to be taken in the event of a fire including:-
 - a) Instruction and training for employees
 - b) Measures to mitigate the effects of a fire.

The responsible person must record,

- ❖ the significant findings of the assessment, including the measures which have or will be taken by the Responsible Person to comply with the Order; and
- ❖ any group of persons identified as being especially at risk;

where,

- ❖ an organisation employs 5 or more persons (in the entire organisation not just the premises in question);
- ❖ a licence under other legislation is in force in relation to the premises (e.g. a public house); or
- ❖ an alterations notice requiring this is in force in relation to the premises;

In addition, it will be necessary to review the findings of the risk assessment regularly (recommended to be at least once a year) and particularly where:-

- ❖ there is reason to suspect that it is no longer valid; or
- ❖ there has been a significant change in the matters to which it relates.

The fire risk assessment (and its periodic review) is now the only means of ensuring the continued adequacy of the fire precautions arrangements within premises. It is, therefore, essential that 'suitable and sufficient' fire risk assessments are only carried out by **competent persons possessing sufficient training and experience, knowledge or other qualities, to enable them to carry out the task proficiently.**

Competence does not necessarily depend on the possession of specific qualifications, although such qualifications may contribute to the demonstration of competence. In the case of small, simple buildings, the responsible person may be able to demonstrate competence provided the risk assessor:-

- Has an understanding of relevant 'best fire safety practices' in similar premises,
- Has an awareness of the limitations of his/her own knowledge and experience,
- Is able to supplement their existing knowledge and experience by a study of suitable guidance documents or by obtaining, when necessary, external help and advice.

Further information on suitable risk assessment formats, the Order and HM Government fire safety guides is available on the Department for Communities and Local Government website at www.communities.gov.uk

Larger premises will require the risk assessor to have a higher level of knowledge and experience. Complex premises will require the specific applied knowledge and skills of an appropriately qualified specialist. In such cases evidence of specialist training and experience or membership of an appropriate professional body may demonstrate competence.

If you are in any doubt as to the level of competence available to you at your premises to demonstrate the attributes of a fire risk assessor, you are strongly advised to contact one of the many professional fire risk assessors/consultants available throughout the country.

FIRE SAFETY CONSULTANTS and ADVISORS

Fire Safety Advisors

The term Fire Safety Advisor, or Fire Safety Consultant, is usually used by fire safety practitioners in the private sector. Fire Safety advisors may have a variety of professional backgrounds.

Verification of Competency

It is recommended that you ensure that the advisor you choose is 'competent' to carry out the service that you require. You may wish to seek information from the advisor regarding the following matters in order to satisfy yourself of their competency.

Professional Qualifications

The advisor may have professional qualifications in relevant subject areas. Such Qualifications may be at degree or diploma level in appropriate subjects, or may be qualifications gained via a Professional body.

Membership of Professional Bodies

The advisor may be a member of an appropriate professional body. You may be able to make enquiries with the professional body to validate their claims. You may wish to enquire if membership of the professional body is dependant on first passing an examination or qualification, or by demonstrating relevant skills.

Professional Training

The advisor may also be able to support his competence by providing details of appropriate technical training that they have undertaken.

Professional Experience

The advisor may be able to provide you with details of their professional background and experience. In some cases the advisor may be able to provide details of other customers for whom they have carried out similar work.

Finding a Fire Safety Advisor or Consultant

The Institution of Fire Engineers <http://www.ife.org.uk/home.html> maintains a register of professional fire safety advisors.

Many advisors advertise their services on the internet, or in telephone directories such as 'Yellow Pages'. However, you are reminded to satisfy yourself that the advisor you employ is '**competent**'- qualifications and membership of organizations do not always prove competency.

If you are in any doubt as to your responsibilities under the Order or there are any relevant matters that require clarification, please do not hesitate to contact the Fire Safety Department on 01743-260260 or visit our web site at www.shropshirefire.gov.uk