

SHROPSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

FIRE SAFETY ADVICE SHEET

REGULATORY REFORM (FIRE SAFETY) ORDER 2005

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order – RRO – came into force on 1st October 2006, and requires the person having control of the premises (Responsible Person) to implement general fire precautions for the safety of employees or persons who are legally on the premises or in the immediate vicinity of the premises who are at risk from a fire on the premises (Relevant Persons).

The definition of the **Responsible Person** within the RRO is:

- a) In relation to a workplace, the employer, if the workplace is to any extent under his control:
- b) In relation to any premises not falling within paragraph a):
 - i) The person who has control of the premises (as occupier or otherwise) in connection with the carrying on by him of a trade, business or other undertaking (for profit or not); or
 - ii) The owner, where the person in control of the premises does not have control in connection with the carrying on by that person of a trade, business or other undertaking.

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service is the enforcing authority for these regulations within the County of Shropshire, covering approximately 17,000 non-domestic premises. In order to ensure that our resources are targeted at those premises posing the highest risk to safety, we are carrying out data collection and basic fire safety assessments of those properties that have not been visited recently by fire safety officers.

Our visit has two purposes. These are:

- To collect data to enable the Fire and Rescue Service to carry out statistical research to assess the risks from fire in Shropshire, and to ensure that our resources are used in the most effective way'.
- To collect sufficient data on the premises to allow us to form an opinion as to the standards of the fire precautions arrangements and compliance with fire safety legislation, concentrating on checking that a fire risk assessment has been carried out, the means of escape are being maintained properly, there is an adequate means of giving warning in the event of a fire, the provision of 1st aid firefighting equipment, and one or two basic management issues regarding fire safety arrangements.

You are advised that although we have looked at the more obvious areas of the fire safety matters in your premises, we have not carried out an in depth assessment and our visit should not be construed as an acceptance of the suitability of either your fire risk assessment or the standards of fire safety provisions for the premises.

The following paragraphs offer basic advice on those areas covered by our visit. Should you wish to obtain further details, please use the contacts shown at the end of this document.

GENERAL FIRE SAFETY ADVICE

Legislative Requirements

The Responsible Person must carry out a suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment to identify the general fire precautions that are necessary to ensure the safety of relevant persons within, or in the vicinity of, your premises.

Guidance on the risk assessment process and the standards of general fire precautions can be found within the guides available from our web site at www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/Safety/rro.htm

Fire Safety Management

The basis for any suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment is an acceptance by management that fire safety is important and that sufficient resources in time and energy are allocated to create a safe environment. The Responsible Person will need to include the following procedures in the implementation of the general fire precautions:

- The provision of a fire safety emergency plan. This is designed to provide information on the actions to be taken in the event of fire (a fire procedure notice), special duties imposed on specific people such as calling the fire and rescue service, dealing with and assisting in evacuation, special procedures for machinery or services that may need to be closed down/shut off or other essential actions developed from the fire risk assessment.
- Procedures for any persons identified as being especially at risk.
- Training for staff in their roles identified in the emergency plan.
- Control measures to eliminate and deal with uncontrolled ignition sources
- Safe storage of hazardous materials in accordance with accepted guidance (usually issued by the Health & Safety Executive)
- Control of combustible waste which may require procedures for more frequent disposal, securing existing waste storage facilities or additional training for staff.

- An awareness of the risks from arson to prevent the likelihood of malicious ignition and reducing the chances of fire spread should such a fire occur. (Our advice leaflet 'Arson Alert' will give more details).
- Procedures for the safety of persons in the vicinity of the premises who may be at risk from an outbreak of fire in the premises.

Means of Escape

Your premises should be provided with sufficient escape routes to allow all occupants to escape safely in the event of fire. When assessing these routes, you will need to take into account such matters as:

- the maximum number of people likely to be in the premises
- a fire may take away the largest exit; – are the remainder sufficient in size and distance?
- the ability of people with different needs to use alternative fire exits – wheelchair users, visually impaired, small children etc
- the method by which doors are secured to ensure that they are easily and readily available to Relevant Persons at all times without the aid of a key. Barrel bolts are considered unacceptable.
- storage and other issues that may render means of escape unusable through obstructions or at increased risk from fire, both internally and externally
- the provision, where necessary, of suitable, clearly visible signs indicating alternative exit routes
- the provision, where required, of adequate illumination (both normal and emergency) to ensure the routes remain useable at all times.

Again, guidance can be found on the Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service web site.

Fire Fighting Equipment

The newly issued guide books state that:

“You (the Responsible Person) have the responsibility for the provision of appropriate firefighting equipment. It is also your responsibility to check that all firefighting equipment is in the correct position and in satisfactory working order before the premises are used.

Appropriate staff should be trained in the use of all such equipment”

Documentation

Any facilities or systems provided as part of the general fire precautions will need to be tested and maintained on a regular basis. Some of these tests can be

completed by yourself or your staff providing suitable training has been given. Others will need to be completed by a competent person or engineer.

Suitable records and certification should be available for inspection as proof that these tests have been carried out. The most common of these testing regimes are for fire alarm/fire detection and emergency lighting systems. Brief details of the test frequencies are set out below.

Fire Alarm and Fire Detection

The current British Standard (BS5839: Part 1:2002) recommends:

⇒ Weekly test by the user

- Operate a manual call point to test the control panel can process the signal and operate the audible devices (bells/sirens).
- A different call point should be used each week, and their location recorded against each weekly test result in the log book.
- Where the facility is provided, check the fire alarm signal is received by any alarm receiving centre. **Note: the centre should be informed prior to the test not to send a '999' call resulting in an unnecessary attendance by the fire and rescue service, and you will need to confirm with the centre when the test has been completed.**
- The weekly test should be carried out at the same time every week, but further tests may be necessary to ensure other staff e.g. night shift workers become familiar with the fire alarm, and staff should be instructed to report any instance of poor audibility.
- The test should last no longer than 1 minute, so that in the event of a genuine alarm at the time of the test, occupants will be alerted by the prolonged activation of the sounders.

⇒ Monthly test by the user

- If the back-up power supply is provided by either a generator or vented batteries (these are not the small batteries housed within the alarm panel), testing should be carried out in accordance with paragraph 44.3 of BS 5839:Part 1: 2002

⇒ Inspection and servicing by a competent person

- Unless a fault is shown on the fire alarm panel, when a competent and qualified engineer should be immediately contacted, most systems should be inspected and serviced by a qualified engineer at intervals not exceeding 6 months. Your fire risk assessment may determine that more frequent visits are necessary, or that the system is of sufficient size and complexity that it would be prudent

to divide the testing into sections so that the overall frequency is still obtained e.g. 50% every quarter.

- Some equipment used in detection systems will require additional testing for example optical beam detectors or the correct functioning of heat and smoke detectors. Your competent service engineer will be able to advise you if such items should be tested annually to comply with the recommendations of the British Standard.

The results of each test and all certificates issued by the competent persons should be recorded in the log book, and any identified defects corrected immediately.

Emergency Lighting

The current British Standard (BS5266: Part 8: 2004) recommends:

⇒ **Daily check by the user**

A check should be made to ensure the LED indicators on each unit are lit demonstrating the central power supply remains connected.

⇒ **Monthly test by the user**

- If an automatic testing device is fitted, record the results of the short duration test, otherwise
- Using the test switches (this isolates the unit from the mains power supply) turn on each light for as long as necessary to ensure that it illuminates. Checks should be made to ensure the units are present, clean and functioning correctly.

Note: Emergency lighting systems should not be tested by removing fuses from electrical distribution panels as this not only damages the circuit, but can lead to electric shocks. Where they are not already fitted, further advice on the provision of suitable test facilities should be sought from a competent electrical engineer.

⇒ **Annually by the user**

The annual test requires all units to be fully discharged, thus leaving a premises without any emergency lighting for a considerable period. Once discharged, it takes approximately 24 hours for batteries to recover, so this test should only be carried out when emergency lighting would not be require e.g. during the summer when ample borrowed light is available from other sources (street lighting); suitable alternative measures can be put in place e.g. torches given to staff in smaller premises or during a period when the premises are vacant (e.g. weekends, annual holidays etc).

- If an automatic testing device is fitted, the results of the full rated duration test should be recorded, otherwise;
- Each emergency lighting unit and internally illuminated sign should be tested (using the test switches) for its full rated duration in accordance with the manufacturers information. Units can operate from between 1 to 3 hours depending on the system, but 3 hours is now the norm.
- The supply of the normal lighting should be restored (using the test switches) and any indicator lamp or device (LED) checked to ensure it is showing a normal power supply.

⇒ **Servicing by a competent person**

Some parts of an emergency lighting system will require servicing by a competent person. This will include battery maintenance, fault rectification or testing of remote power supplies (generators or external battery systems). In all cases, certificates showing what work has been carried out should be received from the test engineer and kept with the log book.

The results of each test and all certificates issued by the competent persons should be recorded in the log book, and any identified defects corrected immediately.

Staff training

All members of staff will need to be fully trained in the fire safety measures identified in the fire risk assessment. Although not exhaustive, this should include:

- The findings of the fire risk assessment
- The details of the fire emergency plan.
- Use of firefighting equipment as necessary.
- Special arrangements for failures in any safety systems.
- Operation of the fire alarm, even if this is a whistle or shout of fire.
- The maintenance of fire safety measures e.g. storage and waste disposal
- The method of calling the Fire and Rescue Service

The new fire safety guides contain more comprehensive recommendations regarding the frequency of staff training but generally those who are more at risk (lone workers, night staff in hotels etc) may need to be trained more often.

Every member of staff should receive training at least once every 12 months, and you will need to ensure that the training is fully understood by testing staff responses and actions during an evacuation drill. Again it is recommended that this is carried out at least annually.

Care should be taken to ensure that vulnerable persons (e.g. residents of care premises, people with disabilities etc), or people in the vicinity of the premises

are not put at risk during evacuation drills, but they should be meaningful and the public (e.g. customers in a shop, sales reps in an office or factory) can be included in an evacuation providing suitable safety measures are in place.

The results of all staff training should be recorded either in a log book or on individual staff records, but should include:

- Date of the training.
- Duration.
- The nature of the training and topics covered.
- The name of the instructor
- Identification any further training needs for individuals.

You may also wish to obtain the signature of staff members against each entry to indicate they have received and understood each session.

Other matters

The Health & Safety (Safety, Signs & Signals) Regulations 1996 state that any sign (defined as including 'an acoustic signal' i.e. a fire alarm warning device) requiring some form of power must be provided with a guaranteed emergency supply in the event of a power cut.

Although some fire alarm systems were fitted prior to these regulations coming into force, compliance had to be achieved by 24th December 1998; therefore any fire alarm system without a battery back-up supply must be upgraded.

For further information on the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 please contact:

- Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service -
www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/Safety/rro.htm
- Department for Communities and Local government -
<http://www.communities.gov.uk>

Or for general fire safety matters, Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service can be reached on **01743 260260** or via our web site at **www.shropshirefire.gov.uk**