

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service

Fire Safety Advice Sheet

Fire Safety in Stables and Similar Premises

Introduction

Stables and similar premises, by their very nature, present a serious risk in terms of fire, and since 2006, are subject to the provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (RR(FS)O).

This legislation requires a Responsible Person to be nominated to take responsibility for carrying out a suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment and to ensure that general fire precautions are provided for the safety of Relevant Persons. More information on the requirements of the RR(FS)O can be found in our Advice Sheet AS1/2006.

The government has issued a comprehensive guidance document which provides information and assistance to the Responsible Person in complying with the law, which is available through our web site, at the address shown at the end of this advice sheet. You are strongly advised to consult this guide to fully understand your duties and the nature of the general fire precautions that will be needed to make your premises safe from fire, but we have also detailed some of the more obvious areas you will need to consider below.

Construction

It is always advisable to build stables using materials that do not easily ignite or burn, ideally using steel frames and masonry walls. The use of timber, particularly soft woods should be kept to a minimum, especially for the interior construction. Cement or compacted earth floors are advisable.

Any electrical installations should be installed by a competent electrical engineer, and comply with current wiring codes, for which a certificate of compliance should be obtained. Safety switches and appropriate circuit protection devices should always be considered but especially where water is used for cleaning. The use of heating devices such as lamps present a risk of ignition in the presence of the straw and other flammable materials, so it is important to position them away from any fuel sources or where they can be damaged by the animals.

Means of Escape

The reaction of animals to a fire is unpredictable, and it is essential to ensure that the layout of your premises provides the easiest way of evacuating both people and animals as quickly and safely as possible.

The government guide covers the basic principles of means of escape, but does not provide too much information on exit widths and door sizes. The guide recommends that any door or routes that are likely to be used by both people and animals at the same time should be at least 2.4m high and not less than 1.2m wide.

You will need to consider any obstruction to these routes caused by opening stall doors, and in larger premises, sliding doors are preferable. Where swing doors are provided, they should open through 180°, and latch open securely. You will also need to consider how far people and animals will be required to travel to reach a place of safety (open air), and it may be necessary to provide alternative means of escape. Reference to the guide book will be required.

Means of providing warning and detecting a fire

A suitable method of raising the alarm must be provided. In small stables, a shout of fire may be adequate, but you will need to consider the effect of a fire warning device on your animals. The use of loud air horns or whistles may cause them to panic, making your task of evacuating the premises more difficult. You may also decide to provide some form of automatic fire detection in tack rooms, storage areas or staff rooms; areas where a fire may start unobserved. You will need to seek professional advice from a suitably qualified electrical or fire alarm engineer to ensure that such detection does not give rise to unwanted fire signals (false alarms) due to dust, insects or other phenomena usually found in premises of this type that may cause false activations of the detectors.

Fire fighting equipment

You will need to provide a suitable means of fighting a fire. This can be achieved by providing portable fire extinguishers or using existing hose reel(s). Whatever is chosen, you must ensure that it is adequately protected against frost, and any hose reels are capable of reaching all parts of the building. Regular testing and maintenance is essential and a suitable number of responsible persons should be trained in the safe use of the equipment. Again you can refer to the full guidance document for further advice.

Safe storage of feed and bedding

Straw, hay and other feed ignite and burn easily and consequently should be stored away from stables, or alternatively be separated by fire resisting construction. Storage of these materials in loft areas is unsafe as it creates a significant fire hazard. By their very nature, stables are often remote from other buildings and arson is always a risk. Storage against a stable or similar building should not be permitted, and the recommended separation between the building and storage areas is 6m.

In case of fire

Once you have carried out your fire risk assessment to identify the risks and control measures, you will need to develop an emergency plan. This is the actions to be taken in the event of fire and will include the method of raising the alarm, the evacuation procedure for animals, fighting the fire where it is safe to do so, calling the fire and

rescue service and any other actions necessary such as the care of your animals during any incident.

One problem faced by the fire and rescue service is locating some of the more remote buildings. You should be able to identify your premises using the standard Ordnance Survey grid reference (6 figures will be sufficient) and ensure that any access to your premises from the main roads is clearly signed. In the event of a fire, it is also helpful if someone is positioned on the road to indicate the best access points.

Fire and rescue vehicles require minimum access widths and heights, but if a horse box (or similar sized vehicle) can gain access to the stable, then this is usually adequate for our needs.

Finally, rural water supplies are essential to our firefighting effort, and if you are able to identify any large ponds or access points to rivers or canals, these should be brought to our attention at the earliest opportunity.

It is not possible to cover all the aspects of your duties under the RR(FS)O and the range of general fire precautions in this advice sheet, therefore it is strongly recommended that you consult the further information on fire safety in animal premises and stables contained in the fire safety guide published by HM Government available through our web site at www.shropshirefire.gov.uk or by telephoning Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service on 01743 260260.