

Fire Safety

with Adrian Thorne

Managing Director Fire Risk UK



Know your business fire safety responsibilities

Every year people die or are seriously injured as a result of fires in non domestic properties. Besides the human risk, fire costs UK businesses millions of pounds due to property damage, fines, compensation and insurance premiums.

Many businesses find that they are not able to recover from the effects of a fire.

- Who is responsible for fire safety in non-domestic premises?
- What are their duties and responsibilities?
- How can I keep people and property safe?
- What are the possible consequences of failure to act?
- Where can I get help and guidance?

Over the coming months we will be providing information covering current fire safety legislation, the responsibilities placed upon businesses in order for them to comply and fire protection and preventative measures.

In this first issue we have detailed below a basic introduction to the Fire Safety Order and an example of a prosecution under the Order.

THE FIRE SAFETY ORDER

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 came into effect in October 2006 and applies to all non-domestic premises in England and Wales, including the common parts of blocks of flats and houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). The law applies to you if you are:

- responsible for business premises
- an employer or self-employed with business premises
- responsible for a part of a dwelling where that part is solely used for business purposes
- a charity or voluntary organisation
- a contractor with a degree of control over any premises
- providing accommodation for paying guests

Under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, the responsible person must carry out a fire safety risk assessment and implement and maintain a fire management plan. If you are an employer or have control over the premises or activities that take place on the premises then you have responsibilities under fire safety legislation. All commercial premises must have a legally-designated person responsible for fire safety. It is their duty to ensure the safety of people in their premises.

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Following a fire in which an elderly woman died, the resulting fire investigation led to a landmark case, in which a former retained fire fighter from Wales who failed to maintain a fire alarm system in a care home to a recognised standard, was fined £11,000.00 including costs. He was the first fire alarm engineer to be prosecuted as a responsible person under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

Magistrates heard that enforcement officers commissioned a specialist examination of the fire alarm panel after a fire at the care home in May 2009. Among the deficiencies found were:

- A blown fuse overridden with a piece of wire
- An electronic component suspended between two terminal blocks instead of being attached to the circuit board
- An alarm silence/fault warning buzzer missing from the circuit board
- The fault warning light on the front face of the panel had been almost covered by paint

Deputy county fire officer, Jim Owen, said: "Whilst many owners have been prosecuted under the Fire Safety Order, this may be the first time a fire and rescue authority has prosecuted someone contracted by the owner of a property to maintain a fire alarm. Taking on such a contract extends the requirements of the Order to the fire alarm engineer. Anyone we find who doesn't carry out their work to recognised standards is a danger, and we won't hesitate to take action."

In future editions we will be discussing the benefits of employing third party accredited fire protection companies.

Fire Risk UK are a BAFE Registered company for the maintenance of fire alarm systems and extinguishers. Please call our office for a no obligation proposal or for further information.



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