

Independent Guide

What fire training is needed for my staff?



Independent workplace compliance

Introduction

Effective management alongside appropriate staff training is fundamental in fire safety. The responsible person's duty is to make sure that a suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment is implemented, and that there are adequate fire safety measures in place. This can only be achieved by making sure those with fire safety responsibilities have the required knowledge, training, and experience.

Fire safety is so important because put simply, fire kills. There are also the humanitarian costs, which can be both moral and financial. Financial costs relate to material and structural damage to buildings, business loss and potential legal costs. The economic cost of fire within England and Wales runs into billions of pounds each year.

Fire legislation

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order (RR(FS)O) came into force in England and Wales on 1 October 2006. This also saw the repeal of many previous pieces of legislation, including the Fire Precautions Act 1971 and the need for fire certificates.

Part 1 of the RR(FS)O identifies general duties, including that of the "responsible person", "general fire practices" and premises which it is applicable to.

Part 2, Articles 8-22, covers in detail the on-going requirements, including specifically in Article 21 the need for adequate safety training.

Duties

As the responsible person, it is their duty to make sure that all employees have undergone sufficient fire safety training. All staff members, including temporary/part-time, contractors and visitors must be familiar with the actions to be taken in the event of a fire, or if the fire alarm were to sound. This can be achieved through inductions, training courses and fire evacuation drills. It is important that individuals are aware of the part they play in helping to manage fire safety through tailored training. Delegation of roles is key to managing fire safety.

Who should receive fire safety training?

As per Article 21 of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, the responsible person must make sure that their employees are provided with adequate safety training. This should be provided at the time they are first employed, and when they are exposed to a new or an increased risk.

The training provided to all staff should deliver information and instruction on fire risks present within the building and cover familiarisation of the building's emergency procedures, so they can act accordingly in the event of a fire or emergency. Training should be provided on the first day of employment with further training given throughout the length of employment to make sure that knowledge is refreshed, and the information is correct. Typically, the following areas should be covered:

- Fire risks within the building;
- Fire safety measures within the building;
- Actions to take if discovering a fire; and
- Actions to take on hearing the fire alarm.



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More specific training should be provided to any fire wardens, this should cover the above and include the below:

- The elements of the 'fire triangle';
- How fire and smoke travels within the building;
- Building design to minimise the impact of fire and smoke spread;
- The employee's proactive role in helping to reduce the chance of a fire and an understanding of fire risk assessments ;
- The employee's building specific reactive responsibilities as fire warden during a building evacuation. This may include areas to sweep/check, what to do if anyone refuses to evacuate, who will call the fire and rescue service, how to manage any assembly points and making sure no-one re-enters the property until it is safe to do so;
- How assistance is provided to those with disabilities or impairments that may affect their ability to evacuate. Any Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) process and template you have in place. This may include the role of a buddy, use of the refuge points, evacuation lifts and evacuation chairs; and
- How to use fire extinguishers (theory training is acceptable) in the event of discovering a fire in its infancy, should it obstruct their safe means of escape.

As with the above, additional training should be provided to other appointed persons who have a part to play in managing the evacuation of the building, such as incident controllers, engineers, facilities or building managers, reception staff and security personnel. This training should be sufficiently detailed to enable them to understand their role in a building evacuation.

Records for all staff inductions and training in relation to fire safety should be kept, demonstrating that they have received suitable and sufficient training in relation to the buildings fire procedures.

Types of training

Induction training, whether in person or through an on-line training module should be provided to all staff. Thereafter, the evacuation drills can act as appropriate refresher training. 'Classroom' based training is advised for individuals taking on newly appointed specific roles. Remote training is becoming more popular as a means of provide refresher training to larger numbers of delegates. However, there is still no substitute to 'classroom' based training as a means of providing informative, interactive and collaborative training where questions can be asked, particular circumstances and be addressed and knowledge can be assessed.

Refresher training

The best form of refresher training for all is an evacuation drill. The guidance states that fire drills should be carried out at least annually to make sure that all occupants are aware of building evacuation procedures. Should you have staff within the building working nights or different shift-patterns, you will need to carry out more frequent fire drills, to make sure that all shift patterns are covered at least annually. It is also advisable to provide bespoke refresher training for those with specific roles, such as the fire wardens, on a routine basis to remind them of their important responsibilities, and the part they play in helping to manage fire safety.

This guide is of a general nature; specific advice can be obtained from Assurity Consulting. Assurity Consulting is the UK's leading independent compliance consultancy specialising in workplace health, safety and environmental solutions. We have over 30 years' experience of helping customers of all sizes, from across all sectors, manage their compliance responsibilities, making sure that their organisation is compliant, their employees are safe, their processes are cost effective and their management team is in control.



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