

THE Burning Issue™

KEEPING YOU INFORMED ABOUT FIRE SAFETY LEGISLATION

Fire Safety Arrangements, Procedures and Safety Assistance

The October Burning Issue discussed the importance of fire safety management. This issue discusses three managerial fire precautions required in England and Wales by the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order (and by equivalent legislation elsewhere in the UK).

Article 11 of the Order requires appropriate arrangements for the effective planning, organisation, control, monitoring and review of the preventive and protective measures. These are simply the general fire precautions identified as necessary by a fire risk assessment. In practice, this means that a suitable fire safety strategy must be formulated.

The strategy must address measures to prevent fire and fire spread, means of escape, emergency escape lighting, escape route signage, fire-fighting equipment, fire warning, instruction and training, and measures to mitigate the effects of fire. This is not the fire risk assessment, although the assessment should verify that the strategy is in place.

The fire safety arrangements must be recorded if five or more persons are employed, or if licensing applies (e.g. liquor or entertainment licensing), or if an alterations notice requires this. These are the same circumstances in which the significant findings of a fire risk assessment must be recorded, but, again, the record of the fire safety arrangements is not the documented fire risk assessment.

The record could take the form of a fire safety manual. Guidance on compiling such a manual is given in BS 5588-12. That guidance is most relevant to complex buildings.

The fire safety strategy should include specific fire procedures, including evacuation arrangements. Article 15 of the Order requires the responsible person to establish and, where necessary, give effect to appropriate procedures, including safety drills, to be followed in the event of serious and imminent danger to relevant persons.

Any specific duties in the event of fire should be documented. Relevant duties under the Fire Safety Order include summoning the fire and rescue service, liaising with them on arrival, assisting occupants to evacuate, ensuring no one re-enters the building until safe to do so and, where appropriate, taking fire-fighting action.

For the responsible person to manage fire safety effectively, he needs what the Fire Safety Order describes as "Safety assistance", the subject of Article 18, which requires appointment of one or more competent persons to assist in undertaking the preventive and protective measures.

Continued overleaf

