

THE Burning Issue™

KEEPING YOU INFORMED ABOUT FIRE SAFETY LEGISLATION

General Fire Precautions – A Duty That Can't Be Ignored

Under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, the responsible person must take such general fire precautions as will ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety of his employees. The responsible person must also take such general fire precautions as may reasonably be required in the circumstances to ensure that the premises are safe. The responsible person must carry out a suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment to identify the general fire precautions required for the above purposes.

What is meant by the term general fire precautions?

By definition, the general fire precautions are:

- (a) Measures to reduce the risk of fire on the premises and the risk of spread of fire on the premises;
- (b) Measures in relation to the means of escape from the premises;
- (c) Measures for securing that, at all material times, the means of escape can be safely and effectively used;
- (d) Measures in relation to the means of fighting fires on the premises;
- (e) Measures in relation to the means for detecting fire on the premises and giving warning in case of fire on the premises; and
- (f) Measures in relation to the arrangements for action to be taken in the event of fire on the premises, including instruction and training of employees and measures to mitigate the effects of fire.

The term "risk", as used in the Fire Safety Order, is stated to mean the risk to the safety of persons from fire. This emphasizes that the Order makes no requirements in relation to protection of property.

Equally, the word risk in (a) above might reasonably be regarded in a different context, namely "likelihood". Thus, it is insufficient simply to protect people from the effects of fire; measures must be taken to eliminate or control fire hazards, such as to reduce the likelihood of fire and fire spread.

This principle of prevention as well as protection is also required under Article 10 of the Fire Safety Order, which, by reference to a schedule within the Order, requires, inter alia, avoidance of risks, combating risks at source, replacing the dangerous by the non-dangerous or less dangerous, and requires a coherent overall prevention policy. (continued overleaf)

