

# PAS 79: 2005 Fire risk assessment - Guidance and a recommended methodology

Useful guidance on fire risk assessment is given in BSI publication, PAS 79.

## What is a PAS and how does it differ from a BS?

A PAS (or "Publicly Available Specification") is a privately written standard, somewhat similar to a text book. It is not a BS because it is not subject to public comment, nor developed by a BSI technical committee. However, the draft is circulated to various interested parties, a number of whom form a "steering group" to advise on the content and to consider comments from the others.

Before publication, PAS 79 was considered by the Chief Fire Officers' Association, the Institution of Fire Engineers, the Institute of Fire Prevention Officers and various users.

Although PAS 79 remains useful as a basis for fire risk assessments under the new legislation, a new version that takes the changes in legislation into account is in the course of preparation.

PAS 79 is currently available from Homesaver at a cost of £95.00 and comes with a pro-forma Fire Risk Assessment Form on CD for multiple use ■

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the processes carried out, the hazards present, the people at risk, the fire protection measures and the arrangements for management of fire safety. It is also a specific requirement that people "especially at risk" are recorded; this will include disabled people, young persons, possibly those who sleep on the premises, etc.

Having established this background information, the fire hazards (ignition sources and situations that could cause a fire) need to be identified; the appropriate measures for control of the hazards also need to be identified and recorded. Thereafter, there needs to be consideration of the adequacy of the general fire precautions (or fire protection measures).

An important part of any suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment is the examination of fire safety management. Thus, the assessment should consider matters such as fire procedures and fire drills, arrangements for assisting occupants (including disabled people) to evacuate, arrangements for inspection, testing and servicing of the fire precautions, and the quality of documentation. Obviously, there should, by definition, also be some form of assessment of the level of fire risk.

The outcome of the suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment is, however, not merely a formal record of what exists. The most important outcome is an action plan for steps that need to be taken. It is on the quality of the action plan that, ultimately, the safety of people in buildings will depend ■

## Trading Tip!

"Fire Risk Assessment" is the buzz phrase of the Fire Safety Order. If you're not offering this service already, make it your No. 1 priority! The vast majority of your business now relies on this process.