

# FIRE SAFETY

## “IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY”

The new fire safety regulations are now in force ( see – **Fire regulations article on this website**).

Under these new regulations, the responsibility for ensuring that premises are fire safe shifts from the fire authorities to whoever has day-to-day control of them. The responsible person will normally be either the owner or the manager of the company/business. Although the administration of the practical tasks may be delegated to either an employee or an outside consultant the responsibility and legal obligations remain with the owner/manager. The responsible person is required to take steps to reduce the risk from fire and ensure that the occupants of the premises (including visitors and members of the public) can escape safely in the event of a fire on the premises. In practical terms to fulfil the obligations it will be necessary to carry out a risk assessment; everyone should by now be familiar with risk assessments since they are required under numerous regulations, e.g. COSHH, LOLER etc.

Actions.

- 1) **Risk assessment:** Decide who is going to carry out the risk assessment; it will be their job to identify all possible fire risks and hazards.
- 2) **Persons at risk:** Identify those people who may be at risk, in particular anyone who for any reason in the event of a fire might find it more difficult to escape e.g. persons with a disability or those people who may be located in a high risk area.
- 3) **Basic procedures:** You should already have fire precautions and procedures in place under the “**The Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations 1997**” to deal with the risk of fire. The person carrying out the risk assessment should consider what needs to be done to remove or reduce the risk of fire that they have identified with particular attention to flammable and explosive substances. Remember under certain circumstances wood dust is a highly explosive substance. Lacquer, paint, polishing materials and solvents should all be stored safely in a structure or enclosure that will contain the substance in the event of spillage and restrict it.
- 4) **Record, plan, instruct and train:** Once all the risks have been identified you need to list them and decide on an action plan to deal with them and any foreseeable emergency which might arise as a result of the risks. All employees need to be informed of the risks and the fire safety plan to negate the risks and then implement the plan. Employee training will invariably be required.
- 5) **Review:** Once the process above has been completed a further risk assessment is recommended to prove that all potential risks have been identified and covered by the action plan put in place. If any new risks are discovered then it will be necessary to repeat steps 2-4 above. Regular reviews of the risk assessment and action plan should be carried out; it is a good idea to decide when the next review should be and record the date each time the risk assessment is carried out. Employers should be mindful that in the event of a change in factory layout or the introduction of a new piece of equipment a new risk assessment must be carried out.