

The new Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order (RRO).

The new Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order (RRO) came into effect on the 1st of April 2006. Prior to this fire safety laws were scattered over some 118 separate pieces of legislation; it is the intent that this will now be streamlined and made much simpler? It also places an emphasis on risk reduction and preventing fire.

The main change that will affect members is that fire certificates as previously issued by the local authority or in some areas the local fire officer will be abolished; the onus will now rest solely on the employer. Under the RRO, companies will be expected to appoint a 'responsible person' who will be ultimately accountable for fire safety.

A fire risk assessment will need to be carried out and must be reviewed every time a significant change is made that might impact fire risk – such as building work or installing new machinery.

The responsible person will have to make sure that signage, emergency lighting, fire extinguishers, fire alarms and any other fire protection equipment are adequate and maintained effectively. They must also ensure that fire safety procedures, evacuation drills, training and means of escape are adequate.

All businesses must keep a written record of their assessments if they employ five or more people – even if all of them are not employed on the same site.

Full details of this RRO can be viewed by going to the following website www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si20051541.htm

I would remind members that in all matters relating to health and safety the HSE do not differentiate between employed and self employed; everyone is covered by the relevant regulations.