

# Talking of Grading...



by GEOFF WRIGHT

## Fire Risk Assessment

Many of our **Graded Companies** will already be familiar with the fact that on the **1st October 2006** it became compulsory for companies to conduct a **Fire Risk Assessment** in their workplace(s).

It was at this time that the now established **Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety Order)** came into force, which introduced major changes in legislation. This replaced the **Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations 1997** as amended in 1999.

In the past **Fire Certificates** were issued either by the local **Fire Prevention Officer (FPO)** or the **Fire Brigade** depending on which authority was applicable. In some instances a declaration would be provided, which indicated that because of the nature of the activities being undertaken, a **Fire Exemption Certificate** would be issued.

However, from the **1st October last year** the criterion changed and the employers in all businesses, both large and small, must by law take steps to ensure that they have what is known as a '**suitable and sufficient Fire Risk Assessment**' in place.

In principle a 'competent person' must carry out a survey of the workplace(s) where the business is being conducted and this must be by someone who is qualified to undertake such a survey and may be either an employee or someone from an outside agency who must then produce and properly document an adequate assessment of the **Fire Risks** in the workplace(s) concerned.

This assessment can take various forms but in essence it should graphically illustrate the types of fire hazard that might be present in the premises concerned (*e.g. Gas Boiler Equipment Room, flammable substances storage areas, etc*) It is a good idea to prepare floor plans where through simple graphical symbols and annotations the risks in certain areas or rooms can be illustrated, described and also highlighted where this might be important. A copy of the floor plan should be displayed in a prominent place.

**Employers must prepare a written Assessment of their workplace(s)** to identify the risks so that they can be minimized and failure to do so can result in prosecution. **All static fire fighting equipment, Fire Alarms and emergency route escape lighting** must be *regularly tested* to determine correct performance and the results should be fully recorded. In the case of many emergency luminaries these should be fully discharged once annually to determine that their stand by batteries are in full working order.

*All employees, either permanent or casual, must be made aware of The Fire Regulations and the procedures to be adopted should they discover a fire and Staff training is essential to protect such personnel as well as visitors and members of the public.*

Additionally, **Employers** must maintain their **Health & Safety** records which should, amongst other things, contain up to date details of **Staff and/or Driver training** related to all aspects of equipment testing and also ensuring that their **New Health & Safety Law poster** is properly completed and is on display in a place where all employees can observe it. *It is also considered desirable for employers to produce and distribute to all applicable personnel, a manual or memorandum which describes the action to be taken in the event of a fire being discovered and the subsequent evacuation procedures to be followed.*

There are many places where details of the latest **Fire Regulations** may be obtained, particularly on the Internet, where a huge number of organisations offer very competitive rates for surveys and Fire Risk Assessment preparation for employers who do not have a 'competent person' to undertake the **Fire Risk** assessment.

### "Risk Assessment: How to do it"

The **University of Bristol** illustrate an interesting feature on their website entitled "**Risk Assessment: How to do it**" and cite a fictitious assessment for 'Crossing the Road' and is well worth a look at.

Of course not everyone has immediate access to the Internet so a trip to your **Local Fire Brigade** or **Library** ought to set you on the correct road for preparing your own particular **Risk Assessment**. Any **Graded Companies** requiring help please contact me or the Association.

The **University of Bristol** website go to: [www.chm/bris.ac.uk/sfety/nfrass.htm](http://www.chm/bris.ac.uk/sfety/nfrass.htm) although this site does principally deal with chemistry.

Finally, as you might expect, whenever pertinent legislation comes into force we like to incorporate it into our Grading system and in the future we will be noting in our 'Premises & Company Image' Category where such **Fire Risk Assessments** have been adopted.

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