



News and views from Fire & Security Consultancy Limited

SHOCK SURVEY Companies not providing for disabled employees

The results of survey conducted by Evac Chair International of one hundred human resources directors and managers, who are responsible for the safety of their employees showed the following:

- 35 percent (more than one in three) said that wheelchair users or mobility-impaired employees within their company did not have a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP), which is required in accordance with fire safety legislation
- 49 percent of companies (around half) do not have the necessary equipment to assist disabled and mobility-impaired employees in an evacuation
- less than 15 percent of the companies with equipment use it during emergency evacuation drills, indicating a stark lack of preparation for evacuation procedures in the workplace
- 62 percent of able bodied staff are unfamiliar with any equipment for safe evacuation of those who are mobility impaired, which would indicate that there is an obvious need to ensure all companies practice with equipment during drills.



Jim Norman, equality manager at the Disability Network, responding to the survey findings, said: 'Everyone who enters a building must be able to leave it safely in an emergency and assemble at a place of safety. 'This research shows that many disabled workers are still facing discrimination from their employers through their inadequate provision for a safe evacuation. 'Employers are also failing to comply with fire safety legislation and could face prosecution'.

More information about the safe evacuation of staff is available from www.evac-chair.co.uk and the **Fire Safety Guides** published by the CLG.

Mark Wallace of Evac Chair International, said: 'Even following the Paralympics, it is still easy to forget that even things such as a flight of stairs can present a huge obstacle to some employees.' 'This survey shows that many employers in the UK still make inadequate provision for disabled staff and this needs to be urgently addressed'.

Concerns over lack of fire door awareness

Two fire safety organisations in the construction industry have raised urgent concerns with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) as part of the Government's review of enforcement of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order.

The BIS is currently gathering people's views and experiences of working with fire safety officers and local fire and rescue authorities where this affects the day-to-day running of businesses, particularly those with 250 or fewer employees. It is also interested to find out where companies get advice on fire safety compliance.

The BWF-CERTIFIRE Fire Door and Doorset Scheme and the UK's new Fire Door Inspection Scheme (FDIS) have both written to BIS to warn of confusion and alarmingly low levels of awareness among many businesses of their responsibilities under the RRO and the crucial impact of fire doors on protecting life and property.

Peter Johnson, chairman of the BWF-CERTIFIRE Scheme, said: "In almost every prosecution and report relating to the RRO, the lack of understanding of the role and use of fire doors is evident. Just this month we saw the prosecution of a Bideford hotel for malfunctioning fire doors, including reports from guests of a terrifying moment in May when fire raged through the hotel and they became trapped in smoke-filled corridors because a door had jammed shut and another had no door handle. Similar reports of fire door failures crop up on a weekly basis.

We have told BIS that it is essential that building contractors, too often pressurised into 'value engineered' specifications, are fully aware of the implications of not choosing a third-party certified fire door and the consequences this may have for those occupying the building. The BWF-CERTIFIRE Scheme will happily provide training and support to any organisation that needs more advice on this aspect of fire safety compliance."

Mr Gary Amer spokesperson for the UK's new **Fire Door Inspection Scheme (FDIS)** added 'Of course, once the correct fire doors are installed in any building, the challenge then becomes their effective inspection, maintenance and replacement. This is another area where building owners can fall foul of the RRO'.

More information is available from www.fdis.co.uk or www.bwfcertifire.org.uk

Basic safety mistakes crippling British industry

Each year around 170 people are fatally injured at work and more than 100,000 serious injuries are reported to HSE.

These incidents devastate lives, causing untold suffering and grief – not to mention millions of working days being lost as result and a cost to society of billions of pounds every year. What makes matters worse is that many of these incidents are caused by the same basic safety mistakes that have been injuring and killing people for decades. Inspectors routinely spot these failures when visiting workplaces across Britain, and have identified the 9 most commonly found mistakes below:

- Poorly maintained or misused ladders
- Dangerous work at height
- Inadequate safety guards on machines
- Badly organised workplace transport
- Exposure to deadly asbestos fibres
- Exposure to toxic paint vapours
- Creating clouds of silica dust
- Damage caused by vibrating power tools
- Unhygienic welfare facilities

More information with regard the above incidents and how to prevent them occurring is available from www.hse.gov.uk

New PAS 79

The British Standards Institution has updated its specification relating to reducing the risk from fire and ensuring there is a safe means of escape in non-domestic buildings.

The updates to PAS 79 have been drafted by fire safety consultants CS Todd & Associates Ltd, who have been involved since PAS 79's inception.

PAS 79 provides a structured approach to fire risk assessment and is described as "essential" for fire professionals carrying out fire risk assessments in any capacity. The revision take into account changes to the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, according to the BSI's Shirley Bailey-Wood. Key changes to the 2012 edition include:

- New guidance on the role of codes of practice and guidance documents as a basis for determining appropriate fire precautions;
- New guidance on the approach that should be adopted in determining the appropriate fire precautions for existing buildings that do conform to current codes of practice applicable to new buildings (e.g. under current building regulations);
- A new annex that contains a competence standard for fire risk assessors, developed and agreed by stakeholders in the fire safety profession;
- Editable PDFs of the model pro-formas for documentation of a fire risk assessment and review of an existing fire risk assessment.

More information available from www.bsigroup.co.uk

HSE introduces Fees for Interventions

HSE's new cost recovery scheme, **Fee for Intervention (FFI)**, has come into force on **Monday, 1 October**.

Under The Health and Safety (Fees) Regulations 2012, those who break health and safety laws are liable for recovery of

HSE's related costs, including inspection, investigation and taking enforcement action.

The Fee for Intervention hourly rate for 2012/13 is £124. The many businesses that comply with their legal obligations will

continue to pay nothing. HSE will review how FFI is working after the first twelve months of operation, and within three years of the regime coming into effect. The review reports will be published on this website.

