

Fire Risk Assessment



INTRODUCTION

Asco Fire Group are a company with over 20 years of experience in providing bespoke fire safety solutions nationwide. Our range of services includes the supply, installation and maintenance of a wide variety of fire safety equipment including fire alarms, fire extinguishers and emergency lighting. As well as fire safety equipment, we also offer our clients fire risk assessments, fire safety training and PAT testing services.

Since our formation over two decades ago, we have worked hard to expand our business and cement our status as one of the nation's leading fire protection companies. This growth has seen us work with multinational companies such as Audi, Selfridges, Holiday Inn and the British Heart Foundation. It is our work with these high-profile companies, as well as a range of businesses around the country, that sets Asco Fire Group apart from other fire safety companies.

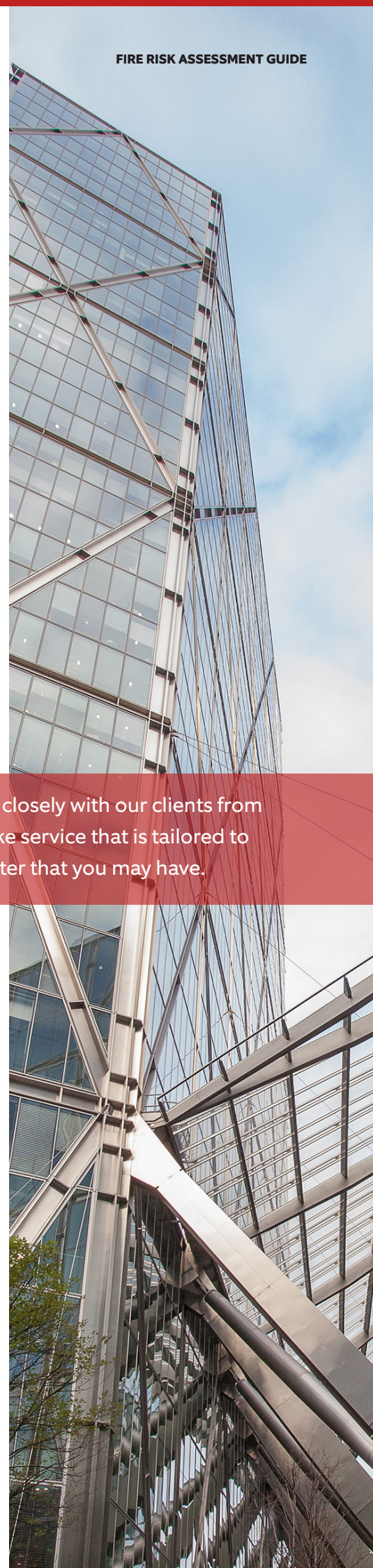
Our workforce consists of highly trained, fully accredited individuals who are committed to providing the best possible service to clients of all sizes. We pride ourselves on working closely with our clients from start to finish, offering a bespoke service that is tailored to every requirement and parameter that you may have.

Whether you need to fully stock your premises with the latest fire safety equipment or you would like comprehensive fire safety training for you and your staff, Asco Fire Group have the skills, experience and knowledge required to deliver nothing but the best service at great prices.

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FIRE & SAFETY LEGISLATION

Fire safety legislation has a lot of sections and features that apply to different businesses depending on the sector they operate in and the function of their premises. These people are also referred to as the 'responsible person', and the Fire Safety Order 2005 defines this as 'the employer, if to any extent the building is under his control (in relation to a workplace)'. If the person does not fit this description, the 'responsible person' is also described as:

- i the person who has control of the premises (as occupier or otherwise) in connection with the carrying on by him of a trade, business or other undertaking (for profit or not); or
- ii the owner, where the person in control of the premises does not have control in connection with the carrying on by that person of a trade, business or other undertaking.'

It is important that you understand the full extent of the regulations that apply to your business, and this guide is designed for business owners and 'responsible person(s)' to help with this understanding. While the rules differ between different environments, there are general practices that must be put in place by all 'responsible person(s)' to adhere to the Fire Safety Order 2005.



WHAT IS A FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT?

A Fire Risk Assessment is a thorough inspection of premises that is to be carried out by the designated 'responsible person'. This inspection is to be carried out regularly to ensure all fire safety standards are being met. If the building contains more than five people, the results of the assessment must be recorded in writing.

Carrying out a Fire Risk Assessment consists of five steps:



When performing the assessment, the 'responsible person' must identify any areas of the environment that could expose individuals to a risk of fire, and then take 'general precautions' to help rectify these issues. The Fire Safety Order 2005 defines these precautions as:

- a. Measures to reduce the risk of fire on the premises and the risk of the spread of fire on the premises;
- b. Measures in relation to the means of escape from the premises;
- c. Measures for securing that, at all material times, the means of escape can be safely and effectively used;
- d. Measures in relation to the means for fighting fires on the premises;
- e. Measures in relation to the means for detecting fire on the premises and giving warning in case of fire on the premises; and
- f. Measures in relation to the arrangements for action to be taken in the event of fire on the premises, including
 - i. Measures relating to the instruction and training of employees and
 - ii. Measures to mitigate the effects of the fire.

IDENTIFYING HAZARDS

When identifying fire hazards in your premises, there are certain things that you need to look out for that can be classed as hazardous or are likely to contribute to a fire hazard. A common method to help identify potential fire hazards is to know the three elements that need to be present in order for a fire to start; oxygen, fuel and ignition. If all three of these are present, then a fire can start. By removing one or all of these parts, you eliminate the risk of fire.

The more obvious hazardous elements are things like naked flames; lighters, gas cookers and matches. There are various solid substances that fall into

the category of 'fuel': materials such as paper, cardboard, wood, gas, plastics, rubber and textiles.

As well as solids, there are common household liquids such as oil, paints, solvents and adhesives that can be easily ignited. If these 'fuels' are near substances that can be classed as 'ignition' then the risk of fire is greatly increased.

Some materials take longer to be ignited than others, but certain fuels can be set alight instantly, so it is important that you keep these materials apart where possible.

PEOPLE AT RISK

As well as identifying the elements that could start a fire in your property, you must also identify any individuals who are most at risk should a fire occur in the building.

When carrying out these checks, it is important that you take into account the numerous variables that can be present in a fire situation.

The people that can be affected by the fire are referred to as 'relevant persons', and The Fire Safety Order 2005 defines 'relevant persons' as 'any person who is lawfully on the premises and any person

in the vicinity of the premises who may be affected by a fire on the premises'. Think about the materials contained in your property; some substances burn quicker than others, so you need to alter your fire contingency plans accordingly.

Any people who are situated near faster burning materials, such as oil or rubber, are arguably at greater risk than those who are not stationed near these materials.

The 'people at risk' category is not just confined to staff members or permanent residents of your building.

As well as the fire itself, you must also consider the products of combustion; intense heat and smoke can overwhelm people very quickly, and different substances generate more of these by-products than others.

Once you have identified the people who are at risk of fire in your property, you then need to come up with plans for efficient means of escape. These plans must cater to any special requirements these people may have, such as wheelchair users or the elderly.

EVALUATING

After you have identified any risks contained in your environment and the persons who will be affected by these risks, the next step is to evaluate your findings and act accordingly. This can include a variety of steps, such as taking action to remove or reduce any fire hazards like the aforementioned fuels and ignitions. Where it may not be possible to remove certain substances, for example if they are central to the operations of your business or building, assess ways to reduce the threat that they can pose to your property and all relevant persons. This may include steps such as moving materials to different areas of the building, or separating fuels and ignition materials where possible.

If you find that you have paints or other flammable liquids situated near cookers, fires or furnaces, for example, look for a place to move the liquids into, to reduce the risk of accidental ignition. Make sure any staff or regular visitors to your premises are fully informed about the fire risks and the steps to take to avoid an emergency.

The evaluation process also extends to plans that you have in place in the event of a fire: your premises should have adequate escape routes – clear, well lit, easy and safe to navigate for all parties concerned.

It is important that you and any staff or residents of the building are well-trained in the execution of the plan. Adequate training can save lives, and it is vital that all potential events are planned for.

RECORD YOUR FINDINGS

Once you have carried out a thorough and proper assessment and evaluation, you must record all of your findings in writing, from the hazards you have identified to the steps you have taken to rectify them. It is very important that the recording of these findings contains every detail, however small, as this is what you can use to help plan out your action plan for any potential fire.

Once you have created your plan of action, it is important that you and any staff or residents of the building are well-trained in the execution of the plan. Adequate training can save lives, and it is vital that all potential events are planned for.

Training needs to incorporate the evacuation of people with special requirements, such as wheelchair users and the elderly.

Certain aspects of the fire safety procedure may not take much practice, but there are some elements, such as evacuation procedures, that will need to be practiced several times to ensure that all staff are familiar with the plan and any changes can be made if necessary.



REVIEW

Unfortunately, fire risk assessments are not as simple as carrying out a few checks and then hoping you don't ever have to experience a fire. It is very likely that your environment will change over time, and as a result of this change, fire safety precautions you may have put in place will need to be changed to accommodate this.

The review must be a comprehensive look at all areas of your environment; from escape routes to the training of your staff. While it may seem time consuming to review these areas, it is vital that you do so to avoid running into any problems in the event of a real fire. The changes may be small, such as moving blockages out of the way of a fire exit or escape route, or they may be quite considerable, such as retraining

your staff in certain aspects of fire safety. However, each one can be equally as important as the other in a real emergency, so it is important that every aspect of your fire safety procedures is correct. These changes will help you comply with all relevant legal and contractual obligations as well, ensuring you can avoid any legal issues resulting from inadequate fire safety precautions.

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EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURES

Implementing emergency evacuation procedures for you and those in your building is something that requires careful planning and attention. As well as creating a general evacuation plan for your building as a whole, you need to cater for those who may have special requirements, such as wheelchair users or other people with mobility issues, such as the elderly. Identify the number of people with special requirements in your building, and ensure that any evacuation routes in your premises can be used by anyone who may need help to move.

For difficult manoeuvrability issues, such as transporting wheelchair users down stairs, ensure that staff are well trained in how to work through these difficulties. This may include a 'carry-down' method, where two or more people carry the individual down the stairs with them, stopping at flat points for a brief rest before continuing down the next flight of stairs. Any staircases that are to be used in an evacuation procedure must be well sheltered to protect users from smoke and fire.

There is certain equipment that can be used to assist with the evacuation of people in emergency situations, such as evacuation chairs, which allow those with limited mobility to be transported down staircases easily and smoothly. The Disability Equality Duty states that all commercial premises should 'proactively promote the equality of disabled people' and this extends to fire safety procedures.

FIRE DRILL CHECKLIST

It is vital for every workplace to have an effective and safe fire drill procedure to ensure that everyone in your building knows how to react in the event of an emergency.

The specifics of a fire drill may differ from business to business, but there are several practices that must be implemented, regardless of the nature of your environment.



Be sure to notify all employees that a fire drill is going to take place before it happens; give them a specific time to expect the drill, and what exactly they will be needed to do when they hear the alarm. This will help them put what they've learnt into practice. You should also warn any visitors in the building that the drill will be happening where possible. If this is not possible, try to attempt the drill during times with the least visitors.



Nominate fire safety wardens who can supervise the drill and see what's being done right and what needs improvement. You can choose either trained fire wardens or senior members of staff to observe the participants carefully, noting down anything that isn't perhaps working as it should.



Ensure you have a register containing the names of all employees and, if possible, the names of any visitors or contractors that may be on site. This allows you to carefully check who is present and who is missing from the drill.



During the drill, observe the evacuation of people with disabilities. Take note of how much difficulty they find in the evacuation process. If you already have an action plan in place to help with the evacuation of disabled people, observe how it is carried out during the drill. Take note of the safety and ease of the evacuation, paying particular attention to things that may need improvement.



Ensure all staff are making proper use of the designated fire exits and escape routes. While there may be exits or routes that employees may find easier, it is important that each evacuation route is practised properly, as in the event of a real fire, certain exits may not be available.



Make sure you carefully record the results of the drill. As well as making your planning easier, it is also necessary to ensure you comply with relevant legal requirements and contractual obligations. Note down anything that you see that did not go well, and work on ways to improve these issues.



Anything that is significantly inadequate, such as escape routes or employee understanding of the plan needs to be noted down in detail. Once your notes are finished, it is important that you work on ways to improve these faults as soon as possible. You never know when a real fire will occur, so you can't afford to delay on these issues.



FIRE SAFETY TRAINING

There are a number of things that you can do to help improve the fire safety knowledge of you and your employees. Ensuring that they receive comprehensive fire safety training will make a world of difference to the way an emergency is handled in your workplace. Here at Asco Fire Group, we offer a bespoke fire training service to suit the needs of any business, whether you have 10 staff or 200.

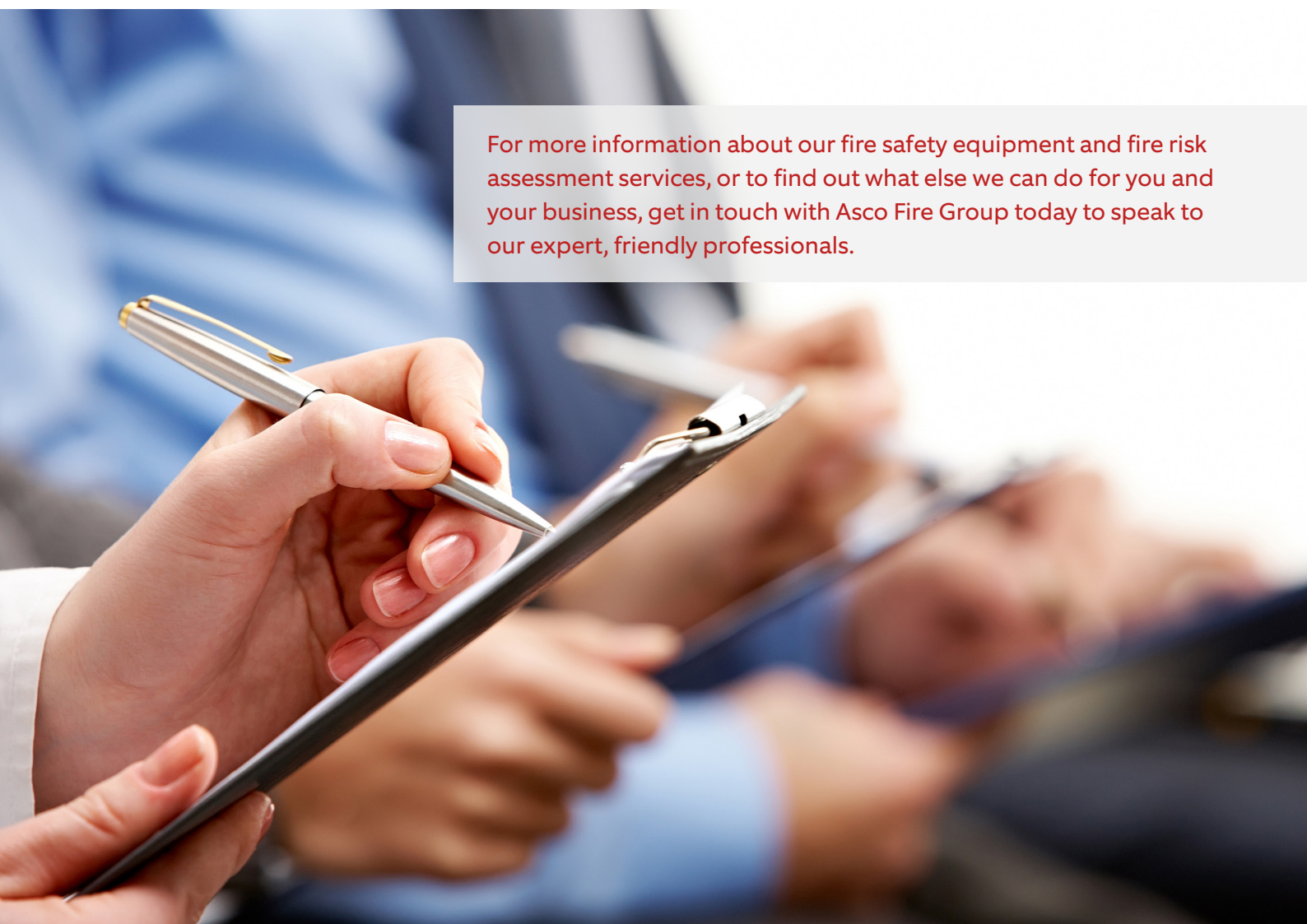
Our service is tailored around your specific requirements, covering everything you need to know about fire safety to ensure you are fully prepared in the event of an emergency.

We can instruct you and your staff members on the correct use of all kinds of fire safety equipment to the creation and practice of evacuation plans that cater specifically to your staff and your premises. Using our fire safety training services will help your staff gain practical use of fire extinguishers and other fire safety equipment, and this, coupled with detailed evacuation procedures, will ensure any fire situation can be handled efficiently, calmly and properly.

We also provide an excellent fire risk assessment service that is both meticulous and efficient; our highly trained professionals know exactly what

to look for and will advise you on any changes you may need to implement.

Our assessments meet all relevant Health and Safety regulations and we take great care to ensure that your business still fulfils its legal requirements and obligations. If we do find that any changes need to be made to your fire safety procedures, you can benefit from our huge range of state-of-the-art fire safety equipment, available at excellent prices for both large and small businesses.



For more information about our fire safety equipment and fire risk assessment services, or to find out what else we can do for you and your business, get in touch with Asco Fire Group today to speak to our expert, friendly professionals.



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