



ECCLESIASTICAL

INSURANCE GROUP

Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

Background

The Government is committed to reducing death, bodily injury and damage caused by fire. To implement this initiative the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (RRO), which takes effect from 1 October 2006, will repeal and replace over 100 pieces of previous fire safety law.

Implications

The RRO will apply to all businesses, places of worship and the voluntary sector. It does not apply to private dwellings in single occupation. A Responsible Person will have to conduct a comprehensive risk assessment to identify:

- Ignition sources
- Suitable means of detecting and raising the alarm in the event of a fire
- Adequate emergency escape routes and exits
- Appropriate type and numbers of fire extinguishers
- Correct type & sufficient numbers of fire signs and notices
- Provision for the correct maintenance of fire equipment
- Suitable provision for the protection of Fire Service personnel
- Ensure the occupants receive the appropriate instruction/training in actions to be taken in the event of a fire and evacuation drills

Responsible Person

The Responsible Person will be one of the following:

- Employers with control of the workplace
- Person with overall management control of a building
- Occupier of the premises
- Owner of premises if an empty building
- Landlord where building is in multi occupancy

The Responsible Person can appoint a Competent Person to carry out the fire risk assessment. Where five or more persons are employed a formal record of any significant findings and remedial measures which have or may need to be taken must be made.

Competent Person

The Competent Person need not possess any specific qualifications but must:

- Understand the relevant fire and safety legislation
- Have appropriate knowledge/experience in the principles of fire safety
- Have an understanding of fire development and the behaviour of people in a fire
- Understand the fire hazards, fire risks & relevant factors associated with occupants at special risk within the building (Disability Discrimination Act)
- Have appropriate training and/or experience in carrying out fire risk assessments

Government Guidance Documents

The Government has issued a range of detailed guidance notes. These include Offices and Shops, Small and Medium Sized Places of Assembly (up to 300 persons), which includes churches and church halls, and Large Places of Assembly (over 300 persons), which includes large churches and cathedrals.

An entry level guide "A short guide to making your premises safe from fire" is also available. This and all of the other guides can be downloaded from: www.firesafetyguides.communities.gov.uk

Conclusion

In practice there is very little change from the current situation. The need to carry out a Fire Risk Assessment has not changed, although this now applies to all premises and open air events and there is no longer the need for there to be at least one employee for it to be a legal requirement. The assessment now also requires the Responsible Person to think about the effect of a fire on their neighbours.

Although the Guidance Notes are very detailed they are designed to be used by lay people. The introduction to the guidance says that it is not prescriptive and that there is no obligation to adopt any particular solution in the guide if fire safety can be met in some other way.

For example, churches do not have to have fire alarm systems, fire exit signs, emergency lighting or outward opening doors if the risk assessment shows that these are not necessary. However, arrangements must be in place to ensure that a fire can be detected and that persons can evacuate the buildings safely.

The Order will be enforced by the Fire Authorities who can issue Improvement and Prohibition notices.

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Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

- Takes effect from 1 October 2006
- Applies to England and Wales
- It applies to churches, church halls and all places of worship
- It is a risk assessment based approach
- A Responsible Person must be appointed to ensure fire safety
- The Responsible Person can be more than one person, eg the PCC
- The Responsible Person must appoint a competent person, but the competent person can be the same as the responsible person
- The Competent Person need not possess any specific qualifications but must understand the fire hazards, fire risks & relevant factors associated with occupants at special risk within the building
- A fire risk assessment must be carried out
- Consideration must be given to include property safety, fire fighter safety, neighbours and the environment around the site
- Churches do not have to have fire exit signs, emergency lighting or outward opening doors. However, arrangements must be in place to ensure that persons can evacuate the buildings safely
- Where five or more persons are employed a formal record of any significant findings and remedial measures which have or may need to be taken must be made
- We advise a record is kept irrespective of the number of employees
- Churches and other places of worship are covered by the guidance for Small and Medium Places of Assembly (up to 300 persons) and Large Places of Assembly (over 300 persons)
- An entry level guide “A short guide to making your premises safe from fire” is also available
- This and all of the other guides can be downloaded from www.firesafetyguides.communities.gov.uk
- In practice there is very little change from the current situation