

Fire

“A fire started by a grinding machine disrupted the company’s production for several months!”

Even a small fire in your premises or adjoining buildings can quickly and easily spread out of control and cause significant smoke and water damage. Examples of fire hazards include flammable substances, hot processes and surfaces, ‘hot work’ and activities that generate dust.

By law, you have a duty to assess the fire risks in your premises and to implement appropriate control measures, which can include:

- minimising flammable materials and sources of ignition
- early detection devices, for example heat or smoke detectors
- an adequate alarm system, capable of alerting everyone in the building
- evacuation routes, emergency exits and safe assembly areas – all with appropriate signs
- firefighting equipment, such as sprinkler systems or portable fire extinguishers
- methods of preventing the spread of fire, for example firebreaks, firewalls or fire doors
- emergency procedures and evacuation drills.

Early warning systems can help with safe evacuation and firefighting systems can alert the emergency services.

Don’t rule out the possibility that your business could be the target of an arson attack.

Tips

- Reduce the risk of fires by giving your employees training and regular exercises in the use of firefighting equipment. Other measures include good housekeeping; regular servicing of equipment and electrical wiring; and storing flammable liquids and gases safely.
- Reduce the risk of arson by improving lighting and surveillance of outdoor areas, and by storing rubbish, waste paper and other combustible materials safely and securely.
- Discuss fire hazards and emergency plans with your fire authority and insurance company.

Useful links

Health and Safety Executive – Fire
www.hse.gov.uk/fireandexplosion/index.htm

List of fire services in the UK
www.fireservice.co.uk/information/ukfrs

Leaks

“A pipe burst and water leaked into the storeroom. The electricity supply and some of the stock were damaged.”

Leaks could result from equipment failure in a your own operations, malicious damage, a burst water main or an accident in adjoining premises. Sewers near your premises could fail to cope with heavy rain or melting snow, and the overflow could enter your buildings. And widespread flooding and property damage could be caused by prolonged and heavy rainfall, particularly if your premises are located in a flood plain.

As well as water, other fluids can cause damage when they leak. Depending on the characteristics of the leaking substance, the consequences can include personal harm, fire, and environmental and property damage.

Tips

- Follow the relevant regulations when it comes to storing hazardous substances.
- To prevent water damage, keep your roofs, drainpipes and gutters clear and in good order. Consider the possibility of heavy rain causing flooding if items are stored outdoors. And make sure that equipment such as electricity distribution boards and computers aren't located where internal leaks could come into contact with them.
- Make sure all pipelines are marked indicating the substance they contain and the direction of flow. Also, make sure the locations of pipeline shut-off valves are clearly marked, and that access to shut-off valves isn't blocked so that leakages can be stopped as quickly as possible in an emergency.
- Make sure you have suitable absorbent materials, containers and personal protective equipment to deal with leaks of hazardous substances.

Useful link

Environment Agency – Flood preparation guide for business
www.environment-agency.gov.uk/business/topics/32354.aspx