

In the first of a new series of columns, Fireco, supplier of fire safety products, systems and services, looks at problems of compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

## ARE YOU PLAYING WITH FIRE?

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 was designed to put an end to prescriptive fire safety and to hand control over to the 'Responsible Person'.

However, Article 9 of the Order is where widespread difficulties have arisen with compliance. The form the risk assessment takes depends on the type and size of the premises and the occupants. What is suitable and sufficient for one building may not be for another. Similarly, two different fire officers may have differing views on the suitability of fire precautions.

In the majority of prosecutions to date, the most serious summons is deemed to be 'Article 9 – Failure to make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks to which relevant persons were exposed'. If the fire risk assessment had been suitable, then the risks imposed upon occupants could have been identified and reduced or removed accordingly.

Auditing a building's risk to life from fire is a complex task and requires a lot of experience. A fire risk assessment is the blueprint to fire precautions. It is key to occupants' safety, so must be a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks.

If in doubt, the best guidance is always to seek sound advice from a qualified, competent fire assessor.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact Fireco on  
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# BE PREPARED

*Richard Evens of St John Ambulance explains the recent changes in first aid at work regulations*



## Health & safety

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) carried out an evaluation and consultation regarding first-aid coverage in the workplace, and found that although first-aid awareness in workplaces was generally good, compliance was often more in spirit than in consideration of the full needs of their staff. The research highlighted some opportunities to improve the format and content of the guidance. The result is new guidelines for first aid at work, which come into effect on 1 October – the first change in over 25 years.

Currently, businesses need to carry out a risk assessment to determine which of the three risk categories – low, medium or high risk – applies to them. This then determines the number of trained first aiders. At present they may need appointed persons or people trained in first aid at work, but this will change from 1 October (see below).

Facilities managers with a responsibility for health and safety need to ensure their workplace is compliant with the regulations, otherwise someone could be badly injured or worse on their premises without anyone there to help.

Businesses will still need to complete a risk assessment to determine their risk category. As a result of the new guidance, St John Ambulance will be making various changes to its courses.

### EMERGENCY AID FOR APPOINTED PERSONS

This is not currently a regulated course. The regulations recommend an appointed person in the workplace has some first-aid training. After 1 October, where an employer has found that they need an appointed person under the old regulations, they may find they now need an emergency first aider in the workplace (EFAW).

### FIRST AID AT WORK (FAW)

Covers the practical skills needed by a first aider in the modern workplace. The course gives the confidence and knowledge to deal with first-aid emergencies. It takes four days every three years. Post-October, it becomes three days every three years, but still covers the important life-saving techniques and treatment for minor injuries that are frequent in the workplace.

### FAW REQUALIFICATION

Updates and refreshes knowledge of the first aid at work syllabus, while allowing time for revision and practice sessions before a final assessment. The course will remain unchanged at two days every three years.

### ANNUAL REFRESHER (AW)

The skills of first aiders are known to 'fade' soon after completing training. This provides an opportunity to practise and update skills during the three-year period as a qualified first aider. Currently it is recommended that some refreshment of life-saving skills is undertaken between FAW courses, but content and duration are not specified. As of 1 October, the HSE strongly recommends that FAW and EFAW students attend a three-hour session annually **FMX**

### FURTHER INFORMATION

*Richard Evens is director of training and marketing, St John Ambulance. On St John Ambulance first-aid courses, staff are given the knowledge and confidence to handle first-aid emergencies. The organisation can advise on how businesses will be affected by the changes. Its website offers access to several online tools to help review current levels of cover and provides business-specific information. [www.sja.org.uk](http://www.sja.org.uk)*