



## Goal

This program provides information to research and prepare fire prevention and emergency action plans.

## Background

A good fire safety plan has three main elements:

- 1) **Prevention** - Evaluating the workplace for fire hazards and taking steps to reduce or eliminate those hazards benefits everyone in the long run.
- 2) **Evacuation** – Fires can spread with incredible speed. The ability for all occupants of any structure to quickly leave the danger zone is the best means of ensuring their safety in case a fire does break out.
- 3) **Firefighting** – It is best to rely on your local fire department to tackle any serious fire.

## Considerations

A fire prevention plan must be:

- in writing;
- kept in the workplace; and
- available for employees to review.

The following minimum elements should be acknowledged in a fire prevention plan:

- list of all major fire hazards;
- proper handling and storage procedures for hazardous materials;
- potential ignition sources and their control;
- type of fire protection equipment necessary to control each major hazard;
- procedures to control accumulations of flammable and combustible waste materials;
- procedures for regular maintenance of safeguards installed on heat-producing equipment to prevent the accidental ignition of combustible materials;
- name or job title of employees responsible for maintaining equipment to prevent or control sources of ignition or fires; and
- name or job title of employees responsible for the control of fuel source hazards.



## Preventing Fires

A few basic steps can considerably lower the chances of a fire breaking out.

- Avoid storing or stockpiling flammable materials, such as packaging materials or waste, where they could be accessed by the public, including areas immediately outside the business premises.
- Ensure all machinery is serviced as recommended by manufacturers and is kept clean.
- If possible, switch machinery off when the business is unattended.
- When the business is unattended, secure all doors, windows or other access points and make sure there is adequate lighting to deter trespassers.
- If your business stores dangerous goods, you should ensure the storage and use adheres to federal, state and local requirements.

## Smoke Alarms

If your business is based outside the home, it's a good idea to contact the local fire department to determine the fire alarm requirements for the building. Smoke alarms or detectors should be placed on every level of the building, including basements, ceilings, or high on walls.

Smoke alarms and detectors should be tested once a month, or per the manufacturer's instructions. Replace batteries once a year or as soon as the alarm or detector "chirps", indicating the battery is low. After 10 years, it's time to replace the smoke alarm, even if it is hard-wired or a "long life", 10-year battery-type. A qualified electrician should perform the initial install and replacement of hard-wired smoke alarms or detectors.



## Evacuation Plan

Smoke alarms/detectors alone cannot ensure the safety of your employees in the event of a fire. A fire can race through a structure/business in a matter of minutes, giving the employer and employees little time to escape. It is essential that businesses develop and practice a basic fire evacuation plan so employees know what to do when an alarm sounds. Employers should involve as many people as practical in putting together the plan, including disabled employees. As part of the plan, have employees:

- study posted evacuation plans;
- learn two ways out of each work area;
- count the number of desks or work stations between their work area and the nearest two exits;
- designate an outside meeting place where everyone can gather after evacuating, and devise a system to account for everyone in the building; and
- practice the evacuation plan at least twice a year.

## Fire Extinguishers

When a fire breaks out, the number one priority is that everyone must evacuate safely and call the fire department. However, some evacuation/emergency plans may include the use of a fire extinguisher, and a properly maintained portable fire extinguisher can quickly put out a small fire or control a larger one until the fire department arrives.

Employees appointed to use a fire extinguisher must be properly trained in its operation before a fire breaks out. They should only operate the fire extinguisher if they have an unobstructed escape route and are comfortable handling the situation. They should begin discharging the extinguisher six to eight feet away from the fire and move closer as the fire diminishes.

To operate a fire extinguisher, a person should remember the word **PASS** while holding the extinguisher with the nozzle pointing away from them:

- Pull the pin;
- Aim low, point the extinguisher at the base of the fire;
- Squeeze the lever; and
- Sweep the nozzle from side-to-side.

## Fire Sprinkler Systems

Your property may also have a properly installed and maintained automatic fire sprinkler system. If so, the chances of dying in a fire, and the average property loss per fire, are both cut by one-half to two-thirds compared to properties that don't have sprinkler systems. Sprinkler systems will also need frequent inspections and adequate service to ensure their functionality in the event of an emergency.

## Contingency Plans

Developing a contingency plan is important for business continuity. Consider what information is necessary to keep the business running and decide how to protect and/or restore all important information (hard copy and electronic) like supplier and client lists, business contracts and insurance details. A designated off-site secure location to store important information should be included in the contingency plan.

For more information on fire safety and prevention see the Service Lloyds website. In Risk Control's Training Materials section, we have additional resources including:

- Fire Safety – Toolbox Talk
- House and Building Fires – Toolbox Talk
- Portable Fire Extinguishers
- Parlay Handouts:
  - A Guide to Worksite Fire Safety
  - The Fire Triangle
  - Worksite Fire Emergencies

Remember to practice Safety; don't learn it by accident.

*For additional assistance, please contact  
RiskControl@ServiceLloyds.com  
P.O. Box 26850, Austin, Texas 78755  
(512) 212-7064  
www.servicelloyds.com*