

# FACT SHEET



## Fire Safety in the Office

A fire at work can mean more than perhaps a few days off. You or your work-mates could be badly injured or killed. Even if no one is injured, a serious fire can mean that you lose your job.

Around 25% of businesses that suffer a serious fire go out of business as a result. Fire safety is the responsibility of everyone in the workplace.

### Fire Prevention

The first step in fire safety is prevention:

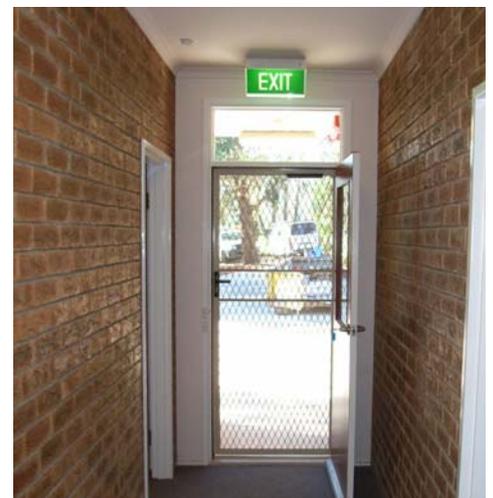
- Smoke only where permitted. Use large, non-tip ashtrays and make sure everything in them is cold before they are emptied.
- Keep passageways and exits free from storage and waste.
- Promptly remove waste paper, packaging, old rags and other fire hazards.
- Designate an employee to ensure that appliances (stoves, kettles etc) are switched off each night.
- Wherever possible turn off computers and/or monitors each night.
- Make sure that any cracked, frayed or broken electrical cord or plug is replaced immediately.
- Make sure that there is plenty of air circulation space around heat producing equipment (e.g. photocopiers and computers).
- Do not run electrical leads or cords across doors or walkways, or pinch them behind furniture.
- Do not overload power outlets or extension boards.
- If an appliance or item of equipment smells or gives off smoke, turn it off, unplug it and do not use it again until a qualified technician has checked it.
- Make sure that fire and smoke doors that should be kept shut are not propped open.
- Make sure that escape stairs and exit doors are not locked or blocked.

### Arson

- Arson is a major threat to your office.
- Follow your building security measures.
- Keep unauthorised people out of your office or work area.
- Minimise combustible material in areas of public access. Keep refuse containers in secure areas or away from buildings.
- Lock all doors after hours.
- Keep areas around the building well lit.



Promptly remove waste paper, packaging, old rags and other fire hazards.



Make sure that escape stairs and exit doors are not locked or blocked.



Make sure that all fire equipment is regularly checked and maintained



Know where the nearest fire alarm or manual call point is and how to use it.

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## Maintenance

- Poor maintenance of fire protection equipment is a major problem in trying to contain a fire. Make sure that all fire equipment is regularly checked and maintained.
- Report any faulty piece of equipment to the appropriate person.

## Plan Ahead

- Know the quickest way out of your building.
- Know where your nearest fire alarm or manual call point is and how to use it.
- Know the fire protection equipment you might need to use.
- Post the fire brigade number close to every telephone.
- Develop an emergency plan for dealing with fires, including first response and evacuation. (This is a management responsibility but all employees should be involved.)
- Ensure that fire drills are frequently conducted.
- If you or one of your workmates or any person likely to be in the building is disabled, make sure that this is included in the evacuation plan.

## If a Fire Occurs:

- Follow the emergency plan.
- Sound the alarm and call the fire brigade, no matter how small the fire.
- Only attempt to fight a fire if it is small (no larger than a wastebasket) and you have the correct equipment to handle it and have been trained how to use it.
- Leave the area, closing doors as you go (this will help to limit the spread of fire and smoke).
- If smoke is present, crawl low (the air will be clearer near the floor).
- Before opening any door use the back of your hand to test for heat on the door surface (a burn to the back of the hand is less incapacitating than one to the palm). If the door is hot do not proceed. If the door is cool, open it cautiously.
- Once outside, move to the designated meeting point until your name has been noted and you are given further directions.

**Remember: Unless you have been told beforehand that a fire alarm is being tested, assume that the alarm is real.**