



Fire Warden Essentials

First things first. Fires in offices happen.

Whatever your attitude to fire safety.

This course looks at the reasons fire wardens are necessary.

Legally, within all buildings, there's at least one person responsible for fire safety.

Fortunately, thanks to this course, you won't have that problem.

NAME



FIRE WARDEN ESSENTIALS

How to use this workbook

You'll read the info, take it in, answer a few questions. Simple.

While the content is presented in a way you'll hopefully enjoy, the main thing is that you know the important stuff.

So, there'll be little takeaway sections to help you remember the key details in future.

Plus, the quiz questions will help embed the knowledge all up there in your brain-tank.

By knowing fire warden essentials, you'll be minimizing fire safety risks.

Which is good, right?

WHO SHOULD READ THIS?

- Employers, business owners, landlords, building and facilities managers who are looking to shift some responsibility by appointing fire wardens
- Existing fire wardens, people who are just about to become fire wardens or people thinking about becoming fire wardens
- People who fancy getting a bit more insight into general fire safety

KEY INSIGHTS

- The legal guidelines when it comes to fire safety, and who's responsible.
- The difference between a fire warden's day-to-day and emergency duties.
- The types of fires
- The strengths and weaknesses of different firefighting equipment
- The ideal number of fire wardens to have

THE NITTY GRITTY

Fires are bad.

So, you don't want them happening where you work.

But, even though we know they're bad, they still happen. Sadly, all too often.

There were 30,000 reported fires in non-dwelling buildings in 2016.

With over 2,000 casualties.

And it's not just injuries.

Up to 80% of businesses never fully recover from a serious fire.

The more you can do to stop them from happening, the better.

Even if you disagree, it doesn't matter.

It's a legal requirement to keep a building fire safe.

Whose responsibility is it?

The 'responsible person', of course.

And who's the responsible person?

Glad you asked.

You're responsible for fire safety in business or other non-domestic premises if you're:

- An employer
- The owner
- The landlord
- An occupier
- Anyone else with control of the premises, for example a facilities manager, building manager, managing agent or risk assessor.

HOWEVER...

If you're one of those guys, you probably have a lot on your plate.

You might want to delegate some of the day-to-day fire safety responsibilities onto someone else, so you can get on with your day job.

That's where fire wardens come in.

Fire wardens oversee general fire risk mitigation, and can act as leaders in an emergency.

Ultimately, though, the buck still stops with the responsible person.

Because they're the responsible person.

Easy enough to remember, isn't it?



TAKEAWAY

Fires are serious. Obviously.

To minimize risk, the highest-ranking person, like the business or building owner, has to carry out a range of fire safety activities.

They might choose to get some fire wardens in to help them.

FIRE WARDEN DUTIES

So what does a fire warden actually do?

Well, their responsibilities are basically split into two categories:

Proactive and reactive.

The proactive duties are the ones you do every day, general housekeeping type stuff, to minimize the risk of fires. They're usually the major parts of a fire risk assessment.

The reactive ones are the ones that you have to pull out of the bag if the worst happens, and there is a fire.

Or failing, that during fire drills.

There aren't any hard-and-fast rules about what those responsibilities are, and they'll differ depending on where you work.

The table on the next page might give you an idea of some of the ones you might have.

PROACTIVE DUTIES

Keeping all fire exits and routes free from obstruction and available at all times, checking final exits aren't blocked from the outside.

Making sure 'Break glass' call points are visible, and have a 'break glass point' sign and emergency fire action notice next to them.

Ensuring fire extinguishers are in their correct place, serviced, signed and stowed above floor level.

Making sure no rooms with a fixed source of ignition or heat are used for storing combustible materials, like paper or waste.

Cleaning smoking areas and emptying smoking receptacles on a regular basis. Controlling of flammable liquids and hazardous materials.

Carrying out electrical safety checks and portable appliance testing.

Monitoring external security.

Testing the emergency lighting tested each month.

Managing any hot works, like welding or soldering, issuing hot works permits and controlling contractors.

Doing weekly fire alarm checks.

Overseeing staff fire inductions.

Arranging fire drills at least once a year.

Operating exit sign surveys.

Checking fire doors on a weekly basis.

REACTIVE DUTIES

Fighting fires, and the use of fire extinguishers, but only if safe.

Raising the alarm and calling the emergency services.

Directing staff to safe, available exit routes. Sweeping all rooms, where safe to do so, ensuring toilets and places like walk-in cupboards are clear of people. Assisting disabled people.

Closing all windows in rooms and corridors, as well as all doors. Ensuring hazardous manufacturing processes and machinery have been isolated.

Taking part in the roll call at the assembly point.

Reporting to the fire service on their arrival.

Fighting fires, and the use of fire extinguishers, but only if safe. Raising the alarm and calling the emergency services.

Directing staff to safe, available exit routes. Sweeping all rooms, where safe to do so, ensuring toilets and places like walk-in cupboards are clear of people.

Assisting disabled people.

Closing all windows in rooms and corridors, as well as all doors.

Now, the important thing to remember about fire evacuations is that, yes, you should try to minimize risks to others – but you should also keep yourself out of danger.

What we mean by that is it's not worth trying to fight a fire if you're going to seriously endanger yourself.

Only go after a fire if you:

- are suitably trained
- understand the different types of fire
- know about the different types of extinguisher

And that's not just because you could get hurt. If you don't know what you're doing, you could actually make a fire worse.

TAKEAWAY

Fire Warden's responsibilities are broken down into what you do before there's a fire (proactive), and what you do when there is a fire (reactive).

Both are there to minimize fire risks. Either by trying to stop them from happening, or keeping people safe when they do.

And, importantly, only take any fire-fighting action if it's 100% safe to do so.

TYPES OF FIRES

Now then.

We mentioned different fire types a page or so ago.

What do we mean by different types of fires?

I mean, they're all wobbly. They're (almost) all yellow. They're all hot.

Well, it's not so much the fires themselves that have types, so much as what the fuel is.

You see (and bear with us if you already knew this) fires need three things to survive:

- Fuel
- Heat
- Oxygen

Just like I need three things to survive:

- Food
- Oxygen
- Beer

So, depending on the type of fuel, there are different "classes" of fires.

Shall we have a look at what they are?

I mean, we're going to anyway, so you might as well enjoy it.

Class A - Fires that involve solid or organic materials, such as wood, plastics, paper, textiles, or coal.

Class B - Fires that involve flammable liquids, such as gasoline, petroleum oil, paint, or diesel.

Class C - Fires that involve flammable gases, such as propane, butane, or methane.

Class D - Fires that involve combustible metals, such as magnesium, lithium, sodium, potassium, titanium, or aluminium.

Class F - Fires that involve cooking oils and fats, such as those used in deep-fat fryers.

TYPES OF FIRE EXTINGUISHER

Now, when it comes to tackling these fires, extinguishers are one of your best weapons.

Extinguishers work by forming a barrier between the fuel, the oxygen or the heat that fires need to survive.

Different extinguishers contain different materials, which form different barriers.

Because of this, each class of fire requires a different type of extinguisher.

The table below will show you which type of fire extinguisher is best against which class of fire.

And which types of extinguisher will only make certain classes of fire worse.

Extinguisher Content	Label looks like	Effective Against	Ineffective Against
Water	White text	Wood, cloth, coal, plastics, paper, textiles and other solid materials	Any other fire types
Powder	Blue rectangle	Solid materials, liquid, gas and chemical fires	Chip pan and fat fires, as well as metal fires (unless specified)
Foam	Cream rectangle	Solid materials and liquid fires	Gas, metal, electrical, chip pan and fat fires
CO2	Black rectangle	Liquid and electrical fires	Gas, metal, chip pan and fat fires
Wet chemical	Yellow rectangle	Cooking fat and oil fires	Any other fire types

It's the responsible person's job to ensure that extinguishers are kept in good working order.

TAKEAWAY

If you do decide that it's safe to tackle a fire, there are two things you need to work out first:

1. The class of the fire you're fighting
2. What extinguisher is best to use

Once that's done, feel free to fight the fire, but (and we can't stress this enough) ONLY if safe to do so.

FIRE WARDEN PRO-TIPS

So, we know what fire wardens are.

We know why we need them.

We know what they do.

What next?

Well, let's get them started.

How many are you going to need?

Good question.

There are a few things to consider.

First, how big your building is, and how many people there are to look after.

Obviously, larger buildings might need several, whereas smaller offices could get by with one.

One per floor might be a good rule of thumb, but have a think about your own circumstances before committing. No two premises are exactly the same.

It's probably better to have too many fire wardens than too few.

Besides, you'll want to have cover in case your fire wardens are away on holiday, or off ill.

Once you're happy, you can sit back and let the fire wardens do their thang.

QUICK QUIZ

So, a lot of the fire warden stuff is common sense. We get that.

But, you have to admit, it's important stuff.

And common sense is one of the first things to go out the window in an emergency.

So, here are a few simple questions to help everything stick.

Feel free to look back through the workbook for the answers.

Q1. Who is ultimately responsible for fire wardens?

Q2. What is the difference between a fire warden's proactive and reactive duties?

Q3: What are the three things a fire needs to survive?

Q4: Why do you need to know what material each extinguisher contains?

FINAL SUMMARY

If you remember one thing from this workbook, let it be this:

While fire wardens are essential, they're not an infallible shield against fires.

Everyone needs to chip in and do their bit to help out fire wardens, and ultimately the responsible person, to help keep premises and people safe.

