



Safety in Scouting in Berkshire



FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT OF PREMISES AND MEETING PLACES

As all are aware from the present advertising campaign in the national and local media, changes to fire safety legislation are due to come into force in October this year. The aim of the reform is to simplify, rationalise and consolidate existing legislation. It will provide for a risk based approach to fire safety. The main effect of the changes will be a move towards greater emphasis on fire prevention in all non-domestic premises. Fire Certificates will be abolished and will cease to have legal status.

The Fire Safety Order covers general fire precautions and other fire safety duties which are needed to protect relevant persons in case of fire in and around most premises. The Order requires fire precautions to be put in place where necessary, and to the extent that it is reasonable and practicable in the circumstances of the case.

Responsibility for complying with the Fire Safety Order will rest with the 'responsible person'. In a Scout meeting place (whether this in a premises owned and managed by a Scout Group, District or County, or where a Scout unit meets in premises owned and managed by others), this responsibility lies with the relevant Executive Committee.

The fire risk assessment will help identify risks that can be removed or reduced and to decide the nature and extent of the general fire precautions needed to be taken to protect people against the fire risks that remain. This requirement is not new and has been implicit in several major pieces of legislation over recent years. Those managing Scout premises in Berkshire should have completed a fire risk assessment a number of years ago (and of course, and kept these up to date).

Official guidance advises that the risk assessment must focus on the safety in case of fire of all occupants and users. It should pay particular attention to those at special risk. This might include the disabled, those with special needs, and those whose mental acuity might pose increased risks (perhaps Beaver Scouts) and must include consideration of any dangerous substance likely to be on the premises. The assessment should be reviewed regularly (at least every two years), and sooner should circumstances change significantly (perhaps the Group is about to start a Beaver Colony, or is about to start hiring out its premises to others).

In order to assist responsible persons in carrying out fire risk assessments, the Department for Communities and Local Government (formally the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister) has published detailed guidance documents. The document titled "Fire Safety Risk Assessment – Small and Medium Places of Assembly" addresses the issues to be found in many Scout premises. In addition, The Scout Association has published (July 2005) a

new fact sheet. More locally, the District Safety in Scouting Coordinator is willing to give advice to Groups (if there is not a Coordinator in your District, talk to your District Chairperson or Commissioner).

Howard de Silva
County Safety In Scouting Coordinator

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Further Guidance :

“A short guide to making your premises safe from fire” (DCLG)

http://www.communities.gov.uk/embedded_object.asp?id=1500384

“Fire Safety Risk Assessment –

Small and Medium Places of Assembly” (DCLG)

http://www.communities.gov.uk/embedded_object.asp?id=1500426

Scout Association Fact Sheet **Managing Fire Safety FS320007**