



Fire safety law changes put new burden on employers

Radical changes to fire safety law, scheduled for early next year, will place huge new responsibilities on employers and building owners.

The Government's Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order or RRO will remove or change more than 120 pieces of fire legislation introduced over the last 30 years. In place of the current situation, where fire and rescue service define the necessary fire precautions, there will be an approach based on risk assessment. The new law is designed to simplify fire legislation, but the result will be to put an extra burden on to businesses.

In future, the onus will be on an employer or a building's owner to identify risks for themselves and then show how they have addressed the risks they have identified. The person responsible for the premises will have two vital responsibilities. They will need to look at how to prevent fires happening – by reducing hazards and minimising risks and they will need to establish the necessary precautions to keep people safe, if or when a fire occurs. This includes ensuring there are adequate escape routes and appropriate fire-fighting equipment.

Local authorities and fire services will have the right to inspect any premises they choose. If they are not satisfied with what they find, they will have the power to issue an improvement or a prohibition notice. They will also have the right to prosecute any organization that does not comply with their orders. Contravening an order will be a criminal offence.

Peter Wilkinson is an Associate Director of Rolton Fire and an expert in fire engineering, which is the use of fire science, engineering, analysis and computer simulation to provide customised fire safety precautions. He says: "Many businesses see these changes in legislation as daunting and even demoralising. And that's not surprising, because they are being weighed down with the responsibility for a vitally important task for which they may well have neither experience nor training.



Peter Wilkinson – an expert in fire engineering.

At Rolton Fire, we can make the transition to the new legislation less painful. That's because we have years of experience of conducting fire risk assessments in all kinds of premises. Our fire engineering expertise is often used to develop fire safety strategies in unusual and complex buildings. We continually provide fire safety advice to a wide range of clients."

Rolton Fire is part of the Rolton Group, an award winning multi-disciplinary professional engineering practice, based in Higham Ferrers. Rolton has worked with clients for more than 20 years to provide innovative solutions that add value to their clients' businesses. For more information about the changes to fire legislation and how they will affect you, call Peter Wilkinson at Rolton Fire on 08707 26 00 00.