

Independent Guide

What should be included in fire warden training?



Independent workplace compliance

Aim of fire warden training

Establishing the aim of fire warden training (also sometimes referred to as fire marshal training) is the key to determining the contents of the course. Often the immediate thought when populating a fire warden course is to provide instructions on what the fire wardens should do upon discovering a fire and/or hearing a fire alarm. However, aside from these important reactive duties, fire wardens must also play a vital role in proactively managing fire safety in their workplace. Therefore, the knowledge required to spot and report fire hazards must also be covered in any fire warden training. This in turn will help to promote and enhance a fire safety culture within a company.

Typical fire warden training course agenda

As with any area of health and safety, when staff are appointed as fire wardens, taking on more responsibility, they require comprehensive training to make sure that they are well equipped to carry out their consequent duties. All fire warden training courses should be tailored to the specific requirements of an organisation, using company fire related policies, and building specific procedures to make the training as extensive and bespoke as possible.

As a guide, typically fire warden training should include the following elements:

- **The importance of fire safety and its potential devastating effects**

This introductory topic is an opportunity to set the scene and engage delegates on this important subject matter. An ideal moment to provide recent fire safety statistics and inform those who are not already aware of the close link between fire safety and life safety. Financial aspects can also be covered, such as typical insurance claims and how many businesses do not recover after a fire.

- **The physics of fire and smoke spread**

A return to school science lessons perhaps, which often has a mixed response from delegates! The focus here should be on understanding the fire triangle, what can cause a fire, what can accelerate a fire and the processes of how fire and smoke spread through a building. It's also important to cover the preventative fire safety measures available.

- **Legislation and legal responsibilities**

It's worth keeping in-mind that fire wardens are not expected to be legal experts at the end of a fire warden training course. A brief explanation of The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (RRFSO), recent legislative updates, along with the fire brigade's enforcement role and an outline of some typical articles within the RRFSO will suffice. Example articles relevant to fire wardens from the RRFSO could include:

- Article 9 – Risk Assessing
- Article 11 – Safety Arrangements
- Article 18 – Safety assistance
- Article 21 – Training

- **Buildings and fire**

For in-person training this is potentially a good time to get people out of the classroom and showcasing what their property has to offer in terms of fire detection and firefighting equipment. So often the case delegates have walked past such equipment daily and not once questioned what it is or its purpose. A time to educate delegates on the fire safety features in their workplace and how buildings are equipped to detect fire and equally how fires can be fought. Different types of evacuation processes are always useful to cover, even if for example a phased evacuation is not relevant for a specific property, it can still help to expand on human behaviour in the event of a fire.

- **Fire warden roles and responsibilities**

Arguably the most essential part of the training. As covered in the aims of fire warden training above, this must include the fire warden responsibilities, both proactive in promoting fire safety and reactive in what to do in the event of an evacuation. Company fire related policies and site-specific evacuation procedures need to be included. It's not often fire wardens get together, so this is a good time to allow them to ask questions and express any concerns with their roles and responsibilities. It's equally important to make sure they are not replacing the words fire wardens with 'fire heroes' and know not to put themselves at any risk of injury or harm whilst fulfilling their duties.



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- **The means of escape for disabled persons**

It is unusual for fire wardens to act as 'buddies' to assist with the means of escape for disabled persons, as fulfilling both roles simultaneously would be challenging. However, having a basic understanding of what a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) is and other groups of occupants potentially more at risk in the event of a building fire, such as young persons, lone workers, sleeping occupants, to name a few will help fire wardens to consider these individuals when sweeping a property and reporting on those evacuated.

- **The use of fire extinguishers**

Practical and interactive sessions are always good throughout any training course to gain an understanding of delegate engagement and knowledge progression. Practical fire extinguisher training is sometimes seen as an incentive to get attendees at a training course, however it is by no means essential. Theory training is sufficient when the classes of fire, types of extinguishers available and a description of their use is covered. Along with another reminder on the 'no heroes' title.

- **Home fire safety**

Whilst not a mandatory bulleted agenda point for a fire warden training course, it does feel morally right to encourage delegates at the end of a course to take any fire safety lessons they have learnt home with them. This is even more important now in the era of hybrid working.

In summary

Make sure that your fire warden training is tailored to your requirements and uses your building specific policies and procedures. The training is usually delivered in-house and combines classroom and practical exercises to make sure that the delegates have a full understanding of their important role as a fire warden.

This guide is of a general nature; specific advice can be obtained from Assurity Consulting. Assurity Consulting is the UK's leading independent compliance consultancy specialising in workplace health, safety and environmental solutions. We have over 35 years' experience of helping customers of all sizes, from across all sectors, manage their compliance responsibilities, making sure that their organisation is compliant, their employees are safe, their processes are cost effective and their management team is in control.



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