Fire

Health and Safety Guidance

Fire

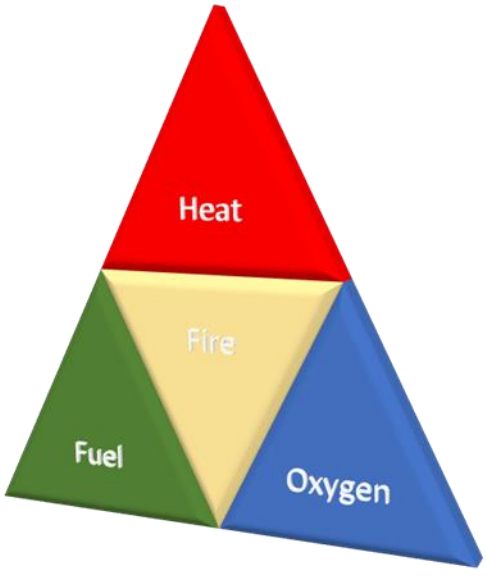
Fire poses a significant threat, not only to lives but also to livelihoods. It has the potential to cause personal harm, which can be devastating. Additionally, fire can inflict damage to property, leading to costly repairs and considerable disruption for both you and your organisation.

Grounds maintenance sheds and machinery are particularly susceptible to fire risks and should be included in the fire risk assessment. This guide outlines the key aspects to consider as part of your comprehensive fire risk assessment for your cricket club.

All Fires Are Preventable

How Do Fires Start?

To understand how to prevent fires, it is useful to understand the conditions necessary for a fire to ignite and continue burning. The 'Fire Triangle' illustrates this concept simply: for a fire to exist, it requires a heat source for ignition, a fuel source to sustain combustion, and oxygen to support the burning process. The removal of any of these elements will prevent the fire from starting or continuing.



Fuel = anything that will burn – chemicals, gas, wood, furniture even some metals.
Heat = anything that provides a temperature high enough via radiation, convection, or conduction to cause combustion of any given fuel source (some fuels burn at low temperatures).
Oxygen = almost continuously present unless special circumstances prevail. Note: Sometimes an oxygen rich environment may exist, in such a case the risk of fire is increased.

How Are Fires Prevented?

Effective fire prevention involves implementing a system that not only identifies potential fire hazards but also proactively prevents the conditions necessary for a fire to occur. This system, known as a 'Fire Safety Strategy,' encompasses several components, including but not limited to:

- Fire prevention: Identifying all hazards, understanding how fires might start, and implementing fire prevention measures.
- Fire detection: Early detection provides timely warnings and allows for early suppression, minimising property damage.
- Warning/Alarm: Providing people with adequate time to evacuate safely.
- Evacuation/Means of Escape: Ensuring safe routes are maintained throughout the building.
- Fire suppression: Delaying the spread of fire and providing means to combat the fire if necessary.

Fire Safety Risk Assessment

If you are responsible for a premises, it is your duty to ensure fire safety within that premises, beginning with a fire safety risk assessment. This assessment follows the same five principles as a standard risk assessment, focusing specifically on fire risk:

1. Identify hazards: Determine who could be harmed by fire-related hazards and how.
2. Assess the risk: Evaluate the likelihood of a fire occurring and the potential severity of injuries. Combining these factors determines the level of risk.
3. Control the risk: Implement measures to control the fire risk to an acceptable level, considering safe evacuation. While complete eradication of the risk may not always be possible, you must reduce it to an acceptable level.
4. Record your findings: Document the assessment.
5. Review your controls: Periodically revisit the risk assessment to ensure its continued relevance.

When identifying hazards, consider the Fire Triangle elements: heat, fuel, and oxygen. Focus on identifying potential heat and fuel sources and when they might come together, whether intentionally or accidentally. Develop appropriate control measures to prevent fires and, in case of a fire, ensure safe detection, warning, and evacuation.

If your premises include grounds sheds, potential heat sources may include recently used machinery (engines/exhausts) or friction tools like grinders and pillar drills. Fuel sources may comprise flammable chemicals, stored items, packaging, waste materials, among others. Inadequate housekeeping often presents fire hazards in various locations.

For a comprehensive guide to Fire Safety Risk Assessment, refer to this resource, and access a Fire Risk Assessment Template here.

Additional Considerations

Fire Detection and Alarm:

While not mandatory, based on your fire risk assessment a suitable fire detection system and effective alarm are highly recommended. In a small single-story premises where you can easily spot fires or smoke, verbally shouting "FIRE" may suffice as an alarm. In a more complex multi-floor premises, a detection and alarm system may be necessary (seek competent advice). Keep in mind that maintenance and regular testing of such systems are essential.

Means of Escape:

Provide safe and suitable means of escape, considering the distance to the ultimate safety point and the number of occupants. Proper signage and lighting, especially during nighttime occupancy, may require emergency lighting. Doors along the escape route should ideally open in the direction of travel, and no door should be locked except for the final exit, which should have a quick-release (push bar or similar) opening system.

Internal Fire Suppression:

Internal fire suppression, such as using fire doors for compartmentation, can provide valuable time for safe evacuation. Fire extinguishers can serve as a form of fire suppression but using them requires training. Modifying a building to address fire risks must adhere to Building Regulations and should involve seeking competent advice.

External Fire Risk:

Assess the likelihood of harm to others, including the potential for fire to spread externally to other buildings. This may occur through roof voids to attached structures or via airborne sparks or flammable materials.

Access:

Ensure easy access for fire services to the building and its grounds should they need to combat a fire. Clear access to fire hydrants and rising fire mains should be maintained, marked clearly, and free of obstructions.

Communication & Training:

Effectively communicate your fire safety strategy to all occupants through signage and notices. Individuals with specific duties related to fire safety should receive suitable and sufficient training.

Storage of Flammable Liquids:

Storing flammable liquids presents a specific hazard. Whether you use petrol/diesel-powered machinery or store other flammable materials, consider the quantities, the results of your fire risk assessment, and the proper storage methods. Large quantities should be stored outside, secured and away from buildings, and sometimes purpose-built or modified structures may be necessary. Smaller quantities (typically in containers no larger than 20 litres) can be stored indoors, provided that they are assessed for risk and controlled measures are in place, including distance from heat sources, avoidance of fire evacuation routes, and adequate storage cabinets. Flammable liquid storage cabinets should have bunds capable of retaining 110% of the largest container's volume.

Summary:

The information provided here serves as guidance. Refer to the linked documents for more detailed information on fire prevention. The complexity of your organisation's buildings will determine the complexity of required controls.

Regardless of the type of building you occupy; the following steps must be taken:

- Conduct a risk assessment and control the risk by implementing measures for fire prevention, detection, alarm, evacuation, suppression, and emergency services contact.
- Document your findings and communicate them to all building occupants.
- Regularly review your fire risk assessment.
- Consider insurance against fire-related losses.

Fire prevention and control is a complex topic, and seeking advice from a competent professional is strongly recommended.