**It doesn't have to be this way….**

**Judge jails two businessmen**

A Mansfield Hotel owner and a Fire Risk Assessor have fallen foul of Fire Safety Laws.

The Hotel owner paid the risk assessor for Fire Risk assessments on two of his hotels. The risk assessment did not come up to scratch and the fire safety in the hotels was dangerous. Employing someone else to carry out the risk assessment did not free the owner from responsibility in the matter. The judge said it was time to send out a message to those who conduct fire risk assessments and to owners who are prepared to put profit before safety.

The owner admitted to:

- An unsuitable and insufficient fire risk assessment
- A lack of suitable fire detection and firefighting equipment
- A lack of emergency lighting
- Escape routes not having fire-resisting and self-closing doors

The owner was ordered to pay £15,000 in costs and jailed for 8 months. The fire risk assessor pleaded guilty to failing to provide a suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment. He was ordered to pay nearly £6,000 in costs and jailed for 8 months.

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**Is the Future nearly here?**

Research indicates that electricity could be used to extinguish fires instead of traditional fire extinguishers – dramatically changing the way fires are put out.

The research, funded by the U.S Departments of Defence and Energy, was presented to a meeting of the American Chemical Society. The phenomenon of electricity affecting fires was observed about 200 years ago but little or no research has been carried out on it.

The study shows that flames can be suppressed quickly. A powerful 600 watt amplifier was connected to a wand-like probe. This device was used to shoot beams of electricity at an open flame. The flame was almost instantly snuffed out! And it worked time and time again. The scientists carrying out the study believe the same effect could be achieved with a power source only one tenth as strong.

It is believed that the soot generated in the flame is the key. The soot particles (made of carbon) easily become charged. As they respond to the electrical field the stability of the flames becomes affected. For example, a large fire underneath a power line can cause arcing between the cable and the ground. The charged soot particles effectively push the flame away from the fuel source and so puts it out.

Such a system would be better suited to fires in enclosed environments such as rooms rather than large fires in the open air. It could allow firefighters to use portable flame-tamer extinguishers, which could be hand-carried or fit into a backpack. The technology could also save water damage.

Further research is required to refine the process and test its effects on the environment, people and machinery. In particular attention will need to be paid to metal implants and heart pacemakers as well as the financial viability of such a project.

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**Did you know…**

Early estimates of how long it should take to evacuate a building were based on a fire at the Empire Palace Theatre in Edinburgh in 1911. When a fire broke out on the stage the organist played the national anthem to keep the theatregoers calm during the evacuation. The safety curtain came down and behind the stage 11 staff died. However, all 3000 of the audience, split over four levels, got out safely and the process took two and a half minutes.
It doesn't have to be this way….

Fallen angels

A company that provided a hostel for asylum seekers has been fined over £11,000 for fire safety breaches. Angel Services (UK) Ltd ran Angel Lodge in Wakefield for up to 180 asylum seekers. These have included Iraqi interpreters issued with death threats after helping UK troops and people fleeing torture in war-torn countries. The offences related to the fire risk assessment and the fire alarm system in the hostel. The offences occurred before March of this year when the hostel closed due to revisions in government funding.

Fines for Nightclub owners

Two nightclub bosses have been fined after breaching fire safety legislation. The first was fined over £4,600 after pleading guilty to seven offences. These included not having a suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment and failing to provide adequate fire safety training for employees. The second was fined £650 after admitting three offences relating to a lack of a suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment.

Are you a Know-It-All?

1) When using a water extinguisher to tackle a fire that is spreading horizontally it is best to:
   a) Aim the hose at the base of the fire, moving the jet across the area of the fire
   b) Aim the hose at the base of the fire, using vertical movements to extinguish the flame
   c) Aim the hose at the top of the fire, moving the jet across the area of the fire
   d) Aim the hose at the top of the fire, using vertical movements to extinguish the flame

2) What components make up the fire triangle
   a) Air, Heat, Chemical reaction
   b) Fuel, Air, Chemical reaction
   c) Heat, Oxygen, Chemical reaction
   d) Fuel, Air, Heat

3) It is recommended that a domestic smoke alarm is tested every?
   a) Day
   b) Week
   c) Month
   d) Year

4) Every year there are how many domestic house fires in the UK?
   a) 50,000
   b) 80,000
   c) 110,000
   d) 140,000

5) A Water Extinguisher complying with British Standards should have a jet of not less than what length?
   a) 4 metres
   b) 5 metres
   c) 6 metres
   d) 7 metres

The answers will appear in next month's edition
But if you can't wait then go to www.westyorkshirefire.gov.uk/quiz

Insurers worried by figures

Association of British Insurers research suggests that "80% of businesses that suffer a major catastrophe fail within 18 months, 69% of SMEs have no contingency plan to cope with serious incidents that could affect their business" and "reports from the fire safety industry provide a disturbing picture of an increasing tendency at large to think that fire safety can be relegated to a lower order of priority, even substantially dispensed with"
It doesn't have to be this way….

Sweet firm awarded £25m for fire

After fire raged through a confectionery plant, liability has fallen on the firm that provided fire protection measures. ADT Fire and Security was found liable for the damage caused to the Trebor Bassett facility in Pontefract in 2005. The claim for £110 million in damages was reduced by over 75% to £25 million. This is because Trebor was also judged to have negligently contributed to the loss by failing to provide adequate fire separation and a sprinkler system.

Suspended prison sentence for building owner

A building owner has been sentenced to a six month suspended prison sentence, 150 hours of community service and more than £13,000 in costs after being convicted of seven offences under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

There were a range of fire safety breaches. These included having no fire alarm or emergency lighting, lack of fire-resistant and self-closing doors, no fire protection for the staircase, no alternative means of escape from the sleeping accommodation and no evidence that a fire risk assessment had been carried out.

Celebrate safely this bonfire night by following our top ten tips

- Site your bonfire away from houses, garages, sheds, fences, overhead cables, trees and shrubs and always away from fireworks.
- Never use flammable liquids - paraffin or petrol - to light the fire.
- Before lighting the fire check that no pets or children are hiding inside it.
- Keep everyone away from the fire - especially children, who must be supervised all the time.
- In case of emergency, keep buckets of water, a garden hose or a fire extinguisher ready.
- Make sure your fireworks conform to British Standard BS7114 and follow the Firework Code.
- Keep fireworks in a closed box and use them one at a time.
- Light the firework at arm's length with a taper and stand well back.
- Never return to a firework once it has been lit.
- Keep pets indoors.

Let's be clear – fireworks are dangerous explosives. They are a traditional part of enjoying celebrations but they cause many hundreds of serious accidents every year.

It is also good practice not to drink alcohol if you're the person setting off the fireworks.

Firework use has become more restricted in recent years. Many people don't know that there are curfews for using fireworks. Private individuals are subject to these curfews but not local authorities for national public celebrations. Fireworks may not be used between 11pm and 7am the next day on normal days. On 5th November and 31st December they must not be used between 12 midnight and 7am the next day. For the first day of the Chinese New Year and Diwali they cannot be used between 1am and 7am. Clearly this law is flouted every year whether deliberately or in ignorance.

It is also an offence to set off a firework in a street or a public place (and has been since the Town Police Clauses Act 1847!).
The 'Dash for Ash'

For some having an open fire is a luxury. For others it is a necessity to lessen heating bills.

However, both can overlook an essential part of the process – the chimney. Do you know how often it should be swept? Can just anyone do it? (not if you don't want to invalidate your insurance if there is a chimney fire).

A blocked or defective chimney can cause both chimney fires and carbon monoxide poisoning. It is vital to have your chimney swept by a professional, qualified sweep.

To minimise the risk of a chimney fire, and not to fall foul of the insurance company, it is advised that they are swept at this frequency:

• Smokeless fuels – at least once a year
• Bituminous coal – at least twice a year
• Wood – quarterly when in use

Furthermore the insurance company will insist that the sweep is a qualified professional. This is such as those certified by the National Association of Chimney Sweeps, The Institute of Chimney Sweeps or the Guild of Master Chimney Sweeps. Each time you will be provided with a certificate to be shown as evidence if needing to make a claim.

Plug-in air freshener warning

A fire in a bungalow was caused by a plug-in air freshener believes the fire brigade.

The fire in London took four fire engines and twenty firefighters to put it out. A spokesperson for London fire brigade advised that people read and follow the instructions for electrical items. In particular, users should make sure that anything that could burn is not placed next to or on top of plug-in air fresheners. When this happens the fresheners may overheat and cause a fire.

The Small Print

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