



INTRODUCTION

This Public Advice Note is designed to explain the concept of staged fire alarms and phased evacuation. A comprehensive fire risk assessment to comply with the duties and provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 must be completed to ensure that the premises are suitable for this type of system. The need for effective staff training in premises where such arrangements exist cannot be over-emphasised.

WHAT IS PHASED EVACUATION?

When the fire alarm sounds it is the usual practice to immediately evacuate all persons from the building as quickly as possible. For this reason, all of the escape routes within and from the building must be wide enough to allow everyone to get out, even if one of the escape routes is blocked by fire.

However, some larger buildings are designed in such a way that the occupants are evacuated in phases (usually two floors at a time). The advantage to the builder, designer and client is that the staircases and exits do not have to be big enough to evacuate the whole of the building at once. The advantage to the occupiers is that an alarm actuation in one part of a large premise will not entail the disruption of a full evacuation.

NECESSARY SAFEGUARDS

Where buildings are designed along these lines, a number of safeguards must be built in.

- The building should be separated into fire resisting compartments, as prescribed by the Building Regulations, so that the spread of smoke is prevented or there is a smoke control system which is designed to control the movement of smoke.
- The building should have a sprinkler system installed in accordance with the LPC Rules.
- There should be a high degree of staff training in the action to be taken in case of the alarm sounding with the provision of floor wardens (who would have specific responsibilities relating to the evacuation of their floors) and a control centre.
- An internal speech communication system, such as a telephone or intercom system, should be provided to permit conversation between a control point at fire service access level, and a fire warden on every storey.
- There should be a suitably staged fire alarm system which complies with the relevant British Standard (at least L3 standard) that has been fully approved by the Fire Authority.

WHAT IS A STAGED FIRE ALARM?

A staged fire alarm alerts the staff and occupants of a building to an alarm of fire in stages. The fire alarm may sound an evacuation signal in one part of a building but only an alert signal to the other parts. After a pre-determined time the evacuation signal may sound throughout the premises or in progressive stages throughout the building.

It is essential that all members of staff understand the meaning of the different alarm sounds, or other signals, and are clear about their specific duties especially those, which involve the evacuation of members of the public from the building.