

THE ROLE OF FIRE WARDENS

The role of a fire warden has become more widely known in the media due to the tragic events at Grenfell Tower. However, what has not been explained is the important role these wardens play in the safety of a building. There is also a lack of education within the industry on what is required under the law to have a fire warden on site.

The role of a fire warden involves both proactive day to day duties and reactive emergency tasks which usually involves the following:

- Checking all fire exits and routes to ensure that they remain free from obstruction and are accessible
 - Ensuring break glass call points have not been tampered with and there is appropriate signage
 - Ensuring the fire alarm or other life safety systems are fully functional and there are no visible faults
 - Undertaking routine exit sign surveys and fire door checks
 - Checking general house-keeping is in good order i.e. controlled waste and appropriate storage of flammable liquids
 - Undertaking external security patrols, taking note of any items that have been left on balconies and may be a hazard
 - Carrying out routine patrols of each floor, checking for any signs of smoke, fire or heat
 - Raising the alarm in the event of an incident and calling the emergency services
 - Prioritising evacuation of the building, directing everyone to safe available exit routes
 - Assisting vulnerable people
 - Guiding individuals to the assembly area
 - Taking part in the roll call at the assembly point
 - Reporting to the fire service on their arrival
- When agents deem there is a requirement for fire wardens, frequently the first question



How important is it to have a fire warden in your block, asks Azeem Rashid

asked by clients is whether there is a legal requirement for them. Whilst it is often the case that the requirement emanates from guidance given under The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, it should be noted there is a legal duty to ensure there is a strategy in place to evacuate all occupants within a building safely, which is based upon a risk-based approach to fire safety.

As such where fire wardens are deemed a requirement, the importance of having trained personnel who are familiar with the building is critical to ensuring owners can meet their health and safety obligations in relation to emergency plans and procedures.

As the role of the fire warden extends beyond a concierge, officers on duty need to be trained effectively in the following:

1. Basic Fire Awareness Training, i.e., the principles and classification of fires
2. Basic Health and Safety Training
3. Fire Evacuation Training
4. Roll Call Procedures
5. Site Specific Instructions
6. Full Job Responsibility
7. Emergency Procedures
8. Incident Handling and Report Writing

Those who are supervisors should receive additional training on customer liaison and officer performance. (As this is a licensable activity under the Private Security Act 2001, it should be noted it is not deemed appropriate for Stewards to undertake this role.)

Once the requirement for fire wardens has been confirmed, the next question tends to be how many wardens are required. This is largely dependent on the size and make-up of the building, along with what other life safety systems have been installed, i.e. sprinklers and fire alarms, along with staffing levels. Each building should be accessed based upon a thorough fire risk assessment, reviewed in conjunction with the local fire brigade to determine how many fire wardens should be appointed.

In order to ensure the fire wardens employed fulfil their role, it is recommended for regular meetings to be held with the service provider to discuss performance and their senior personnel routinely visit the site to ensure staff are not becoming complacent.

Should you have any specific questions about the provision of Fire Wardens, please do not hesitate to get in contact with us on 0203 620 0770 or at info@prosenstry.co.uk.

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