



## A MESSAGE FROM THE MANAGING DIRECTOR

### Overview of Building Fire Safety

An AESI client who owns a number of shops and factories recently asked me what exactly is meant by “fire safety” and this question although complex is best answered as follows.

Building Fire Safety comprises a “total package” which incorporates systems covering management practice and organised human response, both tailored to reduce the impact of fire upon the occupants, the building and its contents, the attending firefighters and any neighbouring property. In the context of Building Fire Safety, fire impact is considered to be any threat to life and property caused by heat or smoke.

Building Fire Safety relies upon a group of “sub systems” to form a complete “package”. More often than not, if one of the “sub systems” is removed, the whole package will collapse. For simplicity, the “package” can be broken down into eight principle “sub systems”, comprising:

- Occupant training and education
- Means of escape from the building
- Fire ignition potential
- Building fire load (combustible material)
- Firefighting (extinguisher) systems
- Fire detection, alarm and communication systems
- Smoke management systems
- Fire brigade response

The above broadly defines a total fire safety package; if you require further advice or assistance on any aspects that would help your commercial property to be fire safe, please, don't hesitate to contact me.

I trust you enjoy our Winter issue of Landlord News.

**David Hassett MD AESI**

*“The Building Act of 2006 and the Building Regulations part 12 stipulate that the owner of a commercial building is responsible for ensuring the maintenance and upkeep of the Essential Safety Measures that form part of the property.”*

## WINTER SAFETY TIP



**This winter make smoke alarms a necessity, not an option!**

Invest in smoke detectors for every workplace or office.

Install dual sensor smoke alarms; make sure they contain both ionization and photoelectric smoke sensors.

Test your smoke detectors (and sprinkler system) once a month.

Replace batteries at least once a year (possible exception: non-replaceable 10-year lithium batteries; still, be sure to test them); many manufacturers also encourage a replacement of the smoke detectors after a decade.

## 5 FRIGHTENING STATISTICS OF FIRE SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE

- 1 Less than 50% of building occupants feel confident of knowing what action to take and where to evacuate during an emergency.
- 2 Less than 50% of building occupants feel confident in how to operate a fire extinguisher.
- 3 Less than 25% of people randomly tested can locate their nearest fire extinguisher from memory without searching the building.
- 4 Over 50% of the people use an incorrect fire extinguisher and/or operate it incorrectly or dangerously (i.e. not sweeping across the fire, not continuing to spray after the fire is out and not aiming at the base of a fire or using an incorrect fire extinguisher).



**...and the most frightening statistic of all...**

- 5 Only 13% of people are aware that different types of fire extinguishers must be used on different classes of fire and of the very dangerous effects of using the incorrect fire extinguisher on specific classes of fire. (Based on recent research by Fire & Safety Australia).

## OMG...WHAT NOW?

### Two things Landlords must do after a fire

**1 Gas, electricity, water and telephone** – As a result of a fire emergency, your gas, electricity, water supply or telephone lines may have been damaged, destroyed by the fire brigade or the provider of these services. It is the property owner's responsibility to have the services inspected and repaired by a qualified trade person and reconnected by the provider.

**2 Property Security** – After Emergency Services have finished their work the property will be handed back to you and it's the owners responsibility to secure the property. This may mean protection from further damage by weather, theft and vandalism. You may need to engage a provider of shutters and or temporary fencing to secure the damaged part of the building. Your insurance company may be able to help with property security. If you have a rental property you should inform the Managing Real Estate Agent of your involvement.



## DO YOU KNOW?

### What is fire?

Fire is a chemical reaction in which oxygen is combined with a gaseous or vaporous fuel. Note that, even if the fuel is a solid (eg wood) or a liquid (eg. petrol) it is the vapours given off when the fuel is heated that burn. This rapid oxidation produces heat and light (flames). Fire can usually take place only when these three elements are present: (commonly called the 'Fire Triangle');

**1 Oxygen** (21% of the air we breathe)

#### 2 Fuel

- Solid combustibles; paper, furniture, clothing and plastics.
- Flammable liquids; petrol, oils, kerosene, paints, solvents and cooking oils/fats.
- Flammable gases; natural gas, LPG, acetylene.

**3 Heat** (energy) A heat source is required to produce ignition. (Ignition sources include heating and cooking appliances, cigarettes, matches, faulty electrical equipment and friction.)

## LANDLORDS: PEACE OF MIND

**Insurance is the most important single aspect of recovering from fire loss.**

- One of your first obligations is to immediately notify your insurance company or broker. Advise the claims manager of the nature of the incident, the loss or damage, and provide them with a name, address and telephone number. The insurance company may refuse to pay losses that occur after the fire incident so make a list of damaged property, detailing the quantity, description, original purchase price, purchase date, damage estimate and replacement cost.
- It is important to coordinate with the insurance adjuster or loss assessor before contracting for any cleaning or repair services or you may be left with bills to pay that otherwise would have been covered by insurance. The sooner your insurer or broker is notified; the sooner the insurance claim can be processed.

### In summary:

- Ask your insurer for advice on actions you should take.
- Do not throw away damaged items without first consulting your insurance company.
- Make a list of items that have been damaged and take photographs if possible.
- Keep receipts for any emergency service or repair work.
- Check with your insurance company to see if your policy covers emergency accommodation.



### AUSTRALIAN ESSENTIAL SAFETY INSPECTIONS

Suite 13, 118 Church St, Hawthorn VIC 3122

Phone: 9815 2085 Fax: 9815 1842

Email: [office@aesi.com.au](mailto:office@aesi.com.au)

Website: [www.aesi.com.au](http://www.aesi.com.au)

### NEED MORE INFORMATION?

Please locate us on [www.AESI.com.au](http://www.AESI.com.au)

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