

Keep Your Business in Business

We have produced a guide, 'Keep Your Business in Business', which aims to reduce the risk of fire, particularly caused by arson. The guide provides a free one-stop information point for all businesses, including practical tips and advice.

'Keep Your Business in Business' also offers simple and practical information on current fire prevention laws. It is available in sections, which are freely downloadable from the West Midlands Arson Task Force website:

www.wmarsontaskforce.gov.uk/kybib

West Midlands Fire Service vision is to make the West Midlands safer. Not only can we give you advice on fire prevention and fire safety management, we can also put you in touch with specialists who can advise you on how to deter arson.

Should you need any further advice on any of these areas, please contact your local Fire Service on the number below, or through www.wmfs.net

The Business Education Safety Team (BEST)

West Midlands Fire Service is dedicated to providing the business community with quality training and information.

With a full-time team of dedicated experts within their field, the BEST team work on a not for profit basis to provide support and understanding in a broad range of topic areas. With many years experience of delivering training to blue chip commercial companies, we are well placed to give you the advice and training to stay on the right side of the law and to know what action to take to prevent or at least minimise the effects of any accident.

Courses are tailored to the exact requirements of the customer which means that any particular area of concern can be addressed and any sector specific needs can be catered for.

Training can be held at our state of the art training centre in the heart of the Midlands or, if preferred, on your site (some size restrictions may apply to accommodate practical demonstrations)

Some typical courses include Fire Marshal, First Aid, Practical Fire Risk Assessment and Managing Fire Safety.

For further information please contact:

Clive Williams
Business Educational Safety Team Manager
West Midlands Fire Service Academy

Email: best@wmfs.net
Telephone: **0121 380 7380**

Our vision

West Midlands Fire Service's vision is to make the West Midlands Safer. We recognise that prevention is better than cure. That's why we think giving you advice on fire prevention and fire safety management and putting you in touch with specialist advice on how to deter arson is important.

Should you need any further advice on any of these areas please contact your local Fire Service on the number below, or through www.wmfs.net

Your local Fire Safety Centre:-

Wolverhampton	0121 380 7562
Oldbury	0121 380 7954
Birmingham	0121 753 1313
Solihull	0121 380 6383
Coventry	02476 220356



Tips to stop your recycling business going up in smoke

Recycling is a growing industry in the UK. It's something we're all being asked to do more of, and the demands to be 'green' are only going to keep on growing.

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE SERVICE

It's an unfortunate irony, however, that recycling centres are prone to fires – causing immense damage to the environment, threatening life and wasting money. Most of these are entirely preventable.

This guide is about helping you to prevent fires in the recycling industry. West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) wants to save life and help you keep your business in business. We want to help create a safer, greener and fairer environment for both residents and businesses.

Fire in Recycling Centres

During the last 2 years (2008 and 2009) WMFS has attended over 50 fires at recycling or re-processing sites.

While these fires may not always be life threatening, recycling site fires do have a massive impact on the community as a whole. The fire service uses a huge amount of resources to deal with any incident at recycling centres, with, on average, up to 7 fire engines attending the scene. This results in a reduced service to the rest of the community and a drain on public money.

The Cost of Fire

Fire has a devastating effect on businesses and the local community. In fact the cost of fire in the UK in 2007 was £1.3 billion, that's £3.4 million every day!* Fire does not just cost money, it causes deaths and injuries and it has a wider effect on society and the economy – it disrupts people's lives.

The insured cost of fires has increased substantially in recent years while the number of fires in business premises has been falling. This means that fires are becoming less common. But when they do occur, they are more devastating. The average commercial fire claim in 2008 was £20,530(a). Approximately 2/3 of businesses will not recover after a serious fire.

Financial pressures on businesses and increasing unemployment can put a business further at risk from fire – so we want to work with you and support you to help you avoid becoming a victim.

*According to the Association of British Insurers –
Tackling Fire: A Call for Action

The Effect of Fire on your Business

Should you have a fire in your premises it may cause:

- A loss of business during closedown
- Loss of regular customers to competitors
- Loss of employment
- Loss of documents such as records, invoices and plans
- Difficulty in obtaining replacement stock or equipment

Case Study 1 – Fire in a battery recycling plant

We responded to a fire in a recycling company, where batteries were reprocessed. The fire was started accidentally, by an electrical short circuit.

It spread to involve the whole building, destroying over 150 tonnes of batteries and causing the release of large quantities of hazardous materials and atmospheric pollution, together with asbestos from the roof, which was wrecked by fire.

Two firefighters were injured by exploding batteries while they were trying to extinguish the blaze, and the fire service had to pump water from local canals on to the fire to put it out.

Case Study 2 – Pallet recycling business

Over 70 firefighters attended a fire involving pallets and recycled timber in storage. The fire destroyed much of the stock and damaged expensive machinery, as well as closing the business while repairs were made.

Water had to be pumped from some distance away and local water-courses were polluted by firefighting water.

An investigation was carried out by the Fire Service and the Police. The immediate loss from a fire like this is around £35,000, but that does not include the cost of lost trade, damage to your reputation, the cost of environmental clean-up and the cost of any prosecutions that may follow.

How can we help?

WMFS wants to provide you with support and guidance to prevent fires from occurring. We are here to answer your questions and work with you to keep your business in business.

Below are some simple steps that you must take to try and prevent a fire on your premises and to reduce the consequences should a fire occur.

1. Carry out a full fire risk assessment of your site(s)
2. Make a disaster recovery plan and plan your fire evacuation routes
3. Keep a record of all fire-related incidents to assist with future risk assessments
4. Train your staff in fire safety procedures
5. Maintenance – Many fires are started by overheating machinery or electrical faults. You should make sure plant and machinery are maintained, to prevent faults from starting a fire. Don't forget to check fire alarms and extinguishers on a regular basis and keep records.
6. Stack Separation – If you store goods in stacks, be sure to separate each of the stacks. This will provide a fire break and prevent a fire spreading through the site.
7. Ensure all fire/burglar alarms and systems are maintained
8. Security mark all property in buildings
9. Keep potential arson targets at least eight metres from your building – That means anything like rubbish skips, bushes, pallets and wheelie bins.
10. Keep your site secure at night – check windows, doors and perimeter fencing regularly.