

Strategic Fire Safety Audit



1. Introduction

- 1.1 It is well known that organisations can maintain and improve their ability to manage risks by learning from experience through the use of audits and performance reviews. Auditing enables an organisation to reinforce, maintain and develop its ability to reduce risks as far as possible and to ensure the continued effectiveness of their arrangements for managing fire safety.
- 1.2 Quantum Compliance has developed a structured auditing process designed to independently and accurately collect information on the efficiency, effectiveness and reliability of an organisation's current fire safety management arrangements.
- 1.3 The Strategic Fire Safety Audit from Quantum Compliance aims to establish that:
- appropriate fire safety management arrangements are in place;
 - adequate fire risk control systems exist; and
 - appropriate fire safety workplace precautions are in place.

2. Quantum Compliance's Approach

- 2.1 Our approach is quite simply to:
- Deliver services to the very highest levels of professional integrity and competence.
 - Apply intelligence to the work in hand - we believe that risk management information needs to be put into meaningful context.
- 2.2 Our approach centres on our belief that effective communication needs to be maintained between ourselves and managers/employees at all stages of the fire safety audit process. This ensures the audit is not merely perceived as a fault-finding activity, but as a valuable contribution to improving the arrangements for managing fire safety within an organisation. Therefore, the audit approach recognises positive achievements as well as areas requiring improvement.
- 2.3 The methodology for undertaking the Strategic Fire Safety Audit is described by the following key stages:

Key Stage 1 – Understanding the organisation and discussing and agreeing objectives and scope of the audit

At the beginning of the process Quantum Compliance would:

- Understand the organisation in terms of what it does, how it is structured and organised and how it is managed.
- Agree the objectives and scope of the audit in terms of the key people to be interviewed, and the number of sites/activities to be included.
- Establish timelines for delivering the various stages of the process.
- Determine the format of the audit report and the way in which its findings would be communicated to the organisation's managers/directors.

Key Stage 2 – Collecting Information

The method of collecting fire safety information would be determined as part of the scoping exercise described in key stage 1. Furthermore, the scoping exercise would also help determine how much sampling needs to be done to reach reliable conclusions.

The nature and complexity of the audit would vary according to the:

- objectives and scope;
- the size, sophistication and complexity of the organisation; and
- the maturity of the existing fire safety arrangements.

Information would be collected via three main sources:

- Interviewing individuals – to gain information about the operation of the fire safety management arrangements.
- Examining documents – assessing records, performance standards, procedures and instructions for completeness, accuracy and reliability.
- Visual observation – of physical conditions and standards to examine compliance with legal requirements and relevant guidance and verify implementation and effectiveness of fire safety precautions.

Key Stage 3 – Making Judgements

The adequacy of the fire safety arrangements would be judged against legal standards, relevant guidance and applicable industry standards. In particular, judgements will be made against BS 9999:2017 - Fire safety in the design, management and use of buildings – Code of practice.

The areas of fire safety management that would be covered by the audit would include:

1. **Risk profiling** – determining occupancy characteristics, fire growth rates and creating risk profiles.
2. **Ensuring effective fire protection** – through the design, construction and maintenance stages.
3. **Designing for the management of fire risk** – implementing fire risk management strategies.
4. **Designing means of escape** – evacuation strategies, horizontal and vertical means of escape.
5. **Access and facilities for fire fighters** – firefighters lifts, vehicle access, water supplies, communication systems, heat and smoke control.
6. **Designing the building structure** – fire resistance, compartmentation, openings, materials and finishes, external fire spread and building separation, engineering services.
7. **Special risk protection.**
8. **Managing occupied buildings** – fire prevention, maintenance, planning, emergency actions, evacuating disabled people.

3. Report Format

- 3.1 The specific format of the Strategic Fire Safety Audit report would be bespoke to the client, however, it would include the following:
- Introduction – covering the scope and objectives of the audit.
 - Executive Summary – including a summary of the key findings and conclusions.
 - Audit Findings – containing the qualitative positive as well as negative findings.
 - Action Plan – a prioritised plan detailing any recommended improvements.
- 3.2 With specific reference to the action plan, recommendations would be prioritised on the likelihood of enforcement action being taken. Note: in relation to the audit findings and action plan items, these would be backed up with actual practical examples to provide illustrations to managers why these observations are being made.
- 3.3 The Strategic Fire Safety Audit report would be initially presented in draft format to ensure that in the client's opinion, the scope and objectives have been strictly adhered to, as well as ensuring the style etc is acceptable. Once comments have been received from the client, the final version would be issued.



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