

# Fire Safety Advice: Energy Plant Operators



Processing of energy and the development of major services in the energy and utilities industries presents significant fire and safety risks. Inadequate or improper fire protection in this highly specialised sector can expose workers and the community to extreme dangers, lead to potential loss of life and property and also result in reduced production and a possible environmental impact.

Fire protection for these specialised industries requires detailed assessments, plans and execution. Wormald offers the following advice to operations managers for keeping their sites fire safe:

## 1. Conduct a thorough risk assessment to highlight potential fire risks and help determine what fire protection solution is required.

- In power generating industries, there are many fire risk areas including fuel, lubrication, hydraulic and transformer oils, natural gas, cable tunnels, cable flats, boiler firing points and coal pulverising plants. Each risk area may require its own specialised fire protection solution.
- Consulting a fire protection specialist can help to ensure all hazards are identified and the most appropriate fire protection solution is installed.

## 2. Understand compliance and regulation requirements.

A breach of fire safety regulation can incur significant costs and put staff at risk, so it is important for site supervisors to understand and comply with regulation requirements. Fire protection is covered by health and safety standards and legislation, which are governed by states and territories.

## 3. Install adequate fire protection equipment.

This may include fire sprinkler systems, water spray deluge systems, water mist systems, gaseous fire suppression systems and portable fire equipment.

- When deciding on the most suitable fire protection solution, considerations include legislation and standards, if any existing fire protection systems are in place and the impact a new system can have on critical plant and equipment.

## 4. Audit, inspect and maintain fire protection equipment.

A high level of reliability is essential when it comes to fire protection. Fire protection systems and equipment should always perform to the standard to which they were originally designed and installed.

- Regular testing can validate the functionality of the systems and equipment and help uncover any faults or issues that may cause malfunction.
- *Australian Standard AS1851-2012 - Routine service of fire protection systems and equipment* recommends that fire protection systems be regularly inspected.

## 5. Provide appropriate signage for all hazards, fire protection equipment and emergency exits.

- Fire extinguishers and other fire safety equipment should be clearly marked.
- Emergency exits signs should be visible so that in the event of an evacuation, people can be directed to escape quickly.

## 6. Train.

A confident team that is able to respond appropriately in the event of a fire is an invaluable investment and can substantially reduce the impact of a crisis.

- Everyone working within a facility or site should know how to respond to a fire emergency and how to use the fire equipment onsite.
- Fire safety training can be included in staff induction where new employees are briefed and trained on what to do in the event of a fire.
- Fire wardens should be fully trained on their responsibilities, fire equipment and the emergency warning and communication systems in their premises.



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