

Fire Safety Advice: Warehousing and Logistics



Fire can have a devastating effect on a business and poses a serious risk to the safety and welfare of building occupants. Fire can cause expensive damage to property and equipment and destroy important data. This may result in lengthy and expensive downtime while repairs and rebuilding take place.

To help warehouse and facility managers protect against fire, Wormald offers the following advice:

1. Conduct a fire safety audit to highlight potential fire risks around the facility. This will help to determine the fire protection solution required.

- Hazards will vary depending on the facility but can include electrical equipment, flammable liquids, combustible waste material or heavy vehicles and machinery.
- Consulting a fire protection specialist can help to ensure all hazards are identified and the most appropriate fire protection solution is installed.

2. Keep up to date with regulation and legislation.

Warehouse and facility managers must know their responsibilities when it comes to ethical and legal fire safety requirements, Australian legislation and standards relating to fire safety change regularly so it's important to stay on top of things.

- Keep up to date on all national and state-based fire safety regulations and standards in relation to fire protection equipment, maintenance or training. It's a good idea to contact fire protection specialist.
- Develop a fire prevention plan in accordance with *Australian Standard AS 3745 - 2010 - Planning for emergencies in facilities*.

3. Install adequate fire protection equipment.

Fire protection equipment may include basic fire extinguishers or fire hose reels, passive fire solutions such as fire doors or more advanced fire detection and suppression systems. When deciding on the most suitable fire protection solution, considerations include:

- legislation and standards
- size and type of building
- materials being handled on the premises

Check whether trucks, forklifts and other mobile plant and machine on site require specialised vehicle fire suppression systems.

4. Service and maintain.

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 AS 1851-2012 - Routine service of fire protection systems and equipment* recommends 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, all building occupants, including less mobile residents, 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.

- Warehouse staff 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. This includes temporary and casual warehouse staff, who should be briefed on emergency response procedures.
- Maintain an accurate entry system to track staff moving and out of the warehouse. In the event of a fire, this can help in conducting an emergency evacuation head count.
- Fire wardens should be fully trained on their responsibilities, fire equipment and the emergency warning and communication systems in their premises.