

Client Briefing Note

National, Fire Brigade Union Strike Action

1. Background

The Fire Brigades Union have announced that a further series of strikes will take place at the following times:

- **Thursday 12th June starting at 09:00hrs and ending Friday 13th June at 09:00hrs.**
- **Saturday 21 June starting at 10:00hrs, for seven hours ending at 17:00hrs**

The London Fire Brigade have a contingency plan in place for these strikes called "CapitalGuard". This is a contracted arrangement, which provides 27 fire engines (16% of the normal LFB capacity) working across the London Boroughs. Because of this reduced capacity, there will be lesser initial attendance at fires and the Fire Brigade will take longer to arrive. Similar arrangements are in place in other Fire Authorities with similar reduced capacity.

2. Implications for Clients

The following issues will arise if a fire occurs during any of the strike days:

- a. The Fire Brigade will only respond to a 999 call reporting an actual fire;
- b. Actual Fire Brigade attendance time will be longer than normal;
- c. The first response will be limited to one fire engine;
- d. The fire fighting auxiliaries can fight fires from outside the premises but will not enter.

For the above reasons it is vital that the risk of fire is reduced as far as possible, staff are aware of the need to ensure a 999 call is made giving accurate information of an actual fire and that portable fire equipment is used promptly on any small fire, by trained staff, to contain any small incident promptly.

3. Necessary Action at Premises

a. Minimising Fire Risk

Every attempt should be made to reduce fire risk to an absolute minimum during the period of any strike and to enhance staff vigilance. The following actions should be taken and all staff briefed accordingly:

- i. Each area not in use at the end of the working day should be checked and all unnecessary electrical equipment switched off and unplugged and combustibles kept well clear of electrical equipment which has to be left on.
- ii. Good housekeeping and removal of combustibles should be reinforced (including external storage at risk from arson).

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- iii. Contracting and maintenance work involving hot work, such as welding or open flames, should not take place during the strike days.
- iv. A review should be undertaken of external areas where people may smoke to ensure that adequate ashtrays are in position and the area is free from combustibles.

b. Fire Containment

- i. Fire doors (except on automatic releases) must be kept closed and a rigorous prohibition of any wedging or obstructing of fire doors enforced.
- ii. For areas of a building which is not in use (ie unoccupied areas during the night time hours) automatic fire door releases must be operated and fire doors firmly closed.
- iii. Staff in kitchen areas should be reminded of the operation of emergency gas shut-offs and the method of operating fixed fire suppression systems.

c. Action in the event of fire

- i. Local fire procedures for calling the Fire Brigade should be changed, so that in the event of a fire alarm activation during the period of the strike, a prompt investigation should be initiated (whilst normal evacuation procedures are taking place) and the Fire Brigade called by 999 as soon as any fire or evidence of fire (smoke etc) is identified. **The call to the Brigade must make it absolutely clear that there is a confirmed fire.**
- ii. Fire controllers, reception staff and fire teams should be fully briefed of the revised procedures.
- iii. Staff who have been trained in the use of extinguishers should be reminded of the key points of their use and suitability for respective fires and the importance, if it is safe to do so, of tackling small fires using the portable equipment provided.

d. Lifts

Procedures for dealing with persons trapped in lifts should be reviewed to ensure that reliance is not placed on the fire brigade during strike periods and arrangements for contact with, and emergency attendance by, lift service companies confirmed.

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4. Conclusions

Fires in Client premises are rare, but do occur from time to time. Taking the above action will minimise risks during this period of Fire Brigade action.

5. Further Advice

Advice on specific fire safety issues can be obtained from Quadriga Health & Safety Ltd, the Company's retained advisers using the normal contact arrangements.