Fire Risk Assessor Certification

IFC Certification Ltd. (IFCC), a member of the internationally renowned IFC Group, provides independent third party certification of companies undertaking fire risk assessments.

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order requires that fire risk assessments (FRA) should be "suitable and sufficient" but gives little guidance on the competence needed to attain that standard. There have been incidents in which shortcomings in fire risk assessments have led to fines and imprisonment.

Concerns with FRA include:

- Clients knowing that fire risk assessors are competent

- Companies whose staff carry out fire risk assessments demonstrating in court that their staff are competent

The fire industry established a national 'Fire Risk Assessment Competency Council' which published guidance on competency requirements and how a Responsible Person can select a fire risk assessor. IFC Group are founder members.

The Competency Council advises that companies that carry out Fire Risk Assessments should be:

- Members of a 3rd party certification scheme run by a UKAS accredited body

- Competence assessed based on the Fire Risk Assessment Competency Council criteria

Benefits of IFCC 0099 Fire Risk Assessor Scheme

- Senior managers within a client or internal organisation can be confident that they have taken appropriate measures to ensure the competence of staff carrying out fire risk assessments

- Professional fire risk assessment companies can also gain market advantage. Tender lists are increasingly requiring membership of third party certification schemes run by UKAS accredited bodies

- Professional fire risk assessment companies will be listed on IFCC's website register which is publicly available. Companies may gain additional work through website references

Key aspects of scheme

The IFCC 0099 scheme incorporates the competence council criteria. It is open to companies, organisations, partnerships and sole traders. The scheme is available to organisations that carry out fire risk assessments as a professional service and also for organisations that carry out fire risk assessments within their own premises (e.g. facilities management companies or organisations that own a number of sites).

The scheme checks the competence of the individuals within the organisation who carry out fire risk assessments. It also checks that the organisation has appropriate management systems and documentation control processes in place.

One key and unique aspect of the IFCC 0099 scheme is that it introduces the concept of Risk Category levels. Not all buildings present the same level of fire risk. For example, the skills, knowledge and experience needed to carry out a fire risk assessment of a corner shop are different from those needed to assess a large hospital.

The IFCC scheme includes three Risk Category levels and each fire risk assessor within the relevant organisation will be approved to a specific level, appropriate to their experience, skill, knowledge and training.

The key benefits of this approach are:

a) It helps with staff progression, with junior staff meeting the Category 1 stage graduating to Category 2 or 3 after gaining experience

b) If someone fails the Category 2 criteria, they may pass the Category 1 criteria and so can gain initial accreditation, which can then be upgraded when they have had additional training or experience

c) If a particular organisation only carries out fire risk assessments within a specific range of building types, they need only ensure that their fire risk assessors have the appropriate level of skills and experience for those types of buildings

... confidence in fire safety

Outline of the IFCC 0099 scheme categories:

Risk Category 1 is for buildings where the fire risk assessment is relatively simple. This would normally include buildings of modest size where the design complies with conventional fire safety design standards, there are no high fire risk materials present and where the evacuation would be expected to be completed quickly.

Risk Category 2 is intended for buildings which are larger, where the evacuation would take longer or be more complex with more reliance on fire safety precautions such as fire rated walls, fire doors, sprinklers and fire alarm systems. This would typically include hotels, hospitals, care homes, tall office buildings and similar.

Risk Category 3 is intended for buildings with an unusual or specialist set of risks or an occupancy that requires particular skills. This would include petrochemical, nuclear and complex industrial installations. It would also include buildings which contain quantities of highly flammable or explosive materials, buildings that are significantly non-compliant to current fire standards (many historic buildings come under that criteria) or where extensive fire engineering analyses have been used to justify the design.

More details on the types of buildings within each risk category are included on the IFCC web site.

The Certification Process

Certification is conducted in three parts: review of FRAs; competence evaluation of the individual fire risk assessors; an audit of the company management system.

The assessment of the competence of the individual fire risk assessors involves a review of previous fire risk assessments, an exam and either a case study (Cat 1), or a witnessed site assessment (Cat 2 / 3). Processes are streamlined to minimise the time and cost required for the assessment to fit in with individual company requirements.

What does it cost?

Costs are competitive but do vary. Contact IFCC and we will be happy to provide a quotation.

How do I apply?

To apply for scheme membership please go to:

http://www.ifccertification.com/clients/application.htm

For further details of all our schemes and other certification services or to discuss your individual requirements please contact:

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11.02.2014