

Fire Brigade Strike

Understanding the Risk

During periods of reduced fire brigade coverage due to industrial action, the response to an emergency call will be severely delayed or limited. Contingency plans during industrial action will be invoked by the relevant authorities, but this will normally be limited due to reduced resources so there may not be fire appliances available for non-life threatening or non-urgent incidents.

Insurance cover for valid claims will remain in force during the period of the industrial action but in view of the additional risk at this time, policyholders should take additional precautions to prevent fires.

Controlling the Hazard

The following precautions are suggested to minimise the risk to your organisation:

- Any work that will involve the impairment of the automatic sprinkler installations or automatic fire detection systems should be re-scheduled, no planned system impairments should be permitted during any industrial action.
- Automatic fire protection and detection installation maintenance routines should if possible be brought forward to ensure that all systems are in perfect working order at the start of the industrial action.
- During the weekly testing of any automatic sprinkler equipment additional vigilance should be given to ensure that all main stop valves are open.

- All manual fire extinguishers and hose reels are accessible and in good working order.
- Re-schedule any maintenance work that may involve hot work (cutting, grinding, welding, burning, brazing, re-roofing with bitumen) so that no operations take place or if in an emergency are minimised during the period of industrial action.
- Increase the frequency of fire safety inspections and security rounds particularly if industrial action takes place over the bonfire period with external checks for stray fireworks to ensure any yard storage of idle wood pallets is covered.
- Urge greater vigilance on the part of all employees and ensure that they are aware of all actions to be taken in the event of an emergency.
- The fire service should be summoned as normal but be prepared for a delayed and/or limited response. Where automatic fire alarms and sprinkler systems are monitored by an alarm receiving centre, procedures during industrial action should be confirmed as emergency attendance may not result from these systems.
- Conduct additional fire emergency drills to ensure that emergency response is as intended.
- If smoking is permitted on site in yards the situation should be reviewed, and a total ban considered during the course of the industrial action.

For further information, contact your local AIG risk engineer.

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