

The 5 frightening statistics of fire safety in the workplace

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The 5 frightening statistics of fire safety in the workplace

1. **Less than 50% of building occupants feel confident of knowing what action to take and where to evacuate to during an emergency**
2. **Less than 50% of building occupants feel confident in how to operate a fire extinguisher**
3. **Less than 25% of people when randomly tested can locate their nearest fire extinguisher from memory without searching the building**
4. **Over 50% of the people who operate a fire extinguisher do so incorrectly or dangerously (i.e. not using the correct extinguisher, not sweeping across the fire, not continuing to spray after the fire is out and not aiming at the base of a fire or using the incorrect fire extinguisher)**

....AND THE MOST FRIGHTENING STATISTIC OF ALL...

5. **Only 13% of people are aware that different types of fire extinguishers must be used on different classes of fire and of the very dangerous effects of using the incorrect fire extinguisher on specific classes of fire**

After reviewing various fire safety research papers and conducting some of our own research to test the accuracy of these findings, the statistics above paint an alarming picture of the state of emergency preparedness and readiness within Australian workplaces.

Our research found that workplaces are underprepared for emergencies that may occur on-site and employees are not confident in the procedures to follow during an emergency situation or how to use fire extinguishers.

How can workplace fire safety training benefit your organization? What is the impact?

Both Australian and international fire statistics show that:

95% of all fires are found to be extinguishable if the correct fire extinguisher is applied promptly. Fire extinguishers are located throughout Australian workplaces as part of their compliance with Australian Standard AS1851 and the Building Code of Australia (BCA), however the majority of people are fearful of fire extinguishers or do not understand how to operate a fire extinguisher in an emergency.

Fire extinguishers are quick and easy to use if personnel are provided with a basic level of fire extinguisher training so that they can identify the class of the fire that is burning, identify the appropriate fire extinguisher to use and effectively operate the fire extinguisher in a range of circumstances.

Our research found that:

- Fire safety training increases the knowledge and emergency response actions of building occupants when confronted with a fire or emergency situation.
- By conducting annual evacuation exercises (as is a mandatory requirement under AS3745-2010), building occupants will obtain more confidence in following emergency procedures for their workplace and they will better understand what emergency actions to take for themselves and their workplace colleagues.
- By conducting regular fire safety training, building occupants improve their knowledge about the location and operation of site firefighting and emergency equipment.
- After attending a basic fire extinguisher training session (where each participant operated a fire extinguisher on a real fire) over 90% of people operated the fire extinguisher correctly on their second attempt and they were 33% more effective in extinguishing the fire (they selected the correct fire extinguisher, they cooled the area after the fire was out and they aimed at the base of the fire).

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By providing your staff with basic fire safety training you will increase the knowledge of fire safety within your workplace and grow the confidence and competence of your staff in responding to an emergency and you are encouraging your staff to extinguish small workplace fires before they grow large and potentially interrupt your business operations.

Summary:

This paper is an educational tool to give you the knowledge and skills to decide on the most appropriate emergency response training requirements for your workplace. I hope you read this document and this helps you in making an informed decision for the betterment of safety in your workplace. We wish you the very best with your workplace fire safety and we hope that this tool helps you to understand some of the research from within this field.

Steve McLeod

CEO

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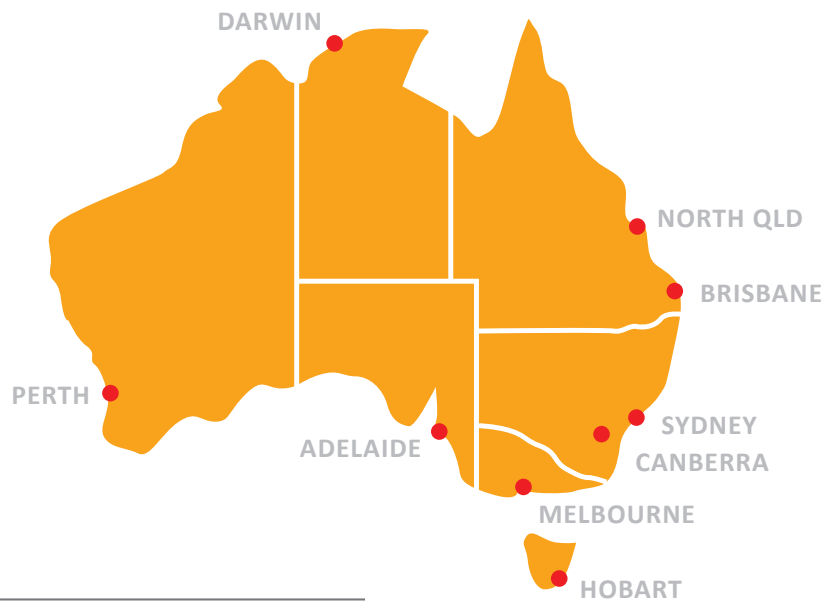
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Research Sources:

- Australian journal of emergency management 2006 Article 'Fire safety training: it's importance in enhancing fire safety knowledge and response to a fire'
- Eastern Kentucky University Study 2012, 'Ordinary people and effective use of fire extinguishers'
- 2012 University Study - Fire drill: Intentional blindness and amnesia for the location of fire extinguishers, by Alan D. Castel & Michael Vendetti & Keith J. Holyoak
- Fire and Safety Australia client and public research 2012-2013

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