

# Enhanced Precautions during a Fire System Impairment

## Technical Bulletin

October 2012

### Property

### Risk Management

**Following a recent serious fire protection impairment at a large industrial park lasting several weeks, this Technical Bulletin is being issued as a reminder of the essential precautions that should be taken during the impairment period.**

There is an increased potential for large scale loss during an impairment to fire protection and/or fire detection systems because a fire is much less likely to be detected and contained with these systems out of service. Preventive measures should be enhanced beyond those normally in place to reduce the chances of a fire occurring in the first place, to increase the ability to detect a fire and to respond effectively.

The following points should be reinforced with site management, maintenance and operational personnel:

- The local Fire Brigade should be advised of the temporary change in protection/detection level
- Hot work should be explicitly prohibited within the affected areas. Hot work includes flame cutting, welding, brazing, grinding and any other spark producing or open flame activity. (See QBE Risk Management Guideline on Hot Work Controls)
- Increase the frequency and extent of surveillance/security tours. This may require the temporary engagement of additional security staff or a change to existing security patterns, including for buildings normally left vacant and unattended
- Self inspections normally done weekly or monthly should be increased to daily and should check the following: (See QBE Risk Management Guideline on Fire Safety & Housekeeping)
  - Combustibles clear by 1.5m+ from battery chargers and space heaters
  - Stock clear of lighting by 300mm+
  - Isolation or replacement of any failed or faulty light fittings, including flickering or glowing fluorescent tubes
  - Readily accessible fire extinguishers, hose reels and external hydrants
  - Fault free operation of manual or automatic fire alarm systems.
- Normal emergency protocols and procedures do not apply during an impairment. All staff and Security personnel should be reminded not to delay in calling the Fire Brigade at the first indication of fire. Do not wait for someone to search and verify a fire during an impairment period
- Do not rely on the alarm receiving company to call the Fire Brigade. The fire service response to remotely monitored fire alarms varies across the country and some will only respond in an emergency manner to a 'confirmed fire', i.e. confirmed by someone else attending the site and verifying the call
- Review any outstanding insurer recommendations or requirements. Complete items that relate to potential ignition sources immediately e.g. battery chargers in racks, combustible materials close to ignition sources etc. or make temporary arrangements to isolate or remove the ignition source hazard e.g. battery chargers in the racks should be electrically isolated etc.

If you are in any doubt about precautions to take during a fire protection or fire detection impairment please contact QBE's Risk Management team.

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