Competent Fire Risk Assessors
Who are they?
Do you need to go internal or external for a fire risk assessor?

- Expertise
- Competence
- Confidence
- Training
- Experience
- Time

Not just the health and safety person!
So what do you need to be a fire risk assessor?

- Knowledge
- Competence
- Qualifications
- Experience
3 Key factors to remember:

1. The world of Fire Safety has a very regulated outcome but is a non-regulated world when it comes to who steers you to that outcome! There is no legislative imperative on the skills/competency of a fire risk assessor so choose carefully!

2. A fire risk assessor is not just for the assessment and the technical ‘bits’, he/she is for ‘life’! Use them to help set your own objectives, priorities, strategies and policies

3. Use them to liaise with the local fire and rescue services on your behalf, if they are competent they will have no qualms about doing so.
So, what are the professionals trying to do?

- Improve all round standards
- Try and get the Fire and Rescue Services to encourage Responsible Persons to only employ competent fire risk assessors
- Encouraging fire risk assessors to up their game
- Encouraging fire risk assessors to prove competency by being on an approved register
- Encouraging fire risk assessors to become third party accredited/certificated as competent
Competent Fire Risk Assessors
How do you choose one?
There is Guidance!

The Industry and professional bodies (Fire Risk Assessment Competency Council) brought out a competency standard for fire risk assessors.

They also produced a guide for the ‘Responsible Person’ to help them choose a competent fire risk assessor. Available on relevant Government websites, CFOA, Fire Industries Association, Fire Sector Federation (www.firesectorfederation.co.uk) and also on The Institute of Fire Safety Managers’ website technical library.
Competent Fire Risk Assessors
How do you choose one?
Bob’s tips!
• Check their credentials, qualifications, training etc.
• Experience in carrying out fire risk assessments including lists of clients and contacts for those clients
• Do they have PI insurance (sufficient for your risk!)
• Are they competent and have they proved that competency in some way?
Bob’s Tips continued:

- Are they on a recognised professional register of fire risk assessors? (professional bodies that run registers are the IFE, IFSM, IFPO and their registers is in the public domain on their websites).
- Have they been through a recognised third party test and examination accreditation/certification process to prove their competency like Warrington Certification FRACs of BAFE SP205 scheme.
- Check their price!
Third Party Certification of Competency National Register

The Institute of Fire Safety Managers (IFSM) is the only professional body to keep a publicly accessible register for accredited/certified competent fire risk assessors called the Nationally Accredited Fire Risk Assessors Register (NAFRAR).

www.ifsm.org.uk
Case Studies

• FR assessor who restricted a building in the FRA to 50 people – the building had a capacity for 560!

• ‘Accountability Signatures’ on a FRA with statement ‘The person named below completed the fire risk assessment and has suitable experience and qualifications to be deemed competent….’
Case Studies

• FR assessor who stated in the FRA that a full fire warning system should be installed in the communal areas of a block of flats.

(interestingly, the local F&RS were insisting this was carried out as the fire risk assessor put in the FRA Action Plan, despite guidance to the contrary!)
What are the Fire and Rescue Services doing in all of this?

• Lack of understanding, knowledge, experience, skills and empathy by F&RS enforcers
• The erosion and dilution of experienced fire safety personnel in fire and rescue services
• Lack of delivery of a national standard in fire safety training by the fire service college
• Lack of a national fire and rescue service inspectorate to ensure commonality and consistency across all fire and rescue services
• Lack of an initial cohesive and overarching enforcement policy set out by central government
The Cautionary Tale!

Conviction of a Fire Risk Assessor - Competency of Fire Risk Assessors

• ‘The 2011 conviction of John O’Rourke at Nottingham Crown Court, whilst being a landmark case, was perhaps an inevitable occurrence that was bound to happen sooner or later in the unregulated field of fire risk assessment’. (Dr Bob Docherty).

• He was jailed for 8 months and fined £6K

• Note – the responsible person also went to jail!!
The Cautionary Tale!

Conviction of a Fire Risk Assessor - Competency of Fire Risk Assessors

• ‘The recent (2016) conviction of Graham Foote at Warrington Crown Court, He was jailed for 4 months suspended for 12 moths plus £1000 costs.

• Note – the responsible person/company was also fined £40,000 plus £15000 costs.
Questions?

www.flamerisk.co.uk

www.ifsm.org.uk