

Formulating a Fire Safety Program For Your Day Care

Contributed by Fiona H Lohrenz
Thursday, 26 June 2008

Fire safety is a major consideration when planning to open a day care facility. The safety of every individual who may enter your premises – staff, children, parents and visitors – is paramount and ultimately, your responsibility.

{mosbotwordcount}

Fire safety is a major consideration when planning to open a day care facility. The safety of every individual who may enter your premises – staff, children, parents and visitors – is paramount and ultimately, your responsibility. It is vital therefore that you have an effective fire safety management policy as fire safety is achieved via this policy combined with adequate fire safety features in your premises. Simply, your goal is to effect whatever measure necessary to minimize the risk of a fire occurring and if a fire does breakout to ensure that staff and children are evacuated swiftly and safely.

{bot_wrgoogle}You will need to put a fire safety program in place in order to realize this goal. Much of this is common sense and good house-keeping practice so should not cost much in terms of time or money. One member of staff should be assigned responsibility for the fire safety program and they should be involved in drawing up a brief written statement outlining the elements that constitute your program.

The fire safety program should detail what fire prevention measures are in place at your day care i.e. what steps are you taking to reduce or eliminate the risks of a fire occurring. These can include not storing flammable gases or liquids in the building, regular checks ensuring that all gas and electrical appliances are in safe working order, ensuring safe cooking practices in the kitchen, utilizing non-combustible materials where possible.

Ongoing staff training is a vital element of fire prevention so that staff know what to do in the event of an emergency and can do so calmly and quickly. All staff should be aware of the location of fire exits, fire fighting equipment, fire protection equipment and fire detection facilities. Training should also involve the use of this equipment where necessary and the procedure involved in emergency procedures and evacuation drills. This training can be undertaken during staff induction however regular refreshers should occur annually.

Regular fire drills should take place in your day care to ensure that staff are capable of reacting should an emergency situation occur. Monthly emergency evacuations i.e. fire drills should be planned and occur without warning. The procedures involved in these evacuations should take into account how many people are on the premises, whether or not any of them are disabled or sleeping – sleeping children should always be given a high priority in an emergency situation. All persons should be evacuated to a pre-arranged assembly point where designated staff members should ensure everyone is present and accounted for. The roll book should be brought to the assembly point for this purpose. Every fire drill should be reviewed in the Fire Drill Report to identify any problems or cause for review.

It is important to keep fire safety records at your child care facility which detail all aspects of your fire safety procedures and should be kept up to date. This record should contain name of the pre-school service, name of the person running the day care, address of the premises, name of person responsible for all aspects of fire safety, name of person responsible for calling the fire brigade, number of children catered for, a floor plan of the day care, staff training details, details of fire drills, list of fire fighting equipment, details of inspection and maintenance of same.

You will need to ensure the adequacy of the fire safety features of your individual premises i.e. actual structure, windows, doors, equipment, appliances, fittings and furnishings. If in doubt about any area of your premises seek the advice of your fire officer. Ultimately, leave nothing to chance. If in doubt seek professional help and have your day care premises up to speed in all matters relating to fire safety from the outset.

Fiona Lohrenz drew on her 10 years experience of running a day care to found ChildCareOnly.com and produce a 'How to Start a Day Care Business' DVD guide: www.startchildcare.com Fiona can be reached at her website: <http://www.childcareonly.com>