

## Industrial Action - Health and Safety Considerations

Industrial action by its very nature will lead to a disruption of service. At a strategic level risk assessments will be undertaken to determine what buildings and services will remain operational during periods of industrial action.

In relation to the buildings that are to remain open then industrial action can lead to a reduction in staffing levels; consequently there is likely to be a need for building managers to consider the health and safety implications such reductions may bring.

The health and safety of building users remains of paramount importance and as such it will be essential that the building manager can demonstrate ongoing assessment of the situation. If it is considered that the likely number of absent staff means the building will not be able to operate safely then serious consideration should be given to closing (or part closure) of the building until adequate resources are in place to allow safe operation to continue.

To comply with their legal obligations, the building manager will need to conduct a risk assessment in advance of the decision to open on the day of industrial action. This must take into account the staff available and their ability to undertake all the necessary safety critical duties.

The following list of factors cannot be considered exhaustive but merely indicative of the types of issues that will need consideration. A number of more locally relevant factors are likely to require consideration.

### Checklist:

- First Aid cover – minimum cover for areas of low risk activity will be an appointed person and the provision of a fully stocked and available first aid kit;
- Fire evacuation procedures will need to be reviewed – a temporary system with alternative fire wardens and building controllers may be required. The need to call the emergency services will need to be integrated into these alternative plans;
- PEEP reviews – Building managers will need to review any personal emergency evacuation plans that will be needed on the day and ensure the agreed mechanism can still be implemented. Alternative work locations may need to be identified;
- Lifts – ensure an effective response can be implemented should the lifts in a building breakdown with someone trapped inside;
- Welfare - facilities need to be available to include toilets, hand washing facilities and a place to prepare hot food and drinks;
- Training – those that have been earmarked for interim duties will require appropriate training?

It is difficult to fully assess the situation as it will be on the day of industrial action however it should be possible to anticipate the likelihood of some these issues occurring in advance and it will therefore be possible to introduce alternative arrangements prior to the period of action commencing.

There is a general expectation that all risk assessments will be recorded unless they are of a basic nature and would be easily repeatable and this may be the case in some situations. It is, however, advisable to create a short information sheet or issue a short e-mail that may be used to inform those working in the building of the temporary measures being implemented during the period of industrial action.

E-learning support for those undertaking interim duties or elements of the risk assessments can be found on CONNECT. These include:

- Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans;
- First Aid – Appointed Persons Awareness;
- Fire Safety Awareness.

Fire evacuation guidance is given within Section 22 of the Health and Safety Policy found within the health and safety pages of CONNECT.

Further information and support can be obtained from your Service Health and Safety Unit or Business, Organisational and People Solutions.

**Safety & Wellbeing team** [healthandsafety@northlan.gov.uk](mailto:healthandsafety@northlan.gov.uk)