



Case Study: **Wentworth House** **Ilford, Essex.**

It is particularly important that those responsible for fire safety should take into consideration the usage and personal circumstances of the occupants and visitors to a building when planning and trialling their fire evacuation procedures. Limited mobility, lack of understanding of fire procedures and lack of familiarity with the building are all issues which can seriously increase evacuation time.

Strategic Risk Management's fire safety specialists were put to the test when planning fire evacuation procedures for Wentworth House in Ilford, Essex which is managed by Portman Property Management Ltd.



Description

Wentworth House is a multi-tenanted, 14 storey commercial office building. Following the unplanned loss of the Senior Building Manager combined with a change of use of the building the client identified significant issues regarding the co-ordination of fire evacuation procedures. As a result SRM was instructed to thoroughly review the emergency procedures for the property and implement appropriate evacuation exercises.

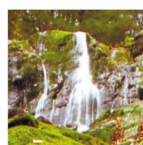
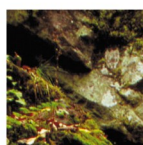
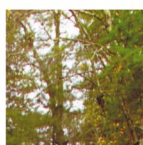
Challenges

A number of challenges were presented:

- Some tenants were providing college courses to numerous non English speaking students. This presented difficulties in communicating essential Fire Safety requirements
- Each floor had its maximum permitted number of occupants, circa 700 in the building in total
- This was further complicated by the high number of visitors who were not familiar with the premises
- Parts of the building were regularly visited by the general public

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How SRM Approached the Problem

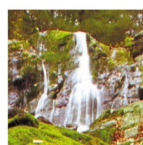
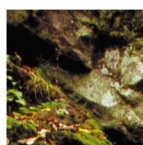
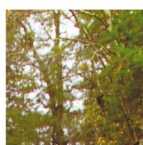
- Initial liaison with undertaken with both client and tenants to understand any site specific issues and previous problems and establish designated responsible persons for Fire Safety. Training was given to the new management team (security staff and site manager) in Fire Safety Awareness with specific emphasis on emergency procedures
- SRM conducted a trial managed fire drill which was observed and recorded. Several issues were identified most of which could be attributed to the language barrier which resulted in a lack of understanding of the correct Fire Safety Procedures. Inappropriate actions observed during the managed fire drill included visitors trying to use lifts, moving against the traffic flow causing congestion and thus increasing the evacuation time, congregating in common areas, returning upstairs to retrieve personal belongings, not assembling at the correct fire assembly point and trying to re-enter the building before the all clear was given
- Following the managed fire drill feedback was given and the necessary actions agreed. All tenants were also given a feedback questionnaire
- A further meeting was held with the designated responsible persons prior to conducting a subsequent managed fire drill
- SRM recommended that a multi-lingual fire evacuation procedures document should be introduced and be given out to all students on arrival and that student inductions should include information on correct Fire and Health and Safety procedures

Project Successes

Overcoming the language barriers and ensuring Fire safety was included in student inductions resulted in the correct fire evacuation procedures being followed and the recorded evacuation time being reduced by half during subsequent fire drill.

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