



R B F & R S

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PUBLIC HOUSE IN SERIOUS BREACH OF FIRE SAFETY LAW

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) has warned that there is no excuse for failing to meet legal standards for fire safety following the outcome of a prosecution at Reading Magistrates Court last Thursday (19 June).

Ten charges were brought under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order against the proprietor of the George and Dragon public house in Church Road, Swallowfield, Mr Paul Dailey, who pleaded guilty to all ten charges.

The charges were brought after a routine inspection of the George and Dragon by Fire Safety Officers on 14 May 2007, which identified serious breaches to the fire safety precautions for the premises. These breaches included:

- No fire risk assessment was carried out for the premises
- No fire protection was provided for fire escape routes
- No fire alarm system was in place
- Obstructed fire escape routes
- No fire drill training was given to members of staff
- Emergency lighting systems did not work

The court was informed that these breaches presented a serious and life-threatening risk, not only to the staff who worked there, but also to members of the public who visited the premises. In summing up, Magistrates reinforced the seriousness of the case and attributed this to a clear failure on the part of Mr Dailey to comply with the responsibilities imposed on him under the Order and his failure to address inadequate fire safety provisions.

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Mr Dailey was fined £4,000 and awarded costs against him of £3,984. Whilst the level of fine may appear low for such a serious case, the courts do have the power to apply more swingeing levels of fines.

David Walden, Fire Safety Technical Support Officer, said: "We are very pleased that the courts have acknowledged the serious nature of this case. This prosecution was brought about under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order, which came into effect in October 2006. Although fire and rescue services are no longer required to issue fire safety certificates, we continue to carry out a rigorous inspection programme of commercial premises to ensure they are meeting the standards required by the Order.

"RBFRS strongly advises that anybody who employs staff or has responsibility and control of commercial premises must ensure that the responsibilities placed upon them by the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order are properly discharged. The Fire Authority has an implicit duty to enforce Fire Safety regulations and thereby protect members of the public."

ENDS.