

Co-Op Slammed with Â£210K Fine for Fire Safety Violations at Southampton Store

Description

The Co-operative Group, a well-known British consumer cooperative, has faced significant penalties due to severe fire safety violations at its Southampton store on Shirley Road. The Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority prosecuted the case, highlighting six critical breaches of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

Detailed Violations

The identified violations were as follows:

- Locked Rear Emergency Exit Doors:** The rear emergency exit doors were not maintained in an unlocked state, hindering easy opening during emergencies.
- Locked Emergency Door:** A lock requiring a security code was installed on the emergency door between the retail and storage areas, making it difficult to open in case of an emergency.
- Obstructed Fire Alarm Call Point:** In the storage area, a fire alarm call point was obstructed, potentially delaying the activation of the fire alarm, which is crucial for early warning.
- Inadequate Fire Safety Training:** The store manager was not provided with adequate and sufficient fire safety training.
- Irregular Fire Alarm System Testing:** The fire alarm system was not being tested regularly, compromising the effectiveness of early fire detection.
- Lack of Early Fire Detection in Retail Area:** There was no adequate means of early fire detection in the retail area, essential for timely warning and evacuation of the manager's office occupants.

Legal Consequences

The Co-operative Group pleaded guilty to these breaches and was fined Â£210,000. Additionally, they were ordered to pay costs exceeding Â£28,000. The case extended beyond the Shirley Road store, considering three additional offences at Co-operative premises on Montague Avenue and Bassett Green Road in Southampton, and at their Kingston Road store in Portsmouth.

Judicial and Public Reactions

His Honour Judge Barnett emphasized the gravity of the situation, describing the Co-operative Group's approach to fire safety as "lamentable." He highlighted the potential dangers posed by the company's negligence, which could have resulted in a "potential death trap."

Chief Officer John Bonney of Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service remarked on the case's significance, stressing that it should serve as a stern reminder to business owners and landlords throughout Hampshire. The Fire Safety Order exists to ensure public safety, and businesses must adhere to these

regulations to protect lives.

CATEGORY

1. Hampshire

POST TAG

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2. Fire Safety
3. Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

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