

Year of gaining Fire Risk Registration: 2010
Membership Grade: Graduate
Registration: Engineering Technician
Job Title: Heritage Fire Safety Specialist
Employer: National Trust

Please describe your current role:

I hold the fire specialist role and advise on all matters relating to fire safety. I ensure that operational staff meet their fire safety regulation compliance responsibilities and support the Head of Operational Risk with Strategic Fire Safety and Emergency Planning support. My role within the National Trust is UK wide and covers England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This can sometimes be tricky as there are differing codes and fire safety technical guides for each specific country. I have to have an awareness of what is happening in the external environment of fire safety, especially regarding the legal requirements and fire safety compliance, and use this to formulate fire policy and standards for the National Trust.

Please provide a brief outline of your career so far:

I have been with the National Trust for the last five years, but have been proud to be actively engaged in Public Safety for the best part of 30 years. My career started in the Merchant Navy where I served on HMS QEII and in 1982 I set sail for the Falkland Islands, as part of the 5th infantry brigade task force. As soon as I left the maritime services I joined East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service in 1986, serving as an operational fire fighter for a number of years and held the rank of Station Officer. I had many different roles within the fire service, including training instructor, fire safety inspecting officer and Public Liaison. I also worked for Brighton Hove City Council for a number of years firstly in Private Sector Housing and then as part of the Compliance team as Compliance Manager.



Have you worked on any unusual or high profile projects?

The recent tragic fire at Grenfell Tower in London has bought back some rather painful memories of a fatal fire in Hove in 1992 where five people died owing to a lack of fire precautions. This was a very high profile case at the time especially as people had lost their lives. Whilst there have been improvements in fire safety during the intervening years, more could be done. Recently completed projects include Croome Court (Worcester) where a detailed fire safety strategy was required to meet some stringent building regulations. A fire engineered solution was the way forward on this project.

What attracted you to gain IFE FRR registration?

I joined the IFE as soon as I could because it had a reputation as being second to none. When I deal with and have conversations with industry professionals, being a member of the IFE just says something about the individual.

I also saw the benefits of joining the IFE's Fire Risk Register of Assessors. Being registered sets you apart from others, especially in an

industry when anybody can appear to carry out a fire risk assessment. You are subject to regular peer review and have to submit CPD, which ensures that you stay current and up to date.

How did you become IFE FRR registered?

I remember applying and having to submit a number of pieces of work for scrutiny. I was interviewed in London on fire safety and had to do a plan drawing observation as well. It was tough, but well worth doing because it meant something. I applied to go on the Fire Risk Register when I was in my previous job role so before I managed fire safety in heritage buildings. At that time I was covering schools, social housing, adult social care, museums, car parks and offices.

How did you find the process and assistance you received?

The process was quite easy because I had a background in fire safety and obviously had the knowledge, skill and experience. Having said that there are still areas where you keep learning and finding out new things. Even during the interview they are not trying to catch you out, but it's more about a professional discussion and two-way communication; they want to hear what you can do and to explain your rationale.

How has IFE FRR registration benefitted your career?

As I have said previously I do not offer consultancy work outside my employment, but it has helped me to maintain the fire risk standards within the National Trust, which I think is very important. I also think employment and employers will look for this type of standard as basic entry to jobs. Not having a fire risk assessment or assessor qualification could be detrimental to the advice that you are giving clients. Some people may try on-the-job learning, but you cannot beat

having qualifications and experience in fire safety and being able to demonstrate this via peer reviews. Joining professional organisations such as the IFE will at least ensure that you maintain standards.

What are your future goals?

To continue enjoying the job that I do, which is fire safety. I do have other outside interests such as football and fishing so it's not all work and no play.

What is your employer's attitude towards FRR registration?

Both my previous employer and my present one are fully supportive of the registration process and they fully support professional subscriptions as well. In a compliance role it is vitally important that your employer supports your development and I am pleased to say the National Trust is a great employer.

Do you have any advice for potential FRR registrants?

Get your application in and don't worry about the process. It's great to sit with like minded people to share your knowledge and experience. You get a real buzz when you get accepted because you feel like you have achieved something and are recognised for your efforts. If you are not on a register then who is monitoring or reviewing what you do and how you do it? When providing advice on fire life safety then you know what the consequences could be for getting it wrong.