



Wednesday

Stream E Sessions 6 and 7

## Stuart Evans

### Biography

Dr Stuart Evans is a visiting fellow at Loughborough University and acts as course tutor for the Healthcare Risk Management Programme and the Fire Officers Programme. He has had a long and varied career in the management and provision of health and social care

## Do we know what to do in the event of a major fire in Health and Social Care.

### Abstract

There is renewed interest in the management of fire safety in hospitals as a result of the introduction of the Regulatory Reform Order (RRO) in 2005. This legislation shifts the emphasis of fire safety management from the competent fire officer/advisor to the Executive Level. As a consequence the advice of fire safety managers becomes a critical element in the risk management process of health and social care organisations. In 2004 there were nearly 2,500 fires causing 115 non fatal casualties in healthcare buildings in the United Kingdom. Fire safety strategies need to be reassessed in the light of the RRO.

Hospitals base their fire safety strategies on avoidance and containment. It is the common strategy of many NHS hospitals to use horizontal evacuation to move patients to safety within the building. This strategy requires that fire doors and barriers are in place at strategic points to prevent the spread of fire horizontally throughout the floor. However, even the best fire safety measures built into a hospital can be affected by its occupants actions: fire doors are worn by use and the running of services through barriers particularly in roof voids are both examples of how fire barriers can be breached. Vertical evacuation and moving patients outside the building is usually only a last resort when all potential for horizontal evacuation has been eliminated. Vertical evacuation has been required in a number of situations in the past and was recently required at the Royal Marsdon fire on the 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2008.

Training is the cornerstone of any fire prevention strategy. Staff cannot be expected to behave consistently in a fire unless they have been trained effectively in what to do in such an emergency.. It has in the past been demonstrated that training to eliminate risks in healthcare organisations is weak<sup>5,6</sup>. In this paper we look at the training of staff on evacuation procedures in health and social care organisations.