

Tesco pays 119,000 pounds for fire safety law breaches

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Supermarket giant Tesco has been fined £95,000 and ordered to pay over £24,000 in costs after pleading guilty to five breaches of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (RRO).

London Fire Brigade, prosecuting, said firefighters were called to a fire at Tesco's Colney Hatch store in Barnet on 14 October 2007. When they arrived found the premises locked but managed to gain access after attracting the attention of an employee who was restocking shelves. There had been a fire in the staff kitchen but it had been put out by staff using extinguishers and a fire blanket. There was still a significant amount of smoke in the kitchen, the corridor and staff locker rooms and crews had to ask staff several times to evacuate the premises.

This incident made officers concerned about fire safety in the store, so on the following day they inspected the premises. A number of breaches of fire safety legislation were found, including a failure to review the store's fire risk assessment, a failure to ensure escape routes were kept clear and inadequate fire separation due to doors being wedged open. An enforcement notice was subsequently served on 2 November 2007.

Tesco pleaded guilty to failing to keep emergency exits clear (£20,000 fine); failing to keep an emergency route clear (£20,000); two counts of fire doors being wedged open (£20,000 each) and storing flammable materials under an emergency stairwell (£15,000). Sentencing took place at Wood Green Crown Court on 20 April 2010.

London Fire Commissioner Ron Dobson said: "Fire safety is a key part of good business management and the general public should feel safe from fire when they are out shopping. London Fire Brigade will continue to take action when businesses, large or small, do not take their fire safety responsibilities seriously. Failure to comply with the law can, as this case has shown, result in a prosecution."

A Tesco spokesperson told Info4fire.com: "We take safety matters in all of our stores extremely seriously. We would like to reassure customers that this was an isolated incident and all issues at this store have been resolved."