Devon County Council

Health and Safety Arrangements for:

Fire Safety
HS18

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Contents

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1. Introduction

This document outlines the minimum level of arrangements needed to comply with Devon County Council's (DCC) Health and Safety Policy.

It is intended to assist managers in their role and to provide information to employees.

Managers must consider the nature of the specific risks - this must be done through conducting a fire risk assessment.

2. The Law

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 places a legal duty on any person who has some level of control in premises, they must take reasonable steps to reduce the risk from fire and make sure people can safely escape if there is a fire.

Therefore, the employer and senior manager, (head teacher or person in control of the premises) is the "Responsible Person". The absolute duty of the responsible person is to ensure the safety of everyone who uses the premises and those in the immediate vicinity who may be at risk if there is a fire.

The Fire Safety (England) (Employees' Capabilities) Regulations 2010 require that the Responsible Person delegating fire safety tasks to employees takes into account the fire safety capabilities of the employees to whom these tasks are delegated.

The Fire Safety Act 2021 has been designed to "ensure that people feel safe in their homes, and a tragedy like the Grenfell Tower fire never happens again".

It sets out clarification to who is accountable for reducing the risk of fires – the duty-holder/building owner for multi-occupied, residential buildings. They must manage the risk of fire for:

- The structure and external walls of the building (e.g., cladding, balconies, and windows)
- Entrance doors to individual flats that open into communal areas.

Extra measures for the duty-holder/building owner may include responsibility for lift inspections, the reviewing of evacuation plans and fire safety instructions to residents.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

Policy

- **The Manager or employee delegated to carry out the Fire Risk Assessment must have attended the DCC Fire Risk Assessment or an equivalent course. The DCC Fire Risk Assessment course has a mandatory refresher period of three years.**

Responsible Person

The Responsible Person must ensure a fire risk assessment is undertaken to identify the general fire precautions needed for the safety of those within the building, the building itself and any site issues. The completion of the risk assessment may be delegated to another person, but the responsible person will ultimately own the fire risk assessment.

Other fire safety duties the responsible person will need to comply with are:

- To consult with your staff (or their elected representatives) about nominating people to carry out particular roles in connection with fire safety and about proposals for improving fire safety.
- To provide all users of the building or site with information on the risks to them, about the measures taken to prevent fires, and how these measures will protect them if a fire breaks out.
- To co-operate and co-ordinate with other responsible persons who also have premises in the site, inform them of any significant risks found, and how those risks might affect the safety of their employees.
- To consider the presence of any dangerous substances and the risk this presents to all users of the premise from fire and to establish a suitable means of contacting the emergency services and provide them with any information about dangerous substances.
- To provide appropriate information, instruction and training to employees, during their normal working hours, about the fire precautions in the workplace, when they start employment, and from time to time throughout their employment.
- To appoint one or more competent persons to assist in undertaking any of the preventive and protective measures required to effectively manage fire safety.
- To ensure that the premises and any equipment provided in connection with firefighting, fire detection and warning, or emergency routes and exits are covered by a suitable system of maintenance and are maintained by a competent person in an efficient state, in efficient working order and in good repair.

Employees

All staff must co-operate with the responsible person to ensure the building/site is safe from fire and its effects. They must not do anything that will place themselves or other people at risk.

With so many workplace activities and materials being potential causes of fire, it is essential that everyone identifies fire risks that are present in their areas of work and within their workplaces and do all they can to reduce this risk.

Additionally, all staff must know what the fire arrangements are so that in the event of a fire everyone can escape quickly and safely.

Within each occupied building, appropriate people will need to be appointed to take charge of and control evacuation procedures and liaise with emergency services.

Appropriate arrangements must be made to ensure that visitors, hirers and contractors are logged in and out of the premises by entering their names in the visitor's book. In the event of a fire evacuation, the person hosting any visitor is responsible for escorting them to the fire assembly area.

4. People at Risk

Adequate provision needs to be made for staff, contractors, members of the public, students and also people with special needs who may be present in their buildings. Some people may have restricted mobility, poor hearing, poor sight, or another form of disability.

Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPS) must be drawn up and put into practice where required. The PEEP must identify what additional measures are required to assist the PEEP holder in evacuating to a place of safety in the event of an emergency.
A record of each PEEP must be kept within the area of concern and a copy placed with the FRA.

An emergency evacuation plan detailing the evacuation procedures for the building must be produced. The plan must be site specific and cover who must do what in the evacuation procedure.

The Emergency Evacuation Plan and any PEEPS must be reviewed periodically and updated when necessary and any revisions notified to all concerned.

To assist in this process blank Emergency Evacuation Plans & PEEPS can be found via the Devon Health & Safety Service's webpages on 'Inside Devon' or the 'Document Library' on the Devon Health & Safety Service's OSHENS website.

5. Fire Risk Assessment

Policy

- **The RA08 template must be used for Fire Risk Assessments**
- **The RA08 must reviewed annually or earlier if there are significant changes such as the building layout or an increase in numbers of people.**

A fire risk assessment (FRA) is an organised and methodical look at the premises, the activities carried on there and the likelihood that a fire could start and cause harm to those in and around the site.

The aims of a suitable and sufficient FRA are:

- To identify the fire hazards and to reduce the risk of those hazards to as low as is reasonably practicable.
- To determine what physical fire precautions and management arrangements are necessary to ensure the safety of people in the premises.

In carrying out a FRA, managers are advised to actively involve staff and, where available, trade union representatives. In shared buildings, all managers have a responsibility to co-operate and share their FRA and Emergency Evacuation Plan with each other.

An FRA may have to be completed for each "Risk Area", meaning that for many buildings or complex sites it may be necessary to complete more than one pro-forma to accurately and adequately capture the information necessary to conduct a satisfactory fire risk assessment.

Significant findings from the FRA must be recorded in writing and these details will enable the person responsible for the premises to produce an adequate plan to evacuate the building of all of its occupants and visitors, including those with special needs. The plan must not rely on fire and rescue service involvement for it to be effective.

This must be a continuous process and the FRA reviewed regularly based on an understanding of how fire occurs and spreads and the changes of risks as they occur. If the FRA shows there are serious risks to people, immediate advice must be sought from the Devon Health & Safety Service on 01392 382027.

To assist in this process a blank RA08 (Fire Risk Assessment) can be found via the Devon Health & Safety Service's webpages on 'Inside Devon' or the 'Document Library' on the Devon Health & Safety Service's OSHENS website.

Appendix 1 sets out the FRA process which should be referred to prior to conducting the practical inspection of the building/site.

The FRA should not be seen as just a paper exercise; it's about taking sensible steps to identify potential fire safety issues and how these will be adequately controlled.

6. Fire Alarm Systems

If there is a fire, it is important that all people in the buildings are warned as quickly as possible. All buildings must have arrangements in place for detecting and giving warning of a fire.

Whichever alarm system is present within the building i.e., manual handheld systems comprising of hand bells, gongs, air horn, or manual electric systems comprising of call points and sounders or

automatic electric systems comprising smoke/heat detectors they must be assessed for effect as part of the FRA.

The manual electric system must be tested weekly using a different call point for each test so that in time all call points will be tested. All call points must be unobstructed, and records must be kept in the fire log book of each test with date, time and signature of the person carrying out the test, together with any notes for action, maintenance, etc. The system must also be maintained by a competent contractor at least every six months.

Handheld systems still present in some schools will be tested when a fire drill is held at the start of each term.

In the event that a fire has started and even in cases where the alarm is linked directly to the fire brigade or an emergency monitoring station, it is advisable to ring 999 to ensure that they have been notified of the fire.

Occasionally due to faulty systems or malicious alarm activation, the fire brigade is called where no fire is present. If the premises suffer from false alarms, procedures must be put in place to reduce unwanted alarm calls. Any procedure must be recorded in the FRA.

False alarm clarification prior to calling the Fire Service must be implemented, therefore procedures must consider the use of a predetermined time delay to allow fire marshals/responsible persons to identify and confirm obvious false alarms within the premises before calling the Fire Service.

It is no longer acceptable to call the Fire Service just because the alarm has activated without trying to implement management procedures to identify false alarms. This procedure must also be outlined in the emergency evacuation plan.

In schools especially during exam times it may be prudent to silence the alarm system, where this is the case it is imperative that a procedure is adopted which will still ensure the safe and quick evacuation of all present. This procedure must again be recorded in the FRA and within the emergency evacuation plan.

It must be remembered that the purpose of any fire alarm warning system is to ensure that everyone can evacuate the premises safely and quickly and proceed to a place of safety where they can be accounted for.

7. Means of Escape

The general principle is that no matter where a fire occurs, the people present must be able to turn their backs on the smoke and flames and escape to a place of safety.

As well as there being a sufficient number of escape routes they must be of an adequate width to allow all persons present to escape. Escape routes are usually corridors, lobbies and stairways

and, therefore, must be constructed from suitable fire-resistant materials and be separated from adjacent areas by fire-resisting doors.

When deciding whether escape routes are satisfactory the following will need to be considered:

- The number of people who may be present, how familiar they are with their area of work and their ability to escape without assistance.
- Where people may be if a fire occurs.
- The size of the workplace, its construction, contents, and layout (e.g., Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) installations)

Escape routes and exits need to be free from obstruction at all times. Floor surfaces on escape routes must also be free from tripping and slipping hazards. No items which restrict the width of the escape route or increase the hazard of the area must be allowed.

As a general principle, escape routes such as corridors, stairways, landings, and lobbies must be kept clear of electrical equipment and appliances (e.g., photocopiers, shredders and vending machines).

Items that contain lithium batteries such as E Bikes must not be charged in escape routes due to the risk of fire when charging. An alternative area should be used for charging such as a side room that ideally has smoke detection and a fire door.

Fire directional signs must be displayed to assist in directing persons towards fire exits and must be clear enough to allow safe evacuation of a building by someone unfamiliar with their surroundings.

So that people can escape quickly, doors on escape routes must open in the direction of travel, be self-closing, clearly labelled and in good condition.

Doors that are held open by electronic means and close automatically on the alarm sounding must be checked following the weekly alarm test to ensure they close fully. This check is to be recorded in the fire logbook.

In cases where it is impractical for fire doors to be closed all the time, they must not be propped open. Ideally, they must be held open by an automatic door release mechanism that releases the door on the actuation of the fire alarm.

Doors that are fitted with electronic release devices (e.g., digital locks), must be linked to an automatic fire alarm system and fail to safe so that they can be opened upon the alarm being activated. These must be checked during the weekly alarm test and recorded in the fire logbook.

Escape routes and exits must be adequately lit and clearly sign posted and lead to a place of safety. If emergency lighting is fitted it must be inspected and tested by a competent person and records kept

The door to the final exit must be capable of being easily and immediately opened from the inside without the use of a key, suitable hardware must be fitted, such as push bars or latches, on the inside of the door.

In some circumstances, security considerations make this inappropriate and, in this case, a safe system of work must be implemented to ensure the safe evacuation of everyone.

8. Fire Fighting Equipment

The fire risk assessment must identify whether the correct type of extinguisher is available for the type of fire that it can be safely used on.

Fire extinguishers are best fixed just off the floor and should be secured to the wall (or contained within purpose built free-standing units). They will normally be positioned by a fire exit. In general, the number of extinguishers necessary is determined by the nature of the fire risk and the size of the floor area.

All firefighting equipment must be maintained in efficient working order and subjected to a periodic visual check, which is recorded in the fire logbook. An annual inspection and test by a competent person must be undertaken and records kept.

Points to consider on the periodic visual check of fire extinguisher are:

- Each extinguisher is in position and signed.
- Freely accessible (not hidden)
- Not discharged, cylinder is not damaged or rusting.
- Hose has not perished, and nozzle fitted.
- Not lost its pressure (if fitted with a pressure indicator)
- That operating instructions are clean and legible.
- It is in test.

Some buildings have drenching and sprinkler systems in place to prevent the formation and spread of fire and smoke in high-risk areas. It is vital that where these systems are present, appropriate safety procedures are in place in the event of the system being activated.

For example, gas drenching systems in server rooms must have a warning system prior to activation or a means to override the system whilst carrying out essential maintenance work within the area of drenching.

As for all firefighting equipment, these systems are to be tested and inspected by a competent person at least annually.

Staff must not try to fight a fire unless they have been trained to do so and it is safe to do so. They must be trained to not put themselves at risk. It is strongly recommended that fire fighting training is carried out for those who work with sources of ignition such as kitchen, science and D&T staff.

9. Information, Instruction, Supervision and Training

Policy

- **Fire drills must be carried out at least twice a year for non-education establishments or termly for education establishments.**

All staff including those with specific fire safety duties must be provided with information, instruction and training about the fire precautions and arrangements in their workplaces.

Fire Routine Notices, giving the actions that must be taken in the event of a fire, must be prominently displayed throughout each building an example fire routine notice can be found via the Devon Health & Safety Service's webpages on 'Inside Devon' or the 'Document Library' on the Devon Health & Safety Service's OSHENS website.

Regular and timed fire drills must be carried out and records kept. It is recommended that a drill is carried out at least twice a year, every term for schools, at different times of day to ensure that people who work part time are included in at least one drill per year.

Schools may consider carrying out a drill at the start of each academic term to allow for new students and staff to become familiar with the procedure. Fire drills must be recorded in the fire logbook.

As part of their induction training, line manager's must provide new staff members on their first day at work with information on the fire safety and emergency evacuation arrangements that apply to their work area.

This information must include:

- What to do if they discover a fire or hear the fire alarm, what the fire alarm sounds like, means of raising the alarm, siting of nearest alarm call point and nearest fire extinguisher.
- Showing them the fire evacuation routes, emergency exits, means of operating any exit devices, such as panic bars, and the fire assembly point.
- An explanation of the reporting arrangements in the event of a fire or drill including the name of the person he/she reports to at the assembly point and the name of the person responsible for the evacuation of the premises.
- An explanation of the importance of keeping fire doors shut, escape routes clear of combustible materials, good housekeeping, etc.

The criteria for attending the Devon Health & Safety Service's Fire Risk Assessment training course are for individuals who undertake fire risk assessments. This is a mandatory training course and has a mandatory refresher period of 3 years.

It is not mandatory for those classed as the 'Responsible Person' or those persons or their deputies who has responsibility for buildings, however it is advisable for these to attend as it gives

them an acceptable amount of knowledge about the fire risk assessment process and will help them in their decision-making process on the findings from an FRA.

The idea behind this training is that fire safety is better managed in-house and the Responsible Person understanding the requirements and leading on all day-to-day managerial processes. This course aims to give those who carry out the FRA confidence in doing a competent assessment coupled with the 'Responsible Person' understanding the FRA process.

The criterion for attending the Devon Health & Safety Service's Fire Wardens virtual training course is for those nominated personnel acting as fire wardens. The content of the course goes beyond the role of a fire warden and encompasses the day-to-day management of fire safety and covers the characteristics of the safe use of fire extinguishers. This does not include the practical use of extinguishers. This is not a mandatory course, and it is for managers / head teachers to establish the need for employees to be trained to act as Fire Wardens.

The Devon Health & Safety Service's Senior Managers' Premises Overview and Senior Managers' Premises Overview (Schools) virtual training courses provide an overview of the duties of the Responsible Person coupled with general fire safety management information and has a mandatory refresher period of 5 years. If any delegates carry out the FRA, then they must attend the appropriate (fire risk assessment) training course.

Service's may dictate additional fire training subject to their own risk assessment findings, in this respect Residential Care Home staff may undergo hands-on fire extinguisher training because of the need to hopefully fight a fire in its early stages as opposed to the issues with delayed evacuation during a real fire.

Within each occupied building, appropriate people will need to be appointed to take charge of and control evacuation procedures and liaise with emergency services (i.e., notify the Fire and Rescue Service of any missing persons and the location and type of fire).

The fire risk assessment should identity any requirements for staff to be trained on using firefighting equipment. People who have not been trained must not be expected to attempt to extinguish a fire.

10. Monitoring

There must be a monitoring regime to ensure that the controls put in place in response to these arrangements, the FRA and emergency evacuation plans are implemented, are maintained, and are having a positive effect on fire safety.

The fire risk assessment, emergency evacuation plan, PEEPS, etc. must be reviewed at least on an annual basis or immediately where there is a change in:

- The number of people present within a building.
- The characteristics of the occupants including the presence of people with some form of disability.

- Alterations to the building, including the internal layout and temporary building works.
- Significant changes to furniture and fixings.
- Becoming aware of shortcomings in fire safety measures.

It is important that fire safety measures and equipment are maintained in effective working order and each building must have a nominated person(s) to carry out the necessary checks. In addition, some equipment requires formal inspections by a competent person.

A simple list indicating when regular checks must be undertaken can be found via the Devon Health & Safety Service's webpages on 'Inside Devon' or the 'Document Library' on the Devon Health & Safety Service's OSHENS website. This list can be adapted to suit each particular building by changing the list into a checklist that meets your need.

Records of findings from monitoring must be kept including any actions taken as a result.

11. Further Information

Further information, including generic risk assessments, can be found via the Devon Health & Safety Service's webpages on 'Inside Devon', the 'Document Library' on the Devon Health & Safety Service's OSHENS website or alternatively by telephone on 01392 382027 or email healthandsafety@devon.gov.uk

Appendix

The Key Elements of an FRA Include:

- Identifying potential fire hazards in the workplace (i.e., sources of ignition, fuel, flammable substances, explosive atmospheres, hazardous work processes)
- Deciding who, in the event of a fire, might be at risk.
- Evaluating the level of risk arising from the hazards. Considering if the present precautions are adequate or if additional controls are required to reduce or eliminate the risks.
- Recording the findings, details of action taken, preparing an emergency evacuation plan and informing staff of the findings and ensure they receive training to follow the fire precautions in the event of a fire.
- Reviewing and revising the assessment when necessary – this will be at least annually or earlier in the event of any significant change or increased risk.

Prevention of fire is paramount to effective fire safety. Three elements are needed to start a fire – heat, fuel and oxygen - commonly known as the 'fire triangle'. Without any one of these a fire cannot start or continue to burn.

Once these elements have been identified it is then necessary for the fire risk assessor to evaluate:

- the chances of a fire occurring and if the sources of ignition can be reduced
- the potential fuel for a fire – can it be minimised by its removal or reduction?
- any additional oxygen sources.

Identifying Sources of Ignition (Heat) Include:

- Aerosols left in the sun or near heat sources.
- Arson.
- Cooking, including microwave ovens and toasters in rest rooms.
- Electric, gas or oil-fired heaters.
- Electrically generated heat or sparks, especially from portable electrical equipment, power leads, over-loaded sockets, batteries, sparks due to static electricity and items that contain Lithium batteries such as E Bikes.
- Engines or boilers or powered machinery of any kind.
- Faulty or misused electrical equipment, especially electric fires, or emergency lamps.
- Hot surfaces – pipes, cooking appliances, machinery, and plant enclosures.
- Hot work – welding, soldering, flame cutting or grinding by builders or maintenance staff.
- Lighting equipment, especially temporary or emergency lighting (as in construction),
- Mechanically generated heat or sparks.
- Naked flames, blowlamps, gas cookers, candles, matches.
- Obstruction of equipment ventilation.
- Smokers' materials.

Removing Ignition Sources

It is important to limit the chances of fires occurring by removing sources of ignition by taking the following actions:

- Avoid self-heating occurring in decorators' rags, cooking or aromatherapy oils on cloths.
- Cleaning clothes and mop heads placed in dryers can spontaneously combust if there is any chemical residue left on them.
- Ensure all electrical fuses, circuit breakers, etc. are of correct rating and suitable for the purpose.
- Ensure any smouldering ignition sources are properly dealt with prior to leaving the workplace.
- Ensure appliances not in use are switched off at night or when an area is not occupied.
- Ensure equipment and processes, which could provide a source of ignition even when not in use, are left in a safe condition.
- Ensure naked flame and radiant heaters are replaced with fixed convector heaters or a central-heating system.
- Ensure the 'no smoking policy' is enforced in all areas.
- Install machinery/equipment designed to minimise risk of fire and explosions.
- Keep ducts and flues clean.
- Operate a 'permit to work' system for maintenance workers and contractors and 'hot works permit' when hot works are being undertaken.
- Prohibit matches and lighters and other naked flames in high-risk areas.
- Regular maintenance will ensure sources of heat do not arise from faulty or overloaded electrical or mechanical equipment (i.e., overheated bearings)
- Remove unnecessary sources of heat by replacing with safer alternatives.
- Ensure heat-producing equipment is used only in accordance with manufacturer's instructions and are properly maintained.
- Take security precautions to prevent arson, ensure waste bins are secured away from the building.
- Tumble-dried linen must be cooled sufficiently before packing and lint removed from filters before each use. Washing and drying machines must not be loaded in excess of manufacturer's recommendations.
- Regular maintenance of fuel (LPG/oil) tanks, restricted access and adequate security monitoring of such installations are maintained.

Sources of Fuel Include:

Anything which burns easily and in sufficient quantity to provide fuel for a fire must be identified, these may include:

- Building structure – combustible claddings and panels, fibre boards, wall and ceiling linings/coverings.
- Cleaning and decorating products.
- Flammable gases, LPG from leaking cylinders, tanks, cartridges, and equipment.
- Flammable liquids, solvents, petrol, white spirit, methylated spirit, paraffin.
- Flammable solvent-based products such as paint, varnish, thinners and adhesives, photocopier chemicals.
- Furniture, including fixtures and fittings, hobby, and crafts materials.

- Over-grown, dry vegetation in summer.
- Plastics, rubber, and foam (polystyrene and polyurethane), video tapes.
- Textiles, curtains, bedding, towels, soft toys.
- Toiletries, aerosols, seasonal decorations.
- Wood shavings, swarf, dust, paper, textiles, and general rubbish.
- Wood, paper and card, loose packaging material.

Minimise Potential Fuel for a Fire

Reduce or eliminate the risks from hazardous materials/substances which burn by considering the following actions:

- Any flammable waste materials and rubbish must be disposed of carefully and immediately to ensure there is not a build-up.
- Unused bathrooms or shower rooms must not be used for storage of combustible items. The area may not have adequate fire protection as it was designed as a wet area and so low risk. It would be changing the use and, therefore, increasing the risk.
- Curtains, drapes and window blinds must be inherently flame retardant (although it is possible to have other fabrics treated, the inherent flame retardant fabrics remain flame retardant after washing)
- Ensure storage areas are not vulnerable to arson or vandalism.
- Ensure suitable separation distances for stored flammable materials (LPG/oil tanks etc.)
- Ensure the fire resistance of the building is intact and not breached by pipes or other services - this particularly applies when alterations to the building have been undertaken and pipe work through walls or ceiling voids have not been sealed adequately.
- Handle, transport, and store flammable materials properly. Check LPG cylinders for leakage and that LPG tanks are effectively maintained.
- Maintain good housekeeping, keeping dust to a minimum, clean and tidy, eliminating any build-up of rubbish.
- Only store highly flammable substances in fire-resisting compartments and only a minimum quantity within the work area (e.g., alcohol hand wash)
- Only use the minimum amount for the job or use less-flammable alternatives, e.g., use water-based paint / varnish instead of solvent based paints and varnishes, use disposable paint brushes which negates the need for white spirit.
- Replace or repair furniture where the foam filling is exposed – ensure all new upholstered furniture meets the appropriate standard for the setting. All items should be labelled to show the standard they meet. Should existing items not meet the above standards, this must be recorded within the FRA and appropriate action taken for the risk within budgetary constraints.
- Risk assess any large areas of flammable wall and ceiling linings to consider how to reduce the Rate of flame spread.
- Roof voids must not be used to store combustible materials and must be kept clear.
- Ensure vegetation around LPG tanks is cut-back in-line with approved standards and there is no build-up of combustible materials near the installation.

Oxygen

The main source of oxygen is obviously from the atmosphere from natural airflow or from air conditioning units or a combination of both.

Additional sources of oxygen such as oxidising chemicals (e.g., sodium hypochlorite, chlorine dioxide, hydrogen peroxide), which will be identified on a container must be appropriately stored and used according to manufacturer's instructions.

Oxygen supplies from cylinder storage can cause an oxygen enriched atmosphere; it is important that staff are made aware of the increased risks this poses. Always advise the Fire Service when oxygen cylinders are in the building. Never store oxygen cylinders where they may become contaminated with grease.

Reduce Sources of Oxygen

Fires cannot start or spread without oxygen, therefore, to restrict the growth and spread of fire and smoke:

- Ensure fire doors are self-closing and kept shut.
- Keep other doors, windows and other openings not required for ventilation shut, particularly at night or when premises are not occupied.
- Don't store oxidising materials near/with heat sources or flammable materials.
- Control the use and storage of oxygen cylinders, ensure they are not leaking and there is adequate ventilation.

Who Could be Harmed by a Fire?

Everyone must be able to evacuate the building quickly and easily to a place of total safety. Fire evacuation plans in most cases deal with this adequately, however consideration needs to be given for:

- Those working outside the normal operating hours (cleaners, caretakers etc.)
- Hirers of buildings during evenings, weekends, and school summer holidays.
- Those working in isolation/isolated areas.
- Those working with or near high-risk hazards/activities.
- Individuals and groups who may be especially at risk, e.g., young, or inexperienced workers, people with mobility or sensory impairment, pregnant workers, children or parents with babies, elderly or infirm people etc.

People who need assistance (or may offer resistance or have behavioural problems) to evacuate may need to have a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) in place. The PEEP must be discussed with the person concerned. The outcome of the PEEP must form part of the overall evacuation plan, it must also be available to the Fire Service with the FRA and Emergency Fire Plan.

Evaluating the Existing Fire Precautions

Fire precautions must be provided and maintained as necessary to safeguard those using the workplace.

Check the fire precautions in place are sufficient for the residual risks. Ensure they have not been altered by unauthorised persons. Check that they will ensure everyone is warned and can leave safely in the event of a fire, the means of escape or method of putting out the fire or the compartmentalisation of the workplace is adequate.

Fire Spread

Fire, once started, spreads by convection, conduction and Radiation:

Convection is the most dangerous and causes the largest number of injuries and deaths. When a fire starts in an enclosed space such as an office, the smoke rising from the fire is trapped by the ceiling and then spreads in all directions, creating a continuing deeper layer over the entire room space. The smoke will pump though any holes or gaps in the walls, ceiling and floor into other parts of the building, trapping the heat from the fire and causing the temperature to rise.

Conduction, some materials (metal shutters and ducting) can absorb heat and transmit it to the next room, where it can cause combustible items to catch fire when they are in contact with the heated material.

Radiation heats the air in the same way an electric bar heater heats a room. Any material close to the fire will absorb the heat until the item smoulders and then burns.

Structural features that could allow the spread of fire, hot gases and smoke into adjacent areas include:

- Ducts without dampers.
- Flues and redundant chimneys.
- Openings in compartment walls, floors and ceilings.
- Non-compartmentalised roof spaces.
- Unprotected areas resulting from changes of use.
- Unprotected stairways.
- Unstopped holes around services.
- Unsuitable glazing on escape routes and in compartment walls.
- Voids behind panelling, above ceilings and below floors.
- Warped and ill-fitting doors.
- Doors being propped open when the area is not in use.

Smoke is the principal hazard to from a fire, it will be hot and contain un-burnt material, which can ignite in the presence of oxygen. It contains toxic gases, causes breathing difficulties, reduces visibility, and disorientates people, making it hard to find the escape routes.

Smoke damage to equipment, furniture and fittings can be extreme even with quite minor fires.

Means of Escape

Everyone within the workplace must know what to do in the event of a fire, the general principle is that wherever a fire should occur, people present can turn their backs on the smoke and flames and escape to a place of safety.

Consideration must be given to the numbers of people visiting or working in each area to ensure that the means of escape are adequate.

The layout of buildings must be such that the arrangement of furniture, filing cabinets and room dividers do not create lengthy dead-ends or increase beyond the acceptable limits the travel distance to a place of safety.

The “Responsible Person” is responsible for providing a safe means of escape and not the Fire and Rescue Service.

Single Stage Evacuation

Providing that staff, service users and others are ‘independent’ (i.e.: capable of evacuating on their own), this is the strategy which will be appropriate as it can be reasonable to expect that everyone in the building is able and willing to evacuate to a place of total safety without assistance.

Phased Evacuation (or Progressive Horizontal Evacuation)

This is a system of evacuation in which different parts of the premises are evacuated in a controlled sequence of phases, with those parts of the premises expected to be at greatest risk being evacuated first. This allows people to wait in a place of safety whilst the fire is dealt with or to await further evacuation down a protected route to total safety.

Refuge

A refuge is a place of reasonable safety in which a disabled person or others who may need assistance, may rest, or wait for assistance before reaching a place of total safety.

It must lead directly to a fire-resisting escape route usually a corridor or stairway, which will normally have a minimum of 30 minutes fire resistance and allow other people to continue their escape to a place of total safety.

Delayed Evacuation

It may not be practical, due to medical conditions to evacuate some service users immediately (due to their capabilities). In these circumstances, it may be appropriate to allow them to remain in their room while the fire is dealt with or whilst others are in the process of evacuation. In this situation enhanced levels of structural fire protection must be provided and a suitable and sufficient evacuation plan established.

In these situations, staff must ensure procedures are exercised in fire drills, and take into consideration: the use of role play, evacuation equipment (evac-chairs) and how the use of structural protection (e.g.: two fire doors rule) assists in the evacuation process.

Escape Routes

The escape routes must be designed to ensure that anyone confronted by a fire, can turn away from it and escape (or be taken) to a place of reasonable safety, and from there to a place of total safety.

Avoid having combustible wall and ceiling linings in escape routes. Where this is not possible make sure that there are adequate breaks e.g. use smaller notice boards with spaces between as opposed to a long continuous run of boards.

Travel Distances

This is the actual distance to be travelled by a person from any point within the floor area to the nearest storey exit or final exit, having regard to the layout of wall, partitions, and fixings.

Fire Signs

All fire safety signs must comply with the requirements of the Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations. Signs that provide information on escape routes and emergency exits must have white lettering on a green background, incorporating a running man symbol and where necessary a directional arrow.

Place of Total Safety

A place of total safety is a place, away from the building, in which people are at no immediate danger from the effects of a fire.

Assembly Points

One of the key elements of the fire safety procedures for any building/site is the means by which the occupants are accounted for following the need to evacuate.

Where more than one assembly point forms part of the evacuation plan arrangements need to be in place to ensure that all people are accounted for and that the person co-ordinating the liaison with the Fire Service can be informed as soon as possible.

Detection and Warning

A fire detection and fire alarm system are likely to form an important component in defence against fire. In many buildings, the evacuation strategy will be very simple: on operation of any manual call point, or detection of fire by an automatic fire detector, fire alarm sounders will operate throughout the building to indicate the need for evacuation of the entire building.

Manual call points must be prominently sited and are distributed such that, from any point in the building, it is impossible to leave the storey or the building without passing a manual call point.

Sufficient call points need to be provided to minimize, to a reasonable extent, the delay between discovery of a fire and the sounding of the alarm. Where the fire hazard level is high and rapid fire development is anticipated, this delay needs to be commensurately shorter.

False Alarms

Establish a procedure for dealing with the fire alarm being activated. There must be a procedure for identifying if there is a fire or not. If there is no fire confirmed, then there may not be a requirement to call the fire service. However, once a fire is confirmed then the fire service must be called immediately.

Fire Extinguishers

Extinguishers to tackle class B, class F and fire involving electrical equipment must ideally be located such that the correct extinguisher for that fire type is the first one encountered by a prospective user.

Extinguishers must be sited near to the fire hazard concerned, but not so near as to be inaccessible or to place the operator in undue danger in case of fire.

They must be sited in such a way that it is not necessary to travel from the site of any fire to reach an extinguisher further than the following maximum distances:

- Class A: 30 m.
- Class B: 10 m.
- Class C: 30 m.
- Class D: case-by-case basis, by expert advice.
- Class F: 10 m.
- Electrical: 10 m.

Where staff are required to pass through doorways to reach the nearest extinguisher, the above travel distances must be reduced to maintain the shortest time between discovery of a fire and

the moment at which the prospective user is able to start fighting the fire with the extinguisher concerned.

The position and type of a fire extinguisher must be indicated on a sign so that, if the extinguisher is removed, this can be identified during a safety inspection, and a replacement ordered.

Record the Findings and Actions

Use the model form (RAA08) which can be found via the 'Document Library' on the Devon Health & Safety Service's OSHENS website to record your findings. The findings will include:

- Significant hazards.
- People / groups of people who are at risk from the hazards.
- Existing controls and risk which are not adequately controlled.
- Further action required, by whom and by when.

Ensure the Fire Logbook is maintained and up to date with recordings of testing, fire drills and maintenance work, including staff training. A Fire Logbook can be found via the 'Document Library' on the Devon Health & Safety Service's OSHENS website.

Ensure the records from competent person checks are maintained and where any remedial works have been actioned that this is identifiable for audit purposes.

Remedial Action Timetable

The timescale for remedial action must be completed for each section where an action is required:

- IMMEDIATE: this must be undertaken at the time (e.g., unlocking a locked fire exit)
- URGENT: within 1 month: this would be an action that could not be undertaken. immediately, but it is still necessary to do something quickly (e.g., arranging a visit from the contractor or property adviser). Consider any immediate control measures that can be put into place to reduce or control the risk meanwhile.
- IMPORTANT: within 2 months: these may be items that have significant costs or need some planning and further consideration. Again, other control measures must be put in place, if practicable, to reduce or control the risks.

Review the Fire Risk Assessment

The FRA must be reviewed at least annually by the "Responsible Person". Any changes in the workplace, increased number of occupants or staff, changes in work or storage of goods etc. must be noted and the FRA reviewed immediately if there are any significant changes.

If a fire or near miss occurs, then the assessment must be reviewed to ensure it is not out of date or inadequate. Identify the cause of any incident and make any necessary adjustments to the fire risk assessment.

Auditing and Monitoring

Check that agreed controls are in place, agreed training has occurred and fire hazards are managed or have been eliminated as identified in the FRA.

Regular checks must be completed using the Fire Safety Maintenance checklist form which can be found via the 'Document Library' on the Devon Health & Safety Service's OSHENS website.

Audits will involve checking the adequacy and effectiveness of the nominated people by interviewing head teachers, managers, and staff to check that good practice is in place. Monitor by undertaking fire drills and discussing the outcomes of the previous fire drills to ensure they are working well.

Document History

Implementation Date	Summary of change	Review Date
October 2008	Original Guidance Note (Intermediate versions archived and available on request)	August 2009
January 2018	Refinement of information and rename to Arrangements under the DCC H&S Policy or School H&S Policy	September 2019
September 2019	Minor textual changes	September 2021
September 2021	Inclusion of Fire Safety Act 2021 and COVID-secure implications	September 2023
September 2023	Added fire drills every term for schools. Removed COVID-secure implications. Further information on PEEPs added. 9.14 changed regarding needs for firefighting training. Changed to new format	September 2025