

# **POLICY FOR HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE**

## **PART C ARRANGEMENTS**

### **SECTION 3 - FIRE PRECAUTIONS**

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## 1. AIM

This document aims to introduce systems to reduce the risk of fire occurring, and the injury or damage that could result. To do this, we will describe how to comply with fire legislation and describe the responsibilities of managers and other people in control of premises or activities.

This document applies to all employees and covers all workplaces including Community Schools.

## 2. FIRE PRECAUTION REQUIREMENTS

The primary purpose of the law on fire precautions is to protect people from fire. The law does this by placing a duty on employers to reduce the risk of fire as far as possible. This involves a number of elements;

- Fire risk assessment
- Fire plans
- Fire evacuation drills
- Information, instruction, training and supervision
- Fire fighting equipment

## 3. GENERAL DUTIES

**DU Directors** - in charge of premises must ensure that suitable fire risk assessments and Fire Plans are in place for their workplaces. They must also ensure that all managers are aware of their duties for induction of all new staff, and are competent to carry out that induction. They must take special care to induct disabled staff as to any special arrangements that may be in place.

**Premises Managers** - Premises managers must ensure that in all workplaces:

- a suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment has been carried out, by a competent person, and control measures implemented
- a suitable means is provided for sounding the alarm. This can range from a full fire alarm system in a large workplace to a hand bell in small workplaces
- adequate means of escape are provided for all employees and any other people on site at all times when the premises are in use.
- doors must be easy to open, and should open outwards. They must be suitable for all users of the building. (for example, disabled employees or visitors).
- furniture and equipment is arranged to allow easy access to a means of escape
- fire doors (that break the building up into small units to stop the spread of fire and smoke) are kept in a good condition. This means that they must close fully by a self-closer, and that any gap around the door is no more than 3mm.
- fire doors are kept closed at all times unless they are held open by an automatic system that will allow them to close if the fire alarm is sounded
- appropriate fire fighting equipment is provided. The number and type of

equipment can be decided as a result of the Fire Risk Assessment. Fire fighting equipment must be inspected annually to ensure that it is ready to use at any time.

- information and instruction is provided to all staff and managers, fire action notices must be displayed.

**Managers** - Managers must ensure that all new staff are provided with induction training to explain the fire precautions relating to their work and workplace, and are shown the correct escape procedure and assembly points. Managers are also required to notify the Premises Manager if a member of staff requires alterations to the workplace in order to react to the fire alarm or evacuate to a place of safety. Notification must be made before the employee starts their employment.

**Employees** – employees are under a general duty to take reasonable care of their own safety, and the safety of people around them. Employees must;

- Raise the alarm if you discover a fire
- Leave the building **immediately** on hearing the fire alarm, even if you think it is a fire drill and follow any instructions that are given
- Report to your manager any dangerous situations or fire risks that you see

#### **4. FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT**

The purpose of the fire risk assessment is to encourage those in control of buildings to think about how fire is prevented and managed in the premises. It will also assist with the drafting of a fire plan. For most office and school activities, it is sufficient to record what general fire precaution measures are taken and what checks are made to ensure that the measures are taken to the proper standard.

Fire Risk Assessment is an analysis of three elements;

- What are the risks of fire, and how serious are they? (i.e. how likely is a fire to start, and how serious is it likely to be)
- What, if anything, needs to be done to remove or reduce the risks?
- What information and training to give to staff

The risk assessment must be carried out by a suitably competent person and must be revised if there has been any change in the use of the premises, equipment, substances or systems used at the site, or if it appears for any other reason to believe that the current assessment is no longer valid. Another opportunity for review would be after a fire or near miss.

Information about the measures identified in the assessment must be provided to all occupiers of the site. This may be by way of an information card to contractors, and information on notice boards for staff and other building occupiers.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations also require employers

to compile and implement measures to deal with emergencies. This duty includes a need to plan for fire and bomb threats.

## **5. FIRE PLANS**

A written plan must be produced of action to be taken in the event of a fire. This plan must account for all occupiers, whether employees or not, and details of the plan must be brought to the attention of all staff on site as well as being displayed in the form of safety signs. The purposes of the plan are to advise occupiers of the correct procedures to take in case of fire, and provide a standard for occupiers to follow.

The production of these plans must be undertaken by a competent person. A fire plan should include;

- location of alarm points and fire fighting appliances
- action to be taken in the event of fire (to be displayed by alarm call points and other locations as may be necessary). For example, "sound the alarm and leave by the nearest available exit".
- action to be taken outside normal working hours, if different from during normal hours
- the location of escape routes and fire exits, specifying routes for or individual groups
- alternative routes, to be used in the event of an exit being unavailable
- the method to be used to ensure that all people have left the building
- the locations of, and action to be taken at, assembly areas
- action with regards to visitors (such as public, clients, students) using the building
- any specialist action regarding equipment, processes, substances, etc. The safety aspects of most materials are now subject to the requirements of the dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmospheres Regulations (see Corporate Arrangement, section 26).
- the duties of nominated persons as part of the plan, including training of Fire Wardens, First Aiders, Evac-Chair operators, etc.
- procedures for bringing the plan to the notice of staff
- measures for, and frequency of, testing the plan, for example, frequency of fire evacuation drills and checks of the alarm system
- arrangements for fire when the building or part of the building is hired. For example, responsibility for facilities etc
- review date

## **6. ASSISTING DISABLED STAFF**

Special consideration must be given in the fire risk assessment to the design and provision of fire procedures for people with disabilities. Disability can be divided into three categories. Each category presents different challenges to the fire risk

assessment process.

**Physical and sensory impairment** –includes wheelchair users, people with vision and hearing impairment and people with mobility problems. There may be a need for additional physical precautions, for example, safe refuges, evac-chairs and visible alarms. Any additional precautions must be supported by procedures, including trained staff to help people to evacuate, and information and methods of communication for people who have to remain at refuge areas during an evacuation. Section 7 contains some more advice on evacuation for people with physical disability.

**Mental health support needs** – people in this group (represented in many of the council's settings) may need support as a result of their reaction to the alarm or an emergency situation. Some people can panic and show unusual reactions.

**Learning difficulties** – people in this group may also need support in understanding the implications of a fire alarm, and what to do. They may also need more support and supervision in evacuating the building.

## **7. FIRE EVACUATION**

A fire drill is an important method of testing the fire precautions in place at any premises. It will help identify any weaknesses in the evacuation process or any problems in the evacuation route. It will also familiarise occupiers with the alarm itself and what action to take.

Fire drills should be carried out at whatever interval is appropriate for the activity or client group involved but should not exceed six months. Here are some suggestions for making the fire drills more useful.

- the drill should be without notice (only key managers and other key individuals should be informed)
- the telephone exchange or secretary should be advised, so that a false call to the Fire Brigade is not made
- the times of drills should be varied, to take account of different activities. This is particularly useful where part time staff are employed
- consider blocking off one exit to practice the use of alternative evacuation route(s)

### **Evacuation of people with a physical disability**

A written procedure must be in place to make sure that there are suitable means of escape for disabled people. This should include the following.

- the provision of safe refuge areas to be used as temporary waiting areas for disabled people. These areas should be clearly marked.
- appropriate training of sufficient staff to carry out specific duties in a fire

emergency situation, e.g. Evac-Chair operation

- a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) should be drawn up for every disabled person in the building. Regular building users, such as staff, should receive a copy of this PEEP. If the building has a large number of visitors fire evacuation instructions should, where possible, be handed to disabled visitors by reception staff.

Where possible, services should be provided so that disabled people do not need to use parts of the building where it would be difficult for them to get to a place of safety, for example some basement areas.

## **8. INFORMATION INSTRUCTION TRAINING AND SUPERVISION**

Managers must ensure that all their employees are aware of;

- action to be taken on discovery of a fire
- action to be taken on hearing the fire alarm
- how to raise the alarm and the location of call points (a call point should be near each exit from the building)
- how to call the Fire Brigade, and who is responsible for making the call, (there may be an automatic system for this, connected to the alarm)
- the location and use of fire fighting equipment
- the importance of fire/smoke doors and the need to close all doors at the time of a fire and on hearing the fire alarm
- evacuation routes and the method of escorting members of the public to a place of safety
- the locations of refuge areas (if any are provided)

These instructions must be given at the beginning of employment and should be repeated when necessary.

Supervision of staff and visitors is essential to ensure that the building has been successfully evacuated. This can be done by checking registers, as is common in schools, but for some buildings, where staff regularly come and go, and visitors are present, it is more practical to appoint fire wardens to check and report that zones of the building are clear.

## **9. FIRE FIGHTING EQUIPMENT**

Sufficient equipment must be provided at suitable locations on site. The type and location of the equipment depends on the type and scale of fire likely at any location within the building. For example, if the only fire likely is wood and paper, then only a water extinguisher is needed. If the fire is likely to be electrical, then a different extinguisher (such as carbon dioxide) is necessary. The following table shows the different types of extinguishers and their uses.

<b>Extinguisher</b>	<b>Best For</b>
Water	Wood, Cloth, Paper, Plastics, Coal etc. Fires involving solids
Dry powder	Liquids such as grease, fats, oil, paint, petrol etc. <b>but not on chip or fat pan fires.</b>
AFFF (Aqueous film-forming foam)	Wood, Cloth, Paper, Plastics, Coal etc. Fires involving solids. Liquids such as grease, fats, oil, paint, petrol, etc. <b>but not on chip or fat pan fires.</b>
Carbon Dioxide CO2	Liquids such as grease, fats, oil paint, petrol etc. <b>but not on chip or fat pan fires.</b>
Fire Blanket	Fires involving both solids and liquids. Particularly good for small fires in clothing and for chip and fat pan fires <b>provided the blanket completely covers the fire.</b>

There must be a system in place at every building to ensure that all fire fighting appliances are tested annually for proper operation. Also, there must be a system to ensure that any damaged, stolen or otherwise defective appliances are repaired/replaced immediately.

## **10. RECORD KEEPING**

To demonstrate that checks have been carried out, Premises Managers must ensure that the following details are recorded in the premises log:

- **Details of the fire drills.** For example keep details of the date and time of drills, the time taken to evacuate, any problems found, and action taken. (see appendix A for an example of fire drill log proforma)
- **Tests of alarms** (where fitted). Checks should be carried out to make sure that the alarm is audible in all parts of the building, and that all of the call points work. Checks of call points, rotating to cover each point, should be carried out weekly. (see appendix A for an example of an alarm test proforma)
- **Checks of emergency lighting systems** (where fitted). The emergency lighting system should be checked by a competent engineer at regular intervals, depending on the type of system fitted. In addition to this, the Premises Manager or manager should arrange for monthly checks that the lights are working.
- **Records** should be kept of the checks carried out on fire fighting appliances. This will usually be in the form of a sticker on each appliance, but details of the company used to carry out the checks should be kept available. Each appliance must be checked every 12 months, or after it is used.

## 11. FURTHER INFORMATION

More information on fire precautions can be obtained from the following sources:

Source	Contact details
CSG <b>Health and Safety team</b> , for general information,	Phone: 020 8359 7955 Email: <a href="mailto:shaw@barnet.gov.uk">shaw@barnet.gov.uk</a>
For detailed information about the law, and advice on risk assessment, <b>The London Fire Brigade</b>	Website: <a href="http://www.london-fire.gov.uk">www.london-fire.gov.uk</a> Phone: 020 7587 2000 e-mail: <a href="mailto:info@london-fire.gov.uk">info@london-fire.gov.uk</a>
For general information about health and safety issues, including fire, <b>The Health and safety Executive (HSE)</b>	Website: <a href="http://www.hse.gov.uk">www.hse.gov.uk</a> Phone: 020 7556 2100 or 0845 345 0055. e-mail: <a href="mailto:hse.infoline@natbrit.com">hse.infoline@natbrit.com</a>

**RECORD OF FIRE ALARM AUDIBILITY TESTS**

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Number and Date</b>	<b>Call point number and location</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Signature</b>
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			

**Signature of Premises Manager/manager** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**FIRE EVACUATION DRILLS - TO BE CARRIED OUT EVERY 6 MONTHS.**

**Annual record for the year** \_\_\_\_\_

Date of fire drill	Comments	Action required	To be taken by (name)	Target date	Signature of manager

**Signed by Premises Manager** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**ANNUAL FIRE PRECAUTIONS CHECKLIST**

Building address: \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

	Answer y/n
<b>1. Alarm system</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weekly audibility check carried out and recorded?</li> <li>• Annual system check carried out?</li> <li>• Is the alarm audible in all areas?</li> <li>• Are all alarm call points easily accessible?</li> </ul>	
<b>2. Means of escape</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are escape routes clearly sign posted?</li> <li>• Are escape routes kept clear of obstructions at all times?</li> <li>• Are final exit doors easy to open?</li> <li>• Are internal fire doors kept closed?</li> <li>• Has the emergency lighting system been checked as per manufacturer's requirements and monthly by Premises Manager?</li> <li>• Are refuge areas clearly marked for disabled people?</li> </ul>	
<b>3. Management</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there a fire plan in place for the site?</li> <li>• Are fire risk assessments complete?</li> <li>• Is adequate training and instruction given to staff?</li> </ul>	
<b>4. Equipment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are all extinguishers checked each year?</li> <li>• Are all extinguishers properly located?</li> <li>• Are all extinguishers properly labelled?</li> </ul>	

Checklist completed by: \_\_\_\_\_

Action to be taken (if necessary):

Action required	To be taken by (name)	Target date

Signed by Premises Manager \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## FLOW CHART TO ASSIST SERVICES IN COMPLYING WITH THIS ARRANGEMENT

