

Guidance on the Provision and Use of Notice-boards in Escape Routes and Circulation Areas

Background

The law requires that we take reasonable precautions to limit the potential for fire to spread through buildings via the materials that are applied to walls and ceilings in circulation areas and escape routes. This is normally achieved by using inherently non-combustible materials, such as plaster and plasterboard, for the surface finishes in these areas.

Due to the nature of the University's work, it is both necessary and desirable to be able to use wall space in entrance lobbies and circulation areas, to display posters and notices. However, unrestricted use of wall space for displays has the potential to undermine the requirements for controlling fire spread. For this reason the following guidance has been drawn up, in consultation with the Fire Service, so that a balance can be reached between the requirement to control fire risk and the need for notice-boards and display space.

Enclosed Notice-boards

Glass fronted notice-boards, and other types of fire resisting enclosure can be used in all areas as they will not contribute to fire spread. They do however need to be lockable to ensure that the enclosures remain closed.

Unenclosed Notice-boards

Due to their potential to contribute to fire spread, the provision and used of unenclosed notice-boards is subject to the following restrictions:

- Unenclosed notice-boards are not permitted within dead-end corridors or protected staircase enclosures.
- Automatic fire detection is required in any corridor or circulation area where unenclosed notice-boards are provided.
- The materials from which the notice-board is made must be inherently fire retardant.
- The maximum size of any single display area shall be no larger than three metres wide by one metre high (or equivalent).
- If the required area of display space exceeds the above limit, it will need to be subdivided into separate blocks such that there is a minimum gap of one metre between each display area.
- The total length of unenclosed notice-boards on any particular wall shall be no more that 25% of the length of the wall on which it is situated.
- Any materials to be displayed on the notice-boards must be fixed at all four corners and be no more than a single sheet in thickness.

If you require help to determine whether any existing or proposed notice-boards or displays meet the above criteria then please contact safety@sheffield.ac.uk and we will be happy to advise.