

Controlling Fire Risk in the Workplace

This note is intended to provide brief guidance on what can be done at a local/departmental level to reduce both the chance of fires/false alarms occurring and to mitigate the risks from fire should one occur.

The importance of good housekeeping in both the prevention of fire and in minimising fire spread cannot be over-emphasised. Almost all fires can be prevented and regular attention in the following areas will help to significantly reduce the level of risk to both life and property.

1. Control of Ignition Sources

- a) For the safety of all building occupants smoking is not allowed in University buildings with the exception of licensed bar areas.
- b) Take care when cooking:
 - i. Make sure any appliances (including those brought in from home) are tested and maintained in good condition.
 - ii. Rooms/areas where staff cook lunch/snacks should be provided with a fire blanket. Ask Safety Services to provide a fire blanket if you don't already have one.
 - iii. Any cooking should be supervised until it is finished and the appliance switched off.
 - iv. Remember that cooking or boiling kettles must not take place in rooms provided with smoke detection since this can lead to false activation of the fire alarm. It is also important to keep kitchen doors closed to prevent smoke or steam activating detectors in other areas.
- c) Ensure that any electrical equipment that you use has been tested and inspected to reduce the possibility of a fault occurring that may cause a fire.
- d) Be vigilant to the possibility of arson especially outside of normal working hours.
- e) The use of portable heating appliances is strongly discouraged but if there is no alternative to their use then convector heaters are the safest option.

2. Control of Flammable Materials

- a) Take care that flammable materials do not come into contact with heat sources.
- b) Don't allow rubbish to accumulate. Never store rubbish or redundant furniture etc in stairways or escape routes, even temporarily.
- c) Try to keep your workplace tidy and where possible avoid accumulating excessive quantities of flammable materials.
- d) Special storage arrangements may be required for any highly flammable materials. If in doubt ask Safety Services for advice.

3. Escape Routes

- a) Keep escape routes free from obstruction and available for use at all times when the building is occupied. Storage of furniture, equipment or other materials on escape routes is not permitted.
- b) Take care not to obstruct fire exits on the outside by careless parking or the thoughtless discarding of rubbish.
- c) Exit doors must be easily openable from the inside without the use of a key. Make sure that any additional security devices such as bolts are left in the open position whenever the building is occupied.

- d) There are limitations on the size and location of notice boards on escape routes. Contact Safety Services if you require advice in this regard.
- e) Take care not to compromise the safety of escape routes by wedging fire doors open. Whenever possible doors to unoccupied rooms should also be kept closed.
- f) Ensure that the fire fighting equipment remains free of obstruction and available for use at all times.
- g) Bicycles are not permitted in University buildings. Cycle racks can be provided by Property Services if required.

4. **Maintenance**

- a) If you are aware that any of the safety provisions are damaged or require maintenance then contact Property Services immediately.
- b) It is good practice to check exits that are rarely used to ensure that doors are unobstructed and will open easily. External parts of escape routes may require pressure washing or clearing of vegetation periodically. Any problems should be notified to Property Services.
- c) The fire alarm should be tested on a weekly basis either by Property Services or nominated members of departmental staff. Any problems noted with the audibility or correct operation of the system must be reported to Property Services help desk immediately.
- d) The fire fighting equipment will be serviced by Safety Services.

5. **Training**

- a) All new staff should receive departmental induction training as soon as possible after they start work.
- b) Remember that all staff and anyone requiring out of hours access must undertake fire training annually.
- c) Safety Services will arrange an annual fire evacuation drill where appropriate.
- d) Any visitors, guests or students should be supervised and if they are to be left unaccompanied, they must be made aware of the fire procedure for the building.
- e) Consider the needs of staff, students and visitors who have disabilities that may affect their ability to evacuate unaided in the event of fire. Safety Services can provide information and assistance in this regard if required.

6. **Liaison**

- a) To enable Safety Services to keep the fire risk assessment for the building up to date we would appreciate your help by informing us of any changes in the following areas:
 - i. Any increase in the number of occupants/visitors
 - ii. Proposed alterations to the structure or layout of the building.
 - iii. Any change of work activity that introduces a new or increased risk of fire.

If you require any further advice or clarification then more detailed guidance can be found in the University's Health and Safety Code of Practice or alternatively by contacting Safety Services.

Please remember that safety is everyone's responsibility and your help and co-operation are fundamental in helping to minimise the risk of fire.