

FIRE PRECAUTIONS

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The following section contains information on fire safety in schools with information given under the following headings:

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Publications

Fire Safety Risk Assessment – Educational premises.

ISBN-13: 978 1 85112 819 8

Indicates specific requirements for fire precautions in educational premises ranging from pre-school through to universities

Fire Risk Assessment for Schools - Council Document

The above is designed to take the responsible person in the school through a fire safety risk assessment on a step by step basis. Copies can be obtained from the Schools H&S Unit.

This Regulatory Reform Order was introduced in order to bring together existing fire safety legislation and to make it clear that the employer is required to take such general fire precautions as will ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety of his employees and those persons not in his employment. As a consequence the law relating to fire safety now follows more closely that set out in Health and Safety legislation.

The law however states it is the responsible person who is required to make a 'suitable and sufficient' risk assessment to identify the general fire precautions that need to be implemented. A responsible person in this case will usually be the employer but can also be anyone who has control of a premise, so far as the requirements relate to matters within his control. This means that all persons who authorise or control building works are viewed as responsible persons and this will include both head teachers and school governors.

2 - RISK ASSESSMENT

The generic risk assessment for schools show that they are in the main low risk environments where fire safety is concerned. This is because they tend to be designed to ensure alternative means of escape and because the most common cause of fires tend to be arson outside of normal school hours. In order to assist duty holders in schools comply with the legislative requirements the Council has produced a 'Fire Risk Assessment document' which will enable the responsible person to produce a site specific risk assessment. (See publications at front of section.)

3 - TEMPORARY DISPLAYS AND DECORATIONS

Great care must be taken when using paper, foamed plastic (such as polystyrene), or flimsy materials, either for decorations or for costumes, especially where heating is by any kind of open fire or radiant heater. Such decorations must not be suspended from light fittings. Fire occurring in suspended and highly flammable materials spreads rapidly, and blazing pieces may drop over a wide area before everyone in the room has a chance to escape. Fancy dresses and costumes are often by their very nature highly flammable and the greatest care must be exercised when school plays or parties are being held.

4 - USE OF PORTABLE HEATING APPLIANCES

Portable heating appliances often present a fire risk and should only be used as set out below.

a) Portable oil heaters – These should not be used.

b) Supplementary heating - Where supplementary heating is necessary it should be provided by electric heaters, preferably of the convector type. Radiant electric heaters must be fitted with appropriate guards and must not be allowed in close proximity to combustible materials.

c) Portable LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) heaters - These should only be used in emergencies, i.e. when the normal heating system fails, and not to supplement normal heating arrangements.

BOMB WARNINGS

Emergency procedures will be necessary to contain risks arising from bomb warnings. Notification may come from a telephone call or by the presence of a suspect package or parcel.

Action to be Taken

1 Telephone Calls

- 1.1 Listen carefully to message and any background noises.
- 1.2 Log carefully all details given.
- 1.3 Assess validity of call.
- 1.4 Sound alarm.
- 1.5 Call police and fire brigade and complete evacuation.
- 1.6 Pass on all information to school liaison/location manager.
- 1.7 Volunteer staff (if required) to assist police in searches.

2 Suspect Packages

- 2.1 By Post: Do not attempt to open parcel or package.
- 2.2 Call police and fire brigade.
- 2.3 Sound alarm.
- 2.4 Complete evacuation procedures.

3 Discovery of Unidentified Package or Parcel

- 3.1 Seal off area and attempt to identify parcel through enquiries.
- 3.2 If no identification made – full emergency procedures to be taken.

**SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNCIL
EDUCATION SERVICE
GUIDANCE NOTE
EMERGENCY ARRANGEMENTS – NON EVACUATION OF BUILDINGS**

1 – INTRODUCTION

Although most of the emergency situations that have occurred in schools involve evacuation of a building there are occasions where evacuation will put persons in greater danger. It is therefore essential that schools do have procedures in place for dealing with such incidents and as with all emergency procedures they must ensure that the relevant people know what is expected of them.

The following information and guidance has been prepared to assist schools in drawing up their own procedures for dealing with non evacuation emergencies.

2 – BACKGROUND

There are two main types of incident where keeping staff/pupils inside is the appropriate action to take.

- a. **Security Incidents** - These can involve situations where a bomb alert is in place, but the bomb is not within the confines of the school, and evacuation of a building may put persons closer to the expected blast zone. Other security situations which involve non evacuation could be where there is a report of an armed person in the vicinity.
- b. **Major Chemical Incidents** - These will normally occur following an incident, involving fire or explosion, at an industrial complex or as a result of a road accident. In such situations a toxic cloud can result.

3 – NOTIFICATION OF INCIDENTS

The very nature of these incidents often means that the initial contact is personal, via the emergency services (police officer), who are attending the situation. Schools are asked to ring the Education Service Health and Safety Section and notify them of such incidents as this is often the first contact the Council receives. It is expected that the priority for emergency services, immediately at least, is to warn those persons in the vicinity and not to inform the Council.

NB Do not wait for confirmation of an incident from the Council before taking action, if you receive direct notification from the Emergency services.

Where schools are not in the immediate vicinity but may be affected, notification will normally be via the Education Service, either by phone or fax, following confirmation of the incident via the emergency management system.

4 – ACTION TO BE TAKEN

Following notification of an incident, the school must implement the measures that will most effectively limit the likelihood of the incident causing injury. The following is a list of incidents together with the actions recommended.

4.1 – For All Incidents

The report from the representative of the Emergency Services must be noted down, timed and the name and badge number of the person making the report noted.

If notification is from the Council make a note of the name of the person contacting you, at the time and the details provided about the incident.

The senior person on site must be contacted immediately and informed of the report. The senior person on site will then take one of the following measures.

4.1.1 – For Fire Alarms Incidents

All staff must be informed that a fire alarm incident is occurring.

Any staff/pupils in the grounds or working outdoors must be brought inside immediately

External access doors into buildings are to be secured. At such times the security requirements will take precedence over fire safety concerns. (The fitting of security locks would allow both requirements to be met).

Curtains or window blinds are to be drawn

Change over for lessons should be suspended for the period of the incident, if this involves pupils going outside.

Breaktimes are to be delayed or suspended

Contact Education Health and Safety Section and advise the details of the incident

4.1.2 – Bomb Alert Off Site

All staff must be informed that there is a bomb alert in the vicinity of the school

Any staff/pupils in the grounds or working outdoors must be brought inside immediately

External access doors into buildings are to be secured. At such times the security requirements will take precedence over fire safety concerns but it highlights the need to fit security locks allowing access outside but requiring a key to enter the building.

Curtains or window blinds are to be drawn

Change over for lessons should be suspended for the period of the incident, if this involves pupils going outside

Breaktimes are to be delayed or suspended

Contact Education Health and Safety Section and advise the details of the incident

4.1.3 – Chemical Emergency – Toxic Cloud

All staff must be informed that a Chemical Emergency is occurring

Any staff/pupils in the grounds or working outdoors must be brought inside immediately

External access doors into buildings are to be closed

Windows are to be closed and air-conditioning systems shut down

Curtains or window blinds are to be drawn

Change over for lessons should be suspended for the period of the incident if this involves pupils going outside

Breaktimes are to be delayed or suspended

Contact Education Health and Safety and advise the details of the incident

5 – NOTIFICATION OF ALL CLEAR

This will normally occur via the Council but it is accepted that on occasions you will be notified directly by the Emergency Services. A record must be made of the information provided by the all clear, the name of the person notifying you of the all clear and when all clear has been given.

6 – ACTION TO BE TAKEN FOLLOWING ALL CLEAR

The senior person on site must be notified that the all clear has been given.

The senior person will then need to decide whether to continue as normal with the remainder of the school day or whether alterations to the timetable are required.

NB You are advised that where a break period has been missed as a result of the incident, this should be rearranged or an extended break taken a little later.

All staff must then be notified that the all clear has been given and what the arrangements are to be for the remainder of the day.

Staff must then inform pupils of the arrangements.

7 – RECORDING AND FOLLOW UP

Following the incident a report should be prepared for governors indicating actions taken and the timescale of same. The procedure followed should then be reviewed and the Education Health and Safety Officer advised of any concerns identified.

APPENDIX 3

FIRE EXTINGUISHER GUIDE

| TYPE | COLOUR CODE | HOW TO PUT OUT FIRE | CLASS OF FIRE | HOW TO USE |
|--|--|--|---|--|
| WATER | MAINLY SIGNAL RED | Mainly by cooling the burning material | Class A DANGER. Do not use on live electrical equipment or on burning oil | Direct jet at the base of the flames and keep it moving across the area of the fire. Seek out any hot spots after main fire is out. |
| FOAM | MAINLY RED BUT WITH CREAM COLOUR CODE | Forms a blanket of foam over the surface of the burning liquid and smothers the fire | Class B fires | Do not aim the jet directly on to the liquid. Where the liquid on fire is in a container or on a nearby surface above the burning liquid. Allow foam to build up and flow across the liquid. |
| AFFF (Aqueous film forming foam Multi purpose) | MAINLY RED BUT WITH CREAM COLOUR CODE | Forms a fire extinguishing water film on the surface of the burning liquid. Has a cooling action with a wider extinguishing application than water on solid combustible materials. | Class A and B fires | For Class A fires use as directed for water extinguishers. For Class B fires use as directed for foam extinguishers. |
| DRY POWDER | MAINLY RED BUT WITH BLUE COLOUR CODE | Knocks down flames | Class B fires. Safe on live electrical equipment although does not readily penetrate spaces inside equipment, a fire may re-ignite. | Direct discharge horn at the base of the flames and with a rapid sweeping motion drive the flame towards the far edge the flames are out. If the extinguisher has a shut off control wait until the air clears and if the flames are visible attack the fire again. WARNING this type of extinguisher does not cool the fire very well and you need to watch out that the does not start up again. |
| DRY POWDER (Multi-purpose) | MAINLY RED BUT WITH BLUE COLOUR CODE | Knocks down flames and on burning solids, melts down to form a skin smothering the fire. Has some cooling effect. | Class A and B fires. Safe on live electrical equipment although does not readily penetrate spaces inside equipment, a fire may re-ignite. | Ditto. |
| CARBON DIOXIDE | MAINLY RED BUT WITH BLACK COLOUR CODE | Vaporising gas which smothers flames by displacement of oxygen in the air. | Class B fires. Safe and clean to use on live electrical equipment. | WARNING these types of extinguishers do not cool the fire very well and you need to watch out that the fire does not start up again. DANGER: fumes from CO ₂ and Halon 1211 (BCF) extinguishers can be harmful to users in confined spaces or if used on hot metal. Ventilate the area as soon as the fire has been controlled. |
| HALON 1211 (BCF) | THESE ARE COLOURED GREEN THEY CAN NO LONGER BE RECHARGED AND ARE TO BE REPLACED | Vaporising liquid gas giving rapid knock down by chemically inhibiting combustion. | Class B fires. Clean and light can also be used on small surface burning Class A fires Effective and safe on live electrical equipment. | Ditto. |
| HOSE REEL | | Mainly cooling the burning material | Class A fires. DANGER do not use on live electrical equipment | Direct jet at the base of the flames and keep it moving across the area of the fire. |
| FIRE BLANKET | | Smothering | Class A and B fires. Good for small fires in clothing and small spillages of liquid fires. | Place carefully over fire. Keep hands shielded from fire. Do not waft the fire towards you. |

The latest British Standard recommends that the bodies of the water extinguishers should be coloured signal red. Other extinguishers should be predominately red with a second colour to indicate the extinguishing medium covering an area sufficient to be readily apparent. Some manufacturers provide a colour-coded label, others colour-code the entire body of the extinguisher.

Since 1st January 1994, Halon (BCF) extinguishers can no longer be re-charged. These extinguishers which are coloured green will over a period be changed for suitably alternative ie: CO₂ or dry powder. This is a result of an International Agreement for protection of the ozone layer.

APPENDIX 4

FIRE INSTRUCTIONS TO HIRERS OF EDUCATIONAL PREMISES

A) GENERAL USE

Before Use

Prior to use of the premises the person in charge should ensure that relevant escape routes are unlocked and available for use and that all persons are familiar with their layout and the whereabouts of fire alarm contacts etc.

Persons in charge of activities must be familiar with the building and must know where to find a telephone in case of emergency.

In the event of fire

In the event of fire the first duty of all concerned is to prevent injury or loss of life.

In the absence of the Head or a nominated deputy, the person in charge is to be responsible for ensuring the Fire Brigade is called on the sounding of the alarm.

Immediately a fire is discovered or one is reported, the alarm should be sounded, the Brigade called (dial 999) and the address of the premises clearly given. If possible, doors immediately surrounding the fire area should be closed.

There may be an opportunity in the event of fire for an attack to be made upon it with the nearest extinguisher or hose reel but fire fighting must always be secondary to life safety.

Immediately after the fire alarm is sounded the person in charge should be escort persons/students in their charge from the building ensuring that all doors, which are passed through, are closed after them. Having safely arrived outside of the building, a check should be made to ensure that all persons are present.

After use

Always after use of premises, persons in charge should carefully check that there are no apparent fire risks and all doors and windows should be closed on vacating the building.

FIRE INSTRUCTIONS TO HIRERS OF EDUCATION PREMISES

B) USE FOR ENTERTAINMENT AND AS ASSEMBLY FUNCTIONS

Routine to be followed in case of fire

Duties of Persons Finding the Fire

See that the Manager or Master of Ceremonies is notified of an outbreak of fire.

Ask attendants to proceed to the exits.

Ask audience to leave the building quietly by the nearest exit available.

Ensure that the fire brigade is called.

Duties of Staff

On directions of the Manager or MC proceed to a nominated exit, open the doors and when persons commence to leave, direct them to the way out.

APPENDIX 4 (cont)

Tackle fire with equipment if it is safe to do so.

Before Function Commences ensure that:

All exits are unlocked and unobstructed and externally.

Safety lighting is operative.

Seating and gangways are arranged in accordance with the safety rules.

Fire fighting equipment is available for immediate use.

Ensure that maximum permitted number of persons to be admitted is not exceeded.