



Fire Safety Management

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this policy statement is to set out how the University will meet its obligations and achieve a high standard of fire safety in all of the properties it occupies and for all work activities, teaching, research, and events. This will be done by taking all reasonable and practicable measures to:

- reduce the risk of fire and risk of the spread of fire on the premises;
- ensure there is an adequate means of escape from the premises;
- ensure that, at all material times, the means of escape can be safely and effectively used;
- ensure adequate means for fighting fires on the premises is provided;
- ensure, where necessary, there are means for detecting fire on the premises and giving warning in the event of fire on the premises; and
- make arrangements for action to be taken in the event of fire, including instruction and the training of employees, and measures to mitigate the effects of the fire.

The policy statement applies to all parts of the University. However, it is recognised that the Buildings and Estates Sub-committee (BESC) of Council's Planning and Resource Allocation Committee (PRAC) are responsible for providing new buildings and extensions to existing buildings that are safe for occupation and comply with the building regulations. Upon occupation, suitable and sufficient fire risk assessments are undertaken by the occupiers to identify the risks to which employees, students, contractors and visitors are exposed in the event of fire, thus determining the precautions needed to ensure the properties are safe.

Although legislation covering fire safety provides for a risk-based approach, the actual means for ensuring an appropriate level of fire safety are prescriptive. The University will therefore take a prescriptive approach to fire safety, using risk-based judgements only in those situations when these prescribed elements cannot be implemented.

OBLIGATIONS

The University's obligations are as follows:

1. The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, which covers:

- meaning of "responsible person";
- duty to take general fire precautions;
- risk assessment;
- principles of prevention to be applied;

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- fire safety arrangements;
- elimination or reduction of risks from dangerous substances;
- firefighting and fire detection;
- emergency routes and exits;
- procedures for serious and imminent danger and for danger areas;
- additional emergency measures in respect of dangerous substances;
- maintenance;
- safety assistance;
- provision of information to employees;
- provision of information to employers and the self-employed from outside undertakings;
- training;
- co-operation and co-ordination;
- general duties of employees at work.

2. The Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmospheres Regulations 2002, which covers:

- risk assessment;
- elimination or reduction of risks from dangerous substances;
- places where explosive atmospheres may occur;
- arrangements to deal with accidents, incidents and emergencies;
- information, instruction and training;
- identification of hazardous contents of containers and pipes.

3. The University of Oxford has adopted the following best practice principles following a review of fire safety management arrangements which identified:

- roles and responsibilities for fire safety management need to be clearly defined across the devolved University;
- there needs to be a sufficient level of monitoring and oversight with regards to the completion and quality of fire risk assessments (FRAs), which are a legal requirement;
- fire wardens should be appointed in all occupied buildings;
- management reporting must include fire risk assessment completion status;
- fire safety management policies and procedures must be shared on the University's document management system.

4. The University of Oxford's commitment, as outlined in University Policy Statement S1/11, for departments to achieve, as a minimum, Level 3 in each Health and Safety Management Profile (HASMAPP) indicator.

ARRANGEMENTS

This policy statement outlines how the University will meet these obligations. The responsibility for implementing this policy statement rests with heads of departments and institutions, or with faculty board chairs, as outlined in:

- University's Statement of Health and Safety Policy;
- Health and Safety Management Responsibilities Policy Statement S2/11.

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To support heads of departments though, the following will be provided by the University's Professional Services (UAS):

- The University Safety Office will complete fire strategies for each individual building on a risk-based rolling programme. The initial programme will run between September 2019 and September 2021, with eighty fire strategies being completed. It will then be reviewed.
- The University Safety Office will identify the training needs for key role holders in fire safety and provide training to support the competency developments of those persons.
- The University Safety Office will receive, review and maintain a register of all fire risk assessments across the University.
- The Estates Compliance Team will manage the fire alarm maintenance and replacement programme with advice from the University Fire Officer. Fire alarms in buildings occupied, but not owned by the University are the responsibility of the landlord.
- Estates Services, as agreed through the Buildings and Estates Sub-committee's Standing Orders, will manage those aspects of fire safety related to the fabric of the buildings on the functional estate, including the electrical and mechanical systems. Those aspects of fire safety related to the fabric of the buildings in buildings occupied, but not owned by the University will be responsibility of the landlords (for example, embedded spaces and buildings leased from colleges or other private providers).

RESPONSIBILITIES

The University Health and Safety Management Responsibilities Policy Statement, S2/11, applies. Heads of department are therefore responsible for achieving the standards in the areas under their control.

For those aspects of fire safety management outside the control of a head of department, the University's Professional Services (UAS), including Estates Services will be the responsible party or, in the case of leased or embedded spaces, it will be the landlord. The Registrar, as the Senior Responsible Officer, is responsible for achieving the standards in the areas under the Professional Services control.

The University's Standing Orders, as approved by the Building and Estates Sub-committee, will be used to determine where specific duties apply. However, the following roles are defined in addition to those set out within the Health and Safety Management Responsibilities Policy Statement, S2/11.

Responsible Person

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 places duties on a 'Responsible Person'. Within the University, the Vice Chancellor is the 'Responsible Person', who is ultimately responsible for fire safety matters.

Heads of department, as defined by the Health and Safety Management Responsibilities Policy Statement, S2/11, and including the Registrar, have delegated authority to act as the 'Responsible Person' for buildings, offices, laboratories, residential accommodation or other structures under their control.

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In multi-occupied buildings, each head of department is responsible for the areas they occupy and should produce their own fire risk assessment for them. The majority occupier is responsible for the common areas and the shared systems and fire safety devices that are provided for the building.

If the majority occupier then becomes a minority occupier, for any reason, a handover of responsibility should be formally undertaken.

Departmental fire officer

Heads of department are expected to appoint an individual to the role of departmental fire officer. The departmental fire officer will act as the 'Competent Person' in the areas they cover and can assist or, where appropriate, oversee the implementation of this policy statement on behalf of the head of department.

Other competent persons

The head of department and departmental fire officer, can also draw upon the assistance of other competent persons across the University (eg Estates Services staff, divisional and area safety officers and the University Safety Office) to help and advise them on how to fulfil their duties as responsible persons.

University Fire Officers

A University Fire Officer and University Assistant Fire Officer are employed to set out fire safety standards, monitor their implementation across the University and provide guidance.

STANDARDS

Heads of department, as the delegated responsible person, are responsible for ensuring their department has appropriate arrangements and procedures in place to meet the following standards.

Roles and responsibilities

1. Roles and responsibilities will be defined for all personnel involved in fire safety management.

Specifically:

- 1.1 Each department will appoint a member of staff as the departmental fire officer, named within their statement of safety organisation.
- 1.2 All responsible persons, departmental fire officers, and competent persons will attend a suitable training course provided by the University Safety Office. Individuals will undertake refresher training every five years.
- 1.3 Suitable training records will be kept by the department for those persons identified above and used to assess or develop further the individual's competency.

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Risk assessment

2. A suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment will be in place for every building, including laboratory teaching space, residential accommodation, embedded space, office, store or any other building, or part of a building managed by the University.

Specifically:

- 2.1 All fire risk assessments will be documented on a standard fire risk assessment proforma, as provided by the University Safety Office.
- 2.2 Those carrying out fire risk assessments will attend a suitable training course provided by the University Safety Office. Individuals will undertake refresher training every five years.
- 2.3 All fire risk assessments will be reviewed on an annual basis and a copy forwarded to the University Safety Office, who will retain a central register of assessments.

Evacuation procedures

3. Suitable evacuation procedures will be documented and in place for every building, including laboratory teaching space, residential accommodation, embedded space, office, store or any other building, or part of a building managed by the University.

Specifically:

- 3.1 Everyone working in a building will be provided with a suitable induction to ensure they understand the evacuation procedures.
- 3.2 Everyone working in a building will be expected to respond in accordance with the building's evacuation procedures. Those who have yet to receive induction training will be supervised by others to ensure they respond appropriately.
- 3.3 Evacuation procedures will be tested on a termly basis. Appropriate actions will be taken to ensure people respond accordingly and the outcome of any evacuation will be documented.
- 3.4 Personal Emergency Evacuation Procedures (PEEPS) will be produced and documented for any mobility-impaired individual or person requiring assistance during an emergency evacuation.
- 3.5 A suitable number of individuals will be appointed by each department to assist in the evacuation of a building, including departmental fire officers, fire wardens, and dedicated escorts.
- 3.6 All those assisting in the evacuation of a building will have attended a suitable level of training, provided either by the University Safety Office, area or divisional safety officers or the departmental fire officer. Individuals will undertake refresher training every five years.

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Fire alarm response

4. There will be a system for responding to fire alarms, so if a fire occurs the fire service is called without delay.

Specifically:

- 4.1 An investigation into the cause of an automatic fire alarm activation will be made, whenever a building is managed by staff, to decide if the fire service is required to attend. Particularly between the hours of 0830 and 1700hrs on weekdays in a non-residential building and at all times in a residential building.
- 4.2 Buildings will be evacuated on activation of the fire alarm system and the system will not be silenced until the evacuation is complete and it is safe to do so.
- 4.3 Oxford University Security Services, or any other relevant alarm monitoring station, will be kept up to date with the names of departmental key holders.

Maintenance and testing of fire precautions

5. All fire precautions, including the fire alarms, monitoring systems, emergency lighting etc, will be maintained, with appropriate test regimes in place, records kept, and a process for responding to faults arising out of this testing.

Specifically:

- 5.1 The fire alarm system will be tested by numbering all break-glass call points and activating a different one each week to ensure that the sounders, and other devices activated by the system, are functioning correctly.
- 5.2 The indicator panel will be checked daily to ensure that it is functioning correctly and is free from faults.
- 5.3 Detectors will be checked quarterly by a competent contractor in accordance with the manufacturer's guidance.
- 5.4 The emergency lighting system, including any illuminated exit signs, will be checked by simulated power failure:
 - monthly to ensure illumination (flick test);
 - annually for all of its duration (drop test).

Emergency lighting

6. Emergency lighting will be in place within premises and outside exit doors where employees, students and other relevant persons resort, during the hours of darkness, to enable safe escape in case of power or local lighting sub-circuit failure.

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Specifically:

- 6.1 Areas used as workplaces or circulation spaces that rely on artificial lighting during daylight hours will be provided with emergency lighting.

Flammable substance and explosive atmospheres

7. A suitable and sufficient risk assessment will be undertaken to determine the quantity of highly flammable liquids that can be justifiably stored in any working area.

Specifically:

- 7.1 The risks from the indoor storage of dangerous substances will be controlled by elimination or the reduction of such substances in the workplace to a minimum, providing mitigation to protect against foreseeable incidents.
- 7.2 When not in use, containers of flammable liquids will be kept closed and stored in suitable cabinets or bins of fire-resisting construction and which are designed to retain spills (110% volume of the largest vessel normally stored in it).
- 7.3 Flammable liquids will be stored separately from other dangerous substances that may enhance the risk of fire or compromise the integrity of the container or cabinet/bin. For example, energetic substances, oxidizers and corrosive materials.

Emergency services access

8. There will be sufficient external access to buildings to enable fire appliances to be brought near enough to the building for effective use. Access for fire appliances will be maintained unobstructed and available at all times.

Specifically:

- 8.1 The departmental fire officer or other competent person will be available to liaise with the fire and rescue service, when necessary, in order to make them aware of any features that arise which may inhibit firefighting activities.

ACHIEVING THE STANDARDS

Failure to achieve the above standards could have a significant impact on departmental or University activities, eg potential for serious injury, interruptions to operations, loss of equipment or facilities, insurance claims or prosecutions. Guidance will therefore be provided via the University Safety Office website to outline how heads of department can achieve these standards within their areas of control. If the guidance is not adopted, then heads of department must assure themselves and the University Fire Officer that their own systems fulfil the same standard.

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DOCUMENT CONTROL

This policy statement forms part of the University's Health and Safety Policy. It supersedes the following University policy statements:

- S10/07 - Fire risk assessments;
- S8/07 - Fire drills;
- S4/05 - Routine testing and maintenance of emergency lighting systems;
- S3/05 - Routine testing and maintenance of fire alarm systems;
- S2/05 - Calling the fire service;
- S1/05 – Storage of flammable liquids;
- S11/01 - Safety requirements for university lecture facilities.

Circulation

All departments: Heads, DSOs, Admins, DDSOs, DFOs, List V.

Version history

UPS No.	Version No:	Approved By:	Date:	Notes:
S1/21	1.0	GPC	HT 2020	Updated policy in agreed '2019 format'.

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