

Fire Safety at Work Policy



ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

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Version Control

This document is intended for:

- Council staff only School-based staff only Council & School-based staff

Version	Key Changes	Approved By

This document may be reviewed and amended at any time and without consultation in response to legal requirements, in line with best practice or in response to an organisational requirement and where the changes do not affect the spirit or intent of the document.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Fire is a potential hazard in all Council premises. The consequences of fire in some premises can be especially serious because of difficulties and dangers associated with the emergency evacuation of children or vulnerable adults, who may be dependent or have mobility impairment.
- 1.2 The aim of the Council is to ensure, as far as possible, that outbreaks of fire do not occur. If an outbreak cannot be prevented it must be rapidly detected, effectively contained and when safe to do so quickly extinguished, with minimal risk to staff or others due to robust fire safety protection and evacuation procedures.

2. Scope of Guidelines

- 2.1 The guidelines apply to all buildings under the control of the Council. All Council places of work must comply with the guidelines.

3. Legislation and Guidance

- 3.1 The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (RRO) together with the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, and other associated legislation and Codes of Practice, impose duties on all employers in respect of fire safety at work.
- 3.2 These duties extend to the Council, its employees and other persons who may be affected by the Council's work activities.
- 3.3 The RRO applies to any person or organisation that is responsible for the building e.g.
- Dutyholder for leased buildings such as **Community Asset Transfers** would usually be the leaseholder however this can vary depending on the details of the lease.
 - Dutyholder for rented buildings would be the landlord for common areas and facilities and the tenant for those areas tenants occupies.
 - Dutyholder for most schools would be Headteachers and local Council
 - Dutyholder for foundation schools would be the Headteacher and the Governors
 - Dutyholder for those in shared premises such as the General Offices, Anvil Court, Foxes Lane etc would be those managing the building.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 Definition of Responsible Person

The Responsible Person has the duty to implement the articles and regulations of The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (see Appendix 2).

The main regulatory authority is the Fire and Rescue Service who have the power to inspect premises and records, investigate, serve notice or begin lawful proceedings to responsible persons. The Fire Authority will determine who in their opinion the responsible person/s is, when there is a need for them to do so. This ultimate duty will sit with the Chief Executive of the Authority.

4.2 The Chief Executive (Responsible Person)

The Chief Executive (Responsible Person) is responsible for ensuring that the Council complies with current fire safety legislation and the implementation of this policy in all the premises that it owns or occupies.

It will be the responsibility of the Chief Executive to ensure:

- Blaenau Gwent Count Borough Council has an effective Fire Safety Management System, an agreed programme of investments in fire safety improvements, and that they are accounted for in the Council's business plans.
- An audit and reporting system of Fire Precautions is undertaken to advise the Council's management board of the current state of fire safety within the Council premises.
- To ensure that all agreements for the provision of services by third parties include sufficient contractual arrangements to ensure compliance with the Council's fire safety guidelines.
- Championing fire safety issues at board level, which for example, would include proposing agreed programmes of investment in fire precautions are accounted for in the Council's business plan
- That Fire Safety Policies and Fire Strategies are uniformly and correctly applied across the Council
- Ensuring appropriate levels of management are always available to make decisions and give instructions regardless of the time of day;
- Provide a fit for purpose reporting system for fire incidents
- Ensure the Council has in place a clearly defined fire safety guidelines and relevant supporting protocols and procedures, and this is supported by sufficient resources and staff available to implement the Council's Fire Safety Guidelines and procedures;
- Ensure the development, delivery and audit of an effective fire safety training programme.

4.3 Corporate Landlord

The Council operates a corporate landlord model for the maintenance of buildings and operationally the responsibility regarding fire sits with Technical Services and Responsible Persons (see Appendix 2 for details). This means that any repairs or statutory inspections falls under Technical Services.

4.4 Technical Services management (Responsible person)

- Responsible for providing solutions for the building recommendations and premises risks identified by the Health and Safety advisor, that they are correctly dealt with, and if necessary entered on Council business plan or risk register.
- They should ensure adequate consideration and priority in the allocation of resources for the safe management of fire precautions.
- Responsible for commissioning Competent Person's (Fire) who are installers and maintainers of fire safety equipment due to their skill, knowledge and qualification.
- They are also required to:
 - Obtain expert advice on fire legislation and/or technical matters;
 - An awareness of all fire safety features in their buildings;

 - Fire safety risks particular to the organisation;
 - Consider precautions for mobility impaired individuals, staff and visitors with regard fire procedures;
 - comply with legislation, taking into account advice from the Health and Safety advisor or instruction from the Fire Authority;
 - Ensure co-operation between employers where two or more share the premises;
 - Monitor and the mitigate fire incidents;
 - Liaise with enforcing authorities;
 - Liaise with other managers and provide a link to Council committees;
 - Monitor the inspection and maintenance of fire safety systems and equipment to ensure it is compliant;
 - Undertake reviews of identified risks in fire risk assessments and if necessary place on the Council risk register;
 - Ensure the day to day implementation of the fire safety guidelines where applicable;

4.5 The Health and Safety Advisor

The Health and Safety Advisor provides competent fire safety advice and will be responsible for:

- Recording and reporting fire risk assessments on behalf of the corporate landlord.
- Providing advice on fire legislation.
- Providing technical advice on the application and interpretation of the fire safety policy
- Review of the content of the Council's fire safety policy.
- Assisting with training, with the development of a suitable and sufficient training programme for staff, and delivery as necessary.
- Liaising with the enforcing authorities on technical issues.
- Liaising with managers and staff on fire safety issues.

Where specialist solutions are required to resolve fire safety issues the Health and Safety Advisor would not necessarily be expected to have the level of skill required but would know the limits of their capabilities and, when necessary, seek specialist advice from an Authorising Engineer (Fire).

4.6 The Local Manager or Person-in-Charge (Responsible Person) e.g. Headteacher, Manager etc

The Local Person-in-charge(s) or Manager(s) must be of a position to be able to take charge in a fire situation. They should appoint a Deputy(s) who can cover for them in their absence. Advice and guidance can be sought from the Health and Safety Advisor and technical services.

The Person in charge at a premise or part of a premise has the following responsibilities:

- Initiating and monitoring actions to ensure the day-to-day maintenance of the fire precautions provided.
- To provide induction fire training to all new staff (see Appendix 4), this includes volunteers, part time and agency staff. This familiarisation training should include;
 - i. Local fire procedures and evacuation plan,
 - ii. Means of escape
 - iii. Location of fire alarm manual call points
 - iv. Firefighting equipment
 - v. Any premise/site fire risks identified
 - vi. Evacuation meeting/muster point
- To organise and record a fire evacuation practice at least twice a year.
- Ensure that weekly alarm checks are undertaken

- Ensure records of testing and maintenance of fire alarms, emergency lighting and firefighting equipment are being maintained.
- Ensuring staff are aware of the procedures and actions required for reporting fire safety defects.
- Record number of fire activation at premises
- Familiarise themselves with the Fire Risk Assessment
- Ensuring written records are updated in the fire risk assessment action plan and the fire logbook to include:
 - All fire safety defects
 - Action taken to rectify those defects and the signing off of defects when cleared
- Contact and inform the Council's Health and Safety Advisor on the following occasions:
 - Any threat to means of escape or fire detection system.
 - In advance of major alterations/extensions
- Ensure sufficient Fire Wardens are appointed and they receive regular refresher training in their duties and responsibilities.
- Staff in the premise participates in fire safety evacuation at least twice per year.
- That on handover of responsibility to a deputy or acting person-in-charge, that person is aware of the legal duty to provide supervision of premise fire procedures in the event of a fire or false alarm situation.
- Ensuring all fire safety related records are available for inspection by the Fire Service at any reasonable time.
- Ensuring any Fire or Automatic Fire Alarm is reported to Tech Services.
- Report to Tech Services and keep progress records of any building or equipment defect/risk that has an effect on fire safety.
- Co-ordinate and direct staff in the event of a fire in accordance with the premise emergency procedures and evacuation plan.
- Ensure local emergency action plans are developed and brought to the attention of staff.
- Ensure that sufficient trained staff are available at all times to implement the local emergency plan.
- Sufficient numbers of key holders should be identified
- Report any actual fires to Health and Safety, Tech services and the insurance advisor

4.7 Responsible Person in Multiple Occupancy (Building shared) e.g. GO, Schools that lease classrooms

In a building with more than one occupier Fire Safety Legislation requires that there is in place consultation and co-operation between all occupants' management and the landlord over Fire Safety matters. A Responsible Person must be appointed for the building by the Host Organisation (e.g., this could be the Council who owns, holds the lease, or is the main occupier).

Each occupier should appoint a Responsible Person for the areas under their control (this would normally be the Person-in-charge of a department or manager). It is desired that Responsible Persons are based within the building.

The Responsible Person has a legal obligation to ensure there is a Fire Risk Assessment that covers their building or area; this document may be provided by the premise management/owner for the whole building, consultation with the building management will determine if this is provided. If not then each occupier must provide a Fire Risk Assessment for their area, and building management or the Host Authority must always provide the FRA for all common areas. Identified risks and remedy information must be shared with all occupiers and management of the premise.

The Host Authority/landlord/leaseholder has responsibility for the building. However, fire procedures and policies of all organisations within the premise must be compatible with those of the Host or they should adhere to those of the Host Authority/leaseholder/landlord.

The Host Authority/leaseholder/landlord is responsible for the testing and keeping records of:

- The fire alarm system.
- Emergency lighting.
- Firefighting equipment.
- Provide opportunity of at least an annual fire practice evacuation training for staffs working within the building.

4.8 Fire Marshal/Warden

An appropriate number of Fire Wardens should be appointed in all departments or buildings to give local leadership and direction in Fire Safety matters. They are not in an enforcing role but report to their line manager, and if necessary to the Health and Safety Advisor and/or Trade Union representatives. Fire wardens should refresh their training every 3 years.

The Fire Warden should: -

- Act as a focal point on fire safety issues for local staff
- Organise and assist in the fire safety regime within local areas
- Raise issues regarding local area fire safety with local management
- Assist with coordination of the response to an incident within the immediate vicinity
- Be responsible for the confirmation of an empty building during an incident
- Support the local managers on regular fire safety checks
- Participate in regular fire warden training and apply the information and duties to the workplace

4.9 Technical Services Staff

Technical services maintenance staff/provider should respond to requests following a Fire Risk Assessment.

All projects should consider the requirements of fire safety during the planning phase of the project and have developed fire strategies at the design stage. Projects staff must take particular care to ensure that any aspect of new, refurbishment or maintenance works where it is likely to affect the fire integrity of a premises that the Health and Safety Advisor is informed and becomes actively involved. Specific and sufficiently detailed instruction should be agreed to enable the works to be undertaken.

4.10 General Duties and Responsibilities of all staff

All Council employees have a duty to ensure that they comply with the fire safety arrangements and procedures at their workplace and that they do not commit acts which could lead to an outbreak of fire. All employees have a duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act, to take reasonable care of their own health and safety at work, and of other persons who may be affected by their acts or omissions.

All Council employees are required to complete fire safety training and to familiarise themselves with the content of the premises' fire procedures.

Staff shall take particular care to ensure that the Health and Safety Advisor is informed and becomes actively involved with any aspect of their or others work or actions that is likely to affect the fire integrity of premises.

5. Fire Training

5.1 Fire Awareness

Training is an essential element of fire safety precautions.

All Council Managers must provide staff with induction fire training on or before their first day in a new workplace (this includes part-time, volunteer and agency staff).

All managers must monitor and encourage their team to attend fire awareness training.

Staff can also complete fire awareness training using the Council Fire e-module.

All staff and management should receive training as a minimum at least every 3 years. An alternative method is for a department/service manager to request the Health and Safety Advisor to provide instruction as part of a team or premise training session.

5.2 Fire Warden/Marsha

Staff identified as Fire Marshals must attend an initial course and refreshed every 3 years or sooner. Both the initial and refresher course are face to face with the Health and Safety Advisor or a qualified trainer.

Additional, specialised training may be required for specific high risk activities.

All staff have a duty to be aware of safety precautions and actions to take in the event of a fire in their area of employment, and when visiting other premises in the course of their duties. All staff have responsibility to seek this knowledge from the Person-in-Charge as required by Health and Safety legislation.

5.3 Evac Chair Training

In premises that have more than one floor, evacuation chairs may be used to aid those with mobility impairment reaching the building exit safely. Sufficient staff should be trained in the use of evacuation chairs to ensure that safe evacuation can be affected whenever the building is occupied. Refresher training is required every 3 years.

5.4 Premise Evacuation Drills

The Council requires general buildings to have at least two fire drills each year and school buildings to have a fire drill once per term. The time and date of these evacuations should be recorded along with any salient details or issues (see Appendix 3).

The legal requirement to undertake fire evacuation is a requirement of the Regulatory Reform Order 2005 and the Health and Safety at Work Act. The law states that responsibility for completion and records of premise evacuation practice is with the person-in-charge of the occupants or building manager.

Evacuation drill co-operation should be done in conjunction with any landlord or main lease holder arrangement. Health and Safety Advisors and Fire Regulatory Authority will inspect fire records and audit compliance during fire risk assessments and other premise visits.

An evacuation practice drill can be done in consultation with the Health and Safety advisor who can provide advice and agree the method plan used. The Health and Safety Advisor may observe the fire drill, provide advice and the evacuation drill debrief.

All evacuation drills must be recorded in a premise fire logbook by the manager, fire records are required to be compliant with regulations. Details that need to be recorded include:

- Date and time that the evacuation is undertaken
- Time that is taken to fully evacuate the building
- Any issues or problems with the evacuation

6. Alarm Testing

For electrical systems a manual call point should be activated (using a different call point for each successive test) every week (see Appendix 1). Manual call points should be numbered to ensure they are sequentially tested. Date of testing of the manual points should be recorded along with the location of the point that was tested.

6.1 Emergency Lighting

The following minimum inspection and tests should be carried out at the intervals recommended below.

6.1.1 Monthly Emergency Lighting Testing

All emergency lighting systems should be tested monthly. This is a short functional test in accordance with BS EN 50172:2004 / BS 5266-8:2004.

The duration of the test should be sufficient to ensure that the luminaire operates correctly, whilst minimising any damage to the system components, e.g. Lamps, Battery.

It is important to note that the entire system doesn't have to be tested at the same time. The system can be tested in sections, over a testing schedule, so long as each luminaire is tested each calendar month and that the test is recorded

6.1.2 Annual Emergency Lighting Testing

The annual test should be a full rated duration test to ensure that the emergency lights are still working and producing the acceptable level of light at the end of the test. For example, if a luminaire is rated for a 3 hour duration, then after 3 hours in an emergency situation the light should still be lit.

It is worth noting that this full duration test should be completed at a time of low risk of an emergency situation so that the batteries have sufficient time to recharge.

7. The Fire Risk Assessment (FRA)

7.1 The FRA will give detailed and specific measures to minimise:

- The incidence of fire throughout the premises.
- The impact from fire on life safety, delivery of service, the environment and property.

7.2 The FRA will give detailed and specific recommendations to ensure that the appropriate fire safety standards are being maintained and that the appropriate management systems are in place.

7.3 Fire Risk Assessments produced will be copied to the person(s)-in-charge or in control of the premise and to any others that need to be informed or take action.

7.4 The FRA must be subject to a regular review by the Premise Manager or Person(s)-in-Charge and they must record the progress of the identified fire risks and remedial work in the FRA Action Plan and they should add any further identified risk items.

7.5 The FRAs should be undertaken on a periodic basis as shown in Table 1 shows our minimum fire risk assessment time intervals.

Premises	Interval
High risk premise e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sleeping locations • high amounts of Gas, Chemical, Flammable or Combustible storage or use • any area that causes or uses anything that is a high fire or explosive risk 	Within each calendar year
Medium risk, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • schools • offices 	At least every 2 years
Low risk, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • empty or low risk storage unit 	At least every 3 years

Table 1: FRA Intervals

7.6 Changes to buildings and plant, or equipment, will require review of the FRA to ensure that the fire risk has been considered.

7.7 Specific fire risks must be considered when procuring new equipment.

8. Hot Works at Council Premises and Fully Leased Buildings

8.1 In any planned hot works on or in Council owned, or Council controlled premise, any contractor should not be permitted to start until Technical Services have agreed the contractor's safety precautions are sufficient and that this has been agreed in writing, usually in the form of a Permit to Work.

8.2 Hot works includes hot bitumen roof repair or laying, welding, gas flame metal cutting etc.

8.3 For emergency work/repairs contractors and maintenance staff should always check with the Technical Services for agreement of Hot Work precautions.

9. Smoking plus Electrically Charged Cigarettes

- 9.1** The Council has a zero-tolerance policy against smoking inside or immediately next to Council controlled buildings, it is recognised that smoking materials are a fire risk and that they are not allowed in Council owned or controlled properties other than in designated areas.
- 9.2** Electronic/Vapour Cigarettes should not be used on any sites in the Council other than in designated areas.
- 9.3** There have been a number of serious fires and injury/near misses incidents within the UK where electronic/vapour cigarettes have been connected to a computer via a charge lead. In the interest of safety for all within Council owned or controlled premise, or Council departments, the charging of electronic cigarettes via any computer is not allowed.

10. Kitchens and Tea Points etc

- 10.1** Kitchens and tea points are in premises throughout the Council. A tea point has a kettle and microwave and can be in an open plan office and has no direct heat sources. A kitchen may also have toasters and hobs and will be in an enclosed space with the relevant fire safety mitigation (e.g., fire doors, heat detection etc).
- 10.2** Fire legislation allows Fire Authorities the right to impose fines or take other action against premise that have false alarms that are not justified. The use of cooking appliances (oven, hob, toasters etc) must only be in a designated kitchen or similar fire resistant enclosure.

11. Electrical Extension Cables and Multi Socket Plugs

- 11.1** The use of extension cables and multi socket plugs is discouraged. Using these items could prevent safety devices performing correctly leading to a fire situation.

- 11.2** Multi socket plugs are easily dislodged due to their design and weight which can then give arcing sparks, so this type of device is banned from use or supply within the Council.
- 11.3** Extension cables are to be avoided whenever possible as the cable can easily be damaged leading to possible short circuit, so the design of a room should always be followed by staff who should place desks and equipment so that they can use all the available plug sockets provided in the room. It is further identified that the reason to achieve one plug to one socket, is that not all persons understand the power required by devices or equipment, and if a combination of devices/equipment is powered from one socket this could give a deterioration of the plug socket and/or supply cable.
- 11.4** At no time can a reel type extension cable be used for static office as they are known to self-heat within the reel.
- 11.5** The joining together of any extension cables by plugging into one another is banned within Council owned or controlled buildings or areas, as this can have a detrimental effect on the correct operation of safety devices.

12. Reporting of Fire and False Alarms

- 12.1** The collection of data for fire/fire alarm incidents and the requirement for investigation of incidents is important. Lessons can be learned from routine reports as well as from the comparatively few serious fires experienced.
- 12.2** Managers and staff who at the time of an incident would be deemed as the lead person of a department or building, or their job position makes them the responsible person, then they must report fire incidents, false alarms or evacuations, to Technical Services. If a building has an actual fire then an additional initial report to the Health and Safety Advisor and Insurance Risk Manager should be sent as soon as possible either by telephone message or e-mail.

13. Fire Alarm Actions and Calling the Fire Service

- 13.1 A Government directive to the Fire Service is to encourage and ensure that in all nondomestic, occupied premises with a fire alarm activating, the staff should identify the zone that has the activated sensor is in and to carry out a search of the area to ascertain if a fire situation exists before calling the Fire Service.

When an emergency call is made to the Fire Services if an actual fire situation cannot be confirmed or genuinely suspected, and a premise search has not been completed, then the Fire and Rescue Service operator may carry out a 'call challenge' and give instruction to search before any response will be mobilised. The Fire Service should not be called for any false fire alarms and they are to be dealt with by the Council staff or the Council maintenance provider and reported to Technical Services.

- 13.2 Staff should first read the fire panel to gain information of the zone and location of the activation. Staff should **never place themselves in danger** when searching, if signs of fire or smoke are seen, smell, cracking sounds within a room or void space are heard, or heat can be felt on an approach to an area or on the outside of the entrance door or the door handle, then they should halt the search, ensure evacuation of all, and immediately report their findings as an emergency to the Fire Service.

References

1. BS 5839-6: 2019 *Fire detection and fire alarm systems for buildings*
2. Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 [The Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2005/1717/contents/made)

Appendix 1 Alarm Test Procedure

Alarm test procedure

1. If the alarm is being monitored (i.e. has an emergency response set up if the alarm activates), the ARC (Alarm Receiving Centre) will need to be notified of this test. *(People usually call and just give a time frame of around 15 minutes so that it will give you enough time to carry it out before it automatically goes into alarm mode again.)*
2. A report from the ARC should be requested to make sure they received the signal, demonstrating that the connection between the alarm system and them is still operational.
3. Each manual call point (MCP) you test will be registered to a specific zone in your building. *(Next to your fire alarm panel should be a Zone Chart which is a floor plan of your building with all of the zones colour coded and labelled so you know which zone relates to which area.)*
4. A different call point should be tested each week. If there are 10 call points on site, all should have been tested by the end of the 10th week before rotating round again. This is to ensure that there are no faults e.g., one of them does not trigger the alarm as it should, which you would not be able to identify if you kept testing the same one each time.
5. After the MCP has been triggered, go to the panel to silence the alarm, first it must be checked that the screen on the panel displays the correct zone. E.g. if the MCP by the Entrance was triggered, Zone 1, the panel should say this.
6. If the correct zone is not displayed, then is an issue there which will need to be rectified.
7. The weekly testing must be carried out during normal working hours.
8. The fire alarm is designed to disrupt. The reason why the fire industry recommend testing at the same time on the same day each week, during working hours, is so that the building occupants know to expect it at this time and become accustomed to what their fire alarm sounds like. If the fire alarm sounds *outside* of this time-frame, they know it's not a test but potentially a real fire, and it is time to get out.
9. The date and time of the test should be recorded along with the location of the MCP and any issues found

Appendix 2 - Activities/Checks required summary

Activities/Checks	Frequency	Responsibility	Action by	Recorded
Fire Evacuation Drills	Two per year	Responsible person for building	Responsible person	Yes
Fire alarm check–rotating fire points activated	Weekly	Responsible person for building	Responsible Person	Yes
Emergency Lighting Test	Monthly	Responsible person for building	Responsible person	Yes
Lift goes to ground floor on activation of alarm	Weekly	Responsible person for building	Tech Services	Yes
Fire extinguisher Checks	Monthly	Responsible person for building	Responsible person	Yes
Fire extinguisher inspections	Annually	Responsible person for building	Tech Services	Yes
Emergency Lighting inspections	Annually	Responsible person for building	Tech Services	Yes
Fire Systems inspections	Annually	Responsible person for building	Tech Services	Yes
Fire Risk Assessment for most premises	Biennially	Responsible person for building	Health and Safety	Yes
Fire Risk Assessment for those with sleeping arrangements	Annually	Responsible person for the building	Health and safety	Yes

Appendix 3: Fire Evacuation Report Example

Fire Evacuation Drill Report

Drill Coordinator	
Location	
Date	
Time of Drill	

Duration and Fire Evacuation Marshals

Duration (mins and secs)	
Number of Marshalls on site at practice	
Is this sufficient?	

Did/were the FEMs: (tick all that apply, comment where necessary)

Clearly visible?	
Well Organised?	
Prevent Re-entry?	
Maintain clear exits?	
Any other FEM comment?	

Comments on the drill and any issues identified

Name	
Signature	
Date	

Appendix 4: Managers Induction Check List for Staff

- Staff should know how to report an incident, risk or near miss or safety concerns (Incident/Accident reporting system)
- That staff must always visually assess (known as a dynamic risk assessment) the availability of exit routes which should be kept clear
- Staff to understand that at no time will they place themselves in danger, it is more important that they are able to escape and raise the alarm to the emergency services
- If staff consider a client, the home of the client, or the situation, is not safe they should leave the premise, and they should always report this to their manager and onto the Incident Report system.