

Fire Precautions

Introduction

The Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations (NI) 2001 place a responsibility on the Employer to carry out a fire risk assessment of their premises and consider their employees and all other people who may be affected by a fire in the workplace. The school as part of its role in the risk assessment process should ensure that the fire safety audit/ inspection sheet in this section is completed annually.

The outbreak of fire within the school premises can result in death, serious injuries, disruption to teaching, financial and administrative costs and stress. Schools can reduce the chance of a fire or minimise its effects by ensuring the:

- Adequate provision of equipment;
- Management of fire safety issues;
- Appropriate training and instruction to staff and pupils;
- Provision of sufficient number of emergency exits and routes;
- Clear indication of emergency exits by signage;
- Keeping of emergency exits and routes clear from obstructions.

A school is legally required to have a means of fire evacuation to be followed in case of a fire.

Action to be taken upon discovering a fire

Any person discovering a fire should:

- Activate the fire alarm;
- Evacuate the building;
- Ring 999.

To enable staff and pupils to become familiar with the building, a fire action notice should be displayed in every occupied room. The fire action notice should be printed on A4 laminated card.

It may be appropriate to show a plan of the school highlighting the escape plan route and assembly point. These would be especially useful if your school is used for evening classes or other activities, which would bring in people who would not otherwise be familiar with the building layout.

On hearing the alarm, all pupils and staff must stop their activity and evacuate the building in an orderly manner.

Heads of Departments should ensure that machinery and electricity have been turned off and windows and doors are closed to prevent the spread of fire and smoke to other parts of the school. All cloakrooms, stores and toilets should be checked to ensure that no one is left inside. Lifts should not be used as a means of escape in the event of an evacuation.

Emergency routes and exits

There should be a sufficient number of emergency exits for use in a school.

The routes to emergency exits must be kept clear at all times and where necessary open in the direction of travel. Emergency doors should be indicated by signage and must not be locked or fastened in such a way that they could not be opened in the case of an emergency.

Evacuation of pupils and staff

Each room, department or block should have a pre-determined point where both staff and pupils will assemble immediately after evacuating the building. Places of assembly should be away from the building and not allow those evacuated to act as an obstruction to emergency service vehicles such as fire engines. Where possible the school should have one assembly point. Staff and pupils must remain there until they receive further instruction.

Teachers should check that all pupils are present at the assembly and report to the Principal that all have been accounted for or that some are missing. The Principal can then provide this information to the Fire Brigade on their arrival.

Fire alarm systems

The purpose of an alarm system in the event of a fire is to alert occupants to evacuate the premises quickly and summon the attention of the Fire Brigade. In all schools a system should exist for alerting occupants of the occurrence of a fire. This will vary from a hand-operated bell or horn to an electronically operated bell or siren. Whichever system is available within the school, this should be recognised by pupils and staff and should not be confused with any other signal. The alarm must be audible in all parts of the building so that the warning is given to all pupils and staff immediately.

The alarm system should be tested weekly and a record kept of the test. See record of weekly inspections form later in this section.

Training

Principals should ensure that staff and pupils have received training in the following areas:

- Fire Prevention;
- Action to be taken on discovering a fire;
- How to raise an alarm and location of call points;
- Action to be taken on hearing the Fire Alarm;
- The location of escape routes;
- Assembly point;
- Evacuation and roll call.

In addition members of staff should receive instruction in:

- The operation of the Fire Alarm (If fitted);
- How to call the Fire Brigade;
- The location of fire fighting equipment and selection of fire extinguishers;
- The evacuation of visitors and disabled persons.

Certain members of staff will have specific duties in the event of a fire. It is important that these are communicated clearly to staff and that everyone understands their responsibilities.

Receptionists/Office staff

Collect class registers so that an effective system of roll call can be administered at the assembly point.

Fire Wardens/Marshalls/Caretakers

Check specific areas, zones or blocks have been evacuated.

Department Heads

Check that all machinery and electricity has been turned off and all doors closed.

Signage

All escape routes need to be signed with the running man, open door and arrow pictograms. Escape routes should no longer be signed 'Fire Exit' without pictograms. Fire doors should be labelled 'Fire Door Keep Shut'.

Fire drills

A fire drill should be held once per term and a record kept of the details. Information such as the date, time taken to evacuate and number evacuated should be recorded. Please see Fire Safety Drill Logsheet. The building should be evacuated in 2½ minutes.

Good fire prevention practices

There are a number of measures which can be taken to prevent a fire. The following are examples:

- Identify all materials, which are combustible within the school and ensure that these are not stored on escape routes or close to sources of ignition.
- Avoid the use of multi point adapters where possible. If this is not possible do not overload.
- Ensure that electrical equipment has undergone portable appliance testing. Keep up to date records. Any faulty equipment should be taken out of use immediately.
- Only competent people should wire plugs etc.
- Good housekeeping, remove waste on a regular basis. Where possible all large bins, skips etc., should be sited at least 10 metres away from the building. These should be secured in an enclosure or locked to a metal post.
- Introduce a no smoking policy. Where smoking is allowed, limit this to restricted areas and provide metal waste bins.
- Unplug all electrical equipment when not in use.

Please refer to the fire safety audit inspection sheet later in this section.

Fire extinguishers

Fire extinguishers are located to assist with the means of escape.

There are 4 main types of fire extinguisher:- Water, Foam, Dry Powder and Carbon Dioxide. Fire extinguishers now have all red bodies with a zone of colour up to 5% to indicate the type of extinguisher.


Type of Extinguisher	Colour	Application
Water	All Red	Paper, wood, textile and fabric. Must not be used on electrical fires
Foam	Red with a band of Cream	Flammable liquids, paper, wood, textile and fabric
Dry powder	Red with a band of Blue	All types of fire
Carbon Dioxide	Red with a band of Black	Electrical fires, flammable liquids and flammable gases.

Fire extinguishers should be sited in conspicuous positions, on the exit routes, adjacent to doors and in similar positions on each floor. A competent person should make a weekly check for discharged extinguishers. A more rigorous inspection and maintenance of fire extinguishers is required every 12 months and an adhesive label showing the details of this should be affixed to each extinguisher. Governors must ensure that they have a contract for the annual inspection of this equipment and also a procedure whereby used or empty extinguishers are refilled. A cross section of staff should receive training in the selection and use of fire fighting equipment.

The number and type of basic extinguisher required will be determined by the completion of a fire risk assessment.



Fire extinguishers should be located 1 metre above floor level.




FIRE ACTION

Any person discovering a fire

1. Sound the alarm
2. Call the Fire Brigade by dialling 999
3. Report to assembly point

On hearing the fire alarm

4. Leave the building by _____ route
5. Close all doors behind you
6. Report to assembly point
7. Do not re-enter the building until authorised to do so.



Do not take risks
Do not return for any reason until authorised to do so
Do not use lifts

What do I need to do to comply with fire precautions regulations?

You should ensure that the school has a comprehensive fire risk assessment carried out by a competent person.

Fire safety audits/inspections (to be completed by the school)

Are combustible materials close to light bulbs or fittings?	YES/NO
Are portable heaters used?	YES/NO
Are there multi point adapters in electrical sockets?	YES/NO
Are plugs fitted with the correctly rated fuse?	YES/NO
Has portable electrical equipment been routinely inspected and has it been deemed safe to use?	YES/NO
Is there any evidence of damage to portable electrical appliances, frayed leads etc?	YES/NO
Is someone designated to switch off electrical equipment and to remove plugs before closing the building at night?	YES/NO
Are gas appliances regularly checked and faults rectified?	YES/NO
Is smoking permitted? Is this restricted to certain areas?	YES/NO
Are gas systems regularly isolated at the end of the day?	YES/NO
Is there any evidence of smoking in areas designated as no smoking zones?	YES/NO
Are bulk quantities of textiles and furniture stored within the school?	YES/NO
Are there displays, notice boards containing combustible materials on escape routes or elsewhere?	YES/NO
Are flammable liquids kept stored in fire resisting stores away from sources of ignition?	YES/NO
Are stores capable of being secured against unauthorised entry?	YES/NO
Are aerosols stored within the premises close to sources of ignition?	YES/NO
Are flammable and oily rags disposed of separately from other combustible materials?	YES/NO
Are housekeeping standards good?	YES/NO
Is waste and rubbish disposed off on a regular basis?	YES/NO
Are outside bins secured away from the building?	YES/NO
Are all members of staff aware of the risk of fire and measures to be taken to reduce the risk?	YES/NO

