

CAERPHILLY COUNTY
BOROUGH COUNCIL

FIRE SAFETY
POLICY

March 2005

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NOTE

Wherever the designation “manager” is used throughout this policy, it is taken to mean Head of Service, Head Teacher, Line Manager, Supervisor and the Officer in charge or anyone who has responsibilities for employees in the course of their work.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This policy sets out the arrangements and responsibilities for managing fire safety within buildings owned or managed by Caerphilly County Borough Council.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

- 2.1. The Authority recognises that its employees are its most valuable resource in delivering high quality services to the community and will take all practical steps to ensure the health and safety of Authority employees, contractors and visitors to and users of council premises.
- 2.2. The effective control of these risks will be delivered through the correct management of fire safety as set out in this policy and the provision of appropriate training, instruction and supervision. To be effective this policy requires the full co-operation of management and employees at all levels.
- 2.3. The Authority accepts it has specific duties under the various pieces of legislation (as described in Section 4) enforced by the Fire Authority.
- 2.4. Employees are under no obligation to use portable fire extinguishers to tackle SMALL fires unless they have been trained, the fire is blocking their exit and they are fully competent and confident to do so.

3. SCOPE

- 3.1. This policy has been agreed with the Trade Unions and applies to all employees except; initially school based staff, though the Council would recommend that School Governing Bodies adopt the policy.
- 3.2. This policy will not apply to residential dwellings, owned, let or leased by the Authority as part of its role as a social landlord.
- 3.3. This policy will be reviewed at least annually to ensure it is in line with current legislation.
- 3.4. In locations / departments where more specialised fire guidance or legislation applies e.g. within care homes then this guidance will be incorporated into local arrangements.
- 3.5. The effective date of the policy is:

4. LEGISLATION

4.1. This policy along with its supporting procedures is designed to ensure the Authority meets its legal obligation as stated in:

- The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act, 1974
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- The Fire Precautions Act, 1971
- Fire Precautions (Workplaces) Regulations 1997
- Fire Precautions (Workplace) (Amendment) Regulations 1999.
- Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

NB Please note that all employees have a legal responsibility to comply with health and safety law and the provisions of this policy. Failure to do so could result in personal and / or Corporate liability.

5.1. The Chief Executive Officer will:

- Be ultimately responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy within Caerphilly County Borough Council.

5.2. Directors will:

- Be responsible for ensuring the effective implementation of this Corporate Policy and associated directorate arrangements within their service areas.
- Ensure that appropriate resources are made available for the effective operation of the policy including training.

5.3. Managers with responsibilities for buildings or sites will:

- Ensure any buildings under their control are subject to a suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment.
- Receive a copy of the fire risk assessment and communicate its findings and implications to relevant employees.
- Co-ordinate the completion of any actions required as a result of the fire risk assessment within their scope of responsibility.

- Work with managers within the building to ensure that suitable local fire procedures are written and communicated.
- Ensure that any maintenance or alteration within the building is undertaken so as not to compromise the fire safety of the building.
- Ensure that any maintenance and testing is carried out on anything provided or in place for fire safety and that records are kept.
- Ensure that any requests for information from the Fire Authority or remedial works required by the Fire Authority are actioned.

5.4. Managers with responsibility for people will:

- Ensure that they and their employees comply with this policy and associated Directorate arrangements for fire safety derived from this policy.
- Ensure that suitable local fire procedures are written and communicated.
- Ensure that employees (including appointed persons, e.g. fire wardens and marshals) receive suitable training in the fire procedures, especially on induction, including how to raise the alarm and exit the building safely in case of emergency. As well as this, training in using fire fighting equipment provided is required for nominated people if considered necessary.
- Ensure that visitors, contractors or members of the public who they have responsibility for are fully aware of the fire procedures. Visitors will remain under the responsibility of the officers they are meeting.
- Ensure that good standards of housekeeping are maintained in their working areas.
- Complete any relevant actions arising from the fire risk assessment.

5.5. Each employee of the Council will:

- Comply with any working procedure or precautionary measure introduced to prevent or reduce potential fire risk.
- Immediately report to their line manager any damage to anything provided for purposes of fire safety.

5.6. The Corporate Health and Safety Manager will:

- Ensure that the fire safety policy is reviewed at least annually to ensure it is in line with current legislation.
- Provide advice and information on legislation or guidance relating to fire safety.
- Audit compliance with the policy.

5.7. Property Division will:

- Ensure that a competent person undertakes fire risk assessments.
- Instigate a review in accordance with the fire risk assessment.
- Provide the Building Manager or other responsible person with a copy of the fire risk assessment.

5.8. Contractors will:

- Comply with any local rules made available to them concerning fire safety.

5.9. Directorate Health and Safety Officers will:

- Communicate this policy to all managers in their Directorate.
- Develop Directorate arrangements in accordance with this policy.
- Provide information and advice as required.
- Monitor the effective implementation of the Corporate Policy and Directorate Arrangements.

6. ARRANGEMENTS

A copy of this policy can be found on the Council's Intranet Site

6.1. Accident and Incidents

All managers must investigate and report all accidents and incidents in line with the Authority's policy. Please refer to the Accident Reporting and Investigation Policy for further details.

6.2. Fire Certificates

Some buildings may require a fire certificate, issued by the Fire Authority. This certificate will specify certain fire safety requirements, e.g. fire fighting equipment etc. Regardless of whether a building has a fire certificate, it must still have a suitable and sufficient risk assessment carried out. Premises which require a fire certificate include, offices, shops, railway premises and factories where:

- more than 20 persons are employed at any one time
- more than 10 persons are employed to work at any one time elsewhere than on the ground floor
- the premises is part of a larger building which meets the conditions in the two points above
- explosive or highly flammable materials are stored or used

NB: Due to upcoming legislation the Fire Authority will no longer issue fire certificates although the application process must still be followed. The Fire Authority will expect to see a fire risk assessment for these premises.
Preferred

6.3. Fire Risk Assessment

- 6.3.1. Fire risk assessments are required for all buildings owned by, leased by or otherwise under the control of the council to ensure the risk of fire is controlled. Through the completion of this risk assessment the council will consider all employees and all other people who may be affected by a fire in the building.
- 6.3.2. Fire risk assessments will be undertaken by a competent person
- 6.3.3. Fire risk assessments will be annually or in the event of any significant changes within the building or with respect to the fire precautions.

6.4. Contents of the Fire Risk Assessment

The fire risk assessment process will consider many aspects of fire safety within the building including:

- Potential sources of ignition and how they can be reduced
- Minimising the potential fuel for a fire
- Reducing sources of oxygen where possible
- Fire detection and fire warning
- Means of escape
- Means of fighting fire
- Maintenance and testing of alarm and emergency lighting systems and fire fighting equipment
- Fire Procedures and training
- Providing for disabled people

- Storage and use of flammable substances
- Smoking
- Potential for arson
- Work processes involving heat
- Housekeeping and rubbish disposal

6.5. Following the completion of a fire risk assessment

Once a risk assessment has been completed it will be passed to the building manager or other responsible person. An action plan must then be generated to address the issues raised. This plan must specify the action necessary, an owner to ensure completion and a date by which the action must be completed.

6.6. Evacuations

- 6.6.1. If a fire is discovered, the alarm must be raised immediately by the appropriate method usually breaking the nearest break glass manual call point. **All employees must take this action if they believe there is a fire;** no authority needs to be sought from any other person.
- 6.6.2. Immediate evacuation of the building must take place as soon as the evacuation signal is given. (Employees will be familiar with the procedure through the staging of regular fire evacuation drills).
- 6.6.3. All occupants, on evacuation, should report to the pre-determined assembly point, which will be displayed on fire action notices.
- 6.6.4. Re-entry of the building is strictly prohibited until the fire brigade officer in charge declares it is safe to do so. Silencing of the fire alarm system should never be taken as an indication that it is safe to re-enter the building.
- 6.6.5. Procedures may be required for disabled person or persons with impaired hearing.

6.7. Correspondence from the Enforcing Authorities

Any advice letters or enforcement notices from the Fire and Rescue Service should be dealt with in accordance with the Corporate procedure.

6.8. Fire safety general

There are minimum standards to be adhered to in all aspects of fire safety to ensure a safe workplace is maintained. Many of these issues will be addressed in the fire risk assessment and include:

6.8.1. Fire detection and fire warning

An effective means of fire detection is essential for detecting an outbreak of fire and for warning people quickly enough so that they can escape to a safe place quickly. The size and complexity of this warning and detection system will depend on the workplace and can range from a visual detection and a shout of FIRE to an automatic fire detection system consisting of smoke and / or heat detectors and an automatic fire alarm. What ever is in place, the people in that area and any visitors, contractors etc. must be aware of the arrangements.

6.8.2. Means of Escape

The number, position and route of fire escape routes will depend on the size and use of the building. This will probably be specified when the building is constructed and a fire risk assessment will determine adequacy. In any case fire escape routes must NEVER be used to store anything and routes / doors must ALWAYS be kept clear.

6.8.3. Means of fighting fire

This can range from fire extinguishers of different types for different materials to large scale sprinkler systems. The number, type and location will be assessed by the risk assessment. Training on the use of this equipment must be provided according to local arrangements.

6.8.4. Maintenance and Testing

Necessary for fire detection systems (e.g. weekly bell tests, fire drills etc.), fire fighting equipment (e.g. fire extinguisher checks) and equipment to aid evacuation (e.g. emergency light tests). Law usually specifies frequency of maintenance and testing. Records of these tests must be kept in the log book for each building. See Appendix 1 for further details.

6.8.5. Fire Procedures and Training

Procedures are required to ensure that everyone knows what to do in the event of a fire and training and monitoring is required so that these procedures can be followed. Fire drills must be held at least once per year and include a de-brief to ensure any areas for improvement are identified and actioned. A properly considered procedure should be formulated for each building rather than attempting to use a standard fire

procedure in all buildings. It is however important that general principles and similar procedures are used so people who move between buildings can identify with the arrangements. Appendix 2 provides a generic fire procedure that can be adapted to fit each site.

6.8.6. Storage of flammable liquids

If flammable substances are stored on the premises it is essential that they are stored correctly in appropriate quantities, containers and in suitably protected areas.

6.8.7. Smoking

Smoking must be managed in accordance with local rules. In all cases receptacles must be provided for disposal and smoking areas segregated from combustible materials. Smokers should not congregate outside fire exit areas. Consult the No Smoking Policy.

6.8.8. Potential for arson

Consideration must be given to the potential for arson. This will be considered within the fire risk assessment. Factors to consider include security measures and the location of rubbish disposal and storage.

6.8.9. Work processes involving heat

Activities such as welding, soldering that generate heat must be very carefully controlled and only undertaken through a permit to work system. Your manager will be able to advise on local arrangements.

6.8.10. Housekeeping and rubbish disposal

Good housekeeping is one of the most important factors in minimising the risk of fire and is the responsibility of every individual within the workplace. Work areas must be kept clear, rubbish must be disposed of frequently, paper and other combustible materials must be stored neatly and appropriately and NEVER store anything on escape routes.

6.8.11. Management of Contractors

It is the responsibility of anyone managing a contract to ensure that contractors understand their obligations and do not compromise fire safety arrangements in any way. Evacuation procedures must be communicated to contractors.

7. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

7.1. Guidance

- 7.1.1. Fire Safety an Employer's Guide – ISBN 0 11 341229 0 - Home Office, the Scottish Executive, the Department of the Environment and the Health and Safety Executive.
- 7.1.2. Caerphilly County Borough Council's Policy on Contractor Selection, Management and Monitoring

APPENDIX 1 – Maintenance and testing frequencies

Please cross reference with relevant British Standards before implementing a maintenance or testing regime. Ensure relevant records are kept. All testing is to be undertaken by a competent person.

Recording – All testing and inspection should be recorded in a log book and copies of relevant certificates should be kept on site. There is no standard log book but the Corporate Unit can advise on format if required.

Equipment	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Quarterly	Six Monthly	Annually	Additional
Fire Detection and Alarm Systems	Check panels for faults are dealt with accordingly	Test to ensure alarms / bells can be heard throughout the workplace Self contained, domestic smoke alarms to be tested.		Relevant inspection and testing of system		Relevant inspection and testing of system Self contained, domestic smoke alarms to be cleaned.	
Emergency Lighting	Check signs and systems are lit and faults dealt with accordingly		Inspection		Inspection		Inspection – 3 yearly
Escape routes	Check routes are clear and free of obstructions / hazards						
Door fastenings	Ensure correct operation						
Self closing devices and automatic door releases / holders	Ensure correct operation						
Exit and directional signs	Ensure signs are clear and unobstructed						
Fire extinguishers and hose reels	Ensure extinguishers are in position and have not been discharged	Basic inspection procedures				Inspection and service	Extended service – five yearly Overhaul / replacement – every 20 years

Appendix 2 – Example Fire Procedure for Caerphilly County Borough Council Premises

The following document consists of a general procedure for three specific groups:

1. Persons who discover a fire;
2. Persons who hear the fire alarm but who have no specific duties in the event of fire;
3. Persons who have special duties to perform when a warning of fire is given, e.g. fire marshals.

1. Persons who discover a fire

- 1.1. **Activate** the nearest and/or **safest** fire alarm on discovery of any fire, however small.
- 1.2. Immediately leave the building by the nearest fire exit. Do not return to your office to collect any belongings, that area may well have been cleared before you return, and nobody will know you are there if your exit is blocked.
- 1.3. Report any suspicions / knowledge fire to the nominated persons (e.g. fire marshal) as soon as it is safe to do so.

2. On hearing the fire alarm

- 2.1. Leave the building by the **nearest** fire exit.
- 2.2. Assemble at the evacuation point.
- 2.3. Do not return to your own base before leaving the building. The area may well have been cleared by the time you return and nobody will know that you are there if your exit is blocked.
- 2.4. Do not try to conclude telephone calls or meetings.
- 2.5. Do not stop to look for possessions.

3. Persons who have special duties

- 3.1. Check that all areas specifically allocated to you are clear of personnel if safe.
- 3.2. Check areas further from the fire exit first and work towards the exit closing doors when you are satisfied the area is clear.

3.3. Leave the building by the nearest fire exit and report to the nominated person (e.g. fire marshal) that your area is clear. (This may involve checking a register).

3.4. Do not re-enter the building until authorised to do so.

3.5. A responsible, nominated person will verify that all areas are clear and will liaise with the Fire Brigade to ensure the building is safe for staff to return.

NB – Suitable training and instruction is required in all aspects of the procedure, especially with regard to those who have special duties.