



Persimmon

Health, Safety
& Environment
Department

Office Fire Safety Standards



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1. Introduction

The purpose of these standards is to ensure that proper planning for fire safety is an integral part of the efficient running of our offices.



2. Office Fire Risk Assessment

An office fire risk assessment must be produced and reviewed on an annual basis by the Office Manager, which is usually the Managing Director's PA. This is done under the advice and guidance of the local Group Health, Safety & Environment Advisor. Advice can also be gained from the third party organisations who will be required to inspect and service fire equipment and alarm systems.

Every office must employ the services of a company or companies to inspect and service the following:

- Fire alarm system
- Emergency lighting
- Fire detection systems (heat and smoke detectors) – if required/installed
- Fire door self closers
- Fire doors and final exit fire doors
- Portable and fixed firefighting equipment
- Lightning protection systems

Once the fire risk assessment has been completed any remedial actions can be compiled into an action plan.



3. Office Fire Safety

Responsible Person

The Managing Director is the named Responsible Person with overall responsibility for the prevention and management of fire risk.

Competent Person

The Office manager is responsible for ensuring that these standards are followed during the day to day running of the office and issues with implementation or non-conformance should be raised with the Responsible Person and the local Group Health, Safety & Environment Advisor at the earliest opportunity.

Fire Marshals

There must be an adequate number of trained Fire Marshals throughout the building who have completed a specific fire marshal course. There should be a sufficient number of Fire Marshals to cover holiday and sickness. The complexity, size and number of floors in the office building will need to be considered when deciding the number of Fire Marshals required, which must be recorded on the Office Fire Risk Assessment.

The Fire Marshals must work with the Office Manager to identify fire risks and potential issues as well as carrying out their duties during an emergency or fire drill.

The names of the Fire Marshals should be displayed on notice boards around the office so that office users know who they can approach to raise fire safety issues.



3. Office Fire Safety

3.1 Emergency Procedures

Written emergency procedures must be posted on notice boards around the office which clearly identify the evacuation assembly area and what to do in the event of a fire. This must also be communicated to all individuals during the induction process.

3.2 Fire Alarms

An adequate number of fixed fire alarm points must be located throughout the office building, with the correct signage. The fire alarm system must be inspected annually by a competent third party and fire alarm testing must be carried out weekly by the Office Manager. This activation test must be recorded and a different call point must be used on a rotational basis.

The evacuation assembly area must be located to the exterior of the office in a safe, prominent area, the route to the evacuation assembly area and should be safe to navigate (i.e. not crossing a road). Signage should be in place to identify the evacuation assembly area.



3. Office Fire Safety

3.3 Fire Escape

Fire escape routes within the office must be clearly identified and clear of obstructions such as waste material, chairs, desks or delivered items. Directional signage must be placed at strategic positions and at all final exit fire doors.

3.4 Internal Fire Doors

All fire doors within the office must be well maintained and inspected by a competent third party on an annual basis.

The fire doors must be fitted with a self-closing device or an automatic door closer. The fire doors must move freely and not jam on uneven floors or carpets. Fire doors must never be wedged open unless for a short duration following a risk assessment.



3. Office Fire Safety

3.5 Final Exit Fire Doors

Final exit fire doors must be inspected on an annual basis by a competent third party and at regular intervals by the Office Manager or Fire Marshals.

These doors must not be used to regularly access or exit the office building as this will introduce undue wear and tear on the door and mechanism which it is not designed for. In exceptional circumstances final exit fire doors may be used for access or egress of materials etc. but must be strictly controlled by the Office Manager.





3. Office Fire Safety

3.6 Fire Drills

The emergency procedures should be tested by carrying out regular fire drills at least every six months, evacuating the whole office to the evacuation assembly area. Once at the assembly area a role call should be taken using the signing in register to identify that all occupants have been accounted for. Observations from the fire drill (good and bad) must be recorded by the Office Manager and appropriate changes made to procedures or provision of fire alarms as required.



3. Office Fire Safety

3.7 People with Mobility Needs or other Disabilities

A separate assessment should be carried out for any employee with a mobility need or a particular disability which may hinder prompt evacuation.

This assessment should highlight how an individual can be evacuated safely from their work area and this may involve upper floors. This assessment must be included in the overall evacuation plan and should be communicated to all Fire Marshals and anyone affected.

3.8 Portable Fire Extinguishers and Fixed Fire Equipment

Office users must be sufficiently competent to be able to use the portable firefighting equipment provided if needed. This must be covered by the Office Manager with all new office staff upon induction.

An adequate number of appropriate portable fire extinguishers should be available at various locations in the office and be easily identified and accessible at all times. The extinguishers may be wall mounted or held in suitable fire extinguisher containers with appropriate signage. All portable fire extinguishers should be visually inspected on a regular basis and serviced annually by a qualified person, such as Chubb/ Bull, ensuring that the maintenance service date and next service date is recorded on the appliance using a fire equipment service record sticker.

Any fixed firefighting appliances such as hoses or sprinkler systems must also be inspected annually by a qualified person.



4. Security Against Arson

The most effective method of deterring arson is to ensure the office building is securely locked out of work hours. All doors and windows must be closed and securely locked.

Skips and areas containing combustible and/ or waste materials must not be stored within 5 metres of the building, unless specifically assessed via the office fire risk assessment with suitable control measures put in place in case of an arson attack.

The collection of waste and combustible material must be controlled and carried out on a regular basis.

Exterior CCTV should be considered in high risk areas, following advice from the local fire or police services and/ or after break-ins or arson attacks.



5. Storage of Flammable Liquids, LPG and Toxic Substances

There should be no reason to store any flammable liquids or LPG cylinders at any offices.

Care should also be taken to ensure that products which could add to the intensity of a fire, such as acetylene or oxygen, or to the toxic hazard in the event of fire, such as chlorine, are not stored in offices.

If any of these products are to be stored in or around offices, then a separate risk assessment must be completed which must be agreed by the responsible person.

Supplies of flammable hand gels and sanitiser should be stored in steel containers within storage cupboards or rooms and the container and doors should be marked with appropriate signage. The normal use of gels and sanitiser in bottles or dispensers is acceptable.

All hot works carried out by a sub-contractor or directly employed operatives in any office buildings must be subject to a separate project plan and RAMS with a hot works permit controlled by the Office Manager under the advice of the local Group Health, Safety & Environment Advisor.



6. Electricity, Gas & Lightning Protection

The most effective method of deterring arson is to ensure the office building is securely locked out of work hours. All doors and windows must be closed

Electrical supply installations, must be installed in accordance with the latest British Standards and Electricity at Work Regulations.

The fixed electrical installations must be inspected every five years by a competent electrician.

A current 5 year NICEIC Fixed Installation Certificate must be held by the Office Manager.

All portable electrical equipment used in the office should carry durable labels which display that it has been inspected and tested and is in a satisfactory condition (PAT). This test must be carried out annually by a competent person.

The following items are an example of the equipment that should be inspected (this list is not exhaustive):

- White goods – dish washers, fridges etc.
- Extension cables
- Christmas lights
- Kettles
- Portable lights

The use of portable heaters in any area of the office buildings should be avoided.

All fixed heating installations must be regularly maintained and inspected on an annual basis. All gas installations must be inspected by a competent gas installation engineer, who must supply a gas installation certificate.

Gas cookers must be inspected by a competent gas installation engineer on an annual basis and should be subject to a maintenance schedule. This would also include any extraction filters or ducting.

The lightning protection system if installed should be maintained by a competent person and inspected and tested on an annual basis.



7. Housekeeping

Good housekeeping is essential in all offices. Waste material, if allowed to accumulate, provides an excellent starting point for fire. All combustible waste material (cardboard packaging, paper and shredded documents) must be removed from the office on a regular basis.

The storage of archived files from site and departments must be strictly controlled and minimised to avoid fire loading areas of the office and building. Removing archived material to external storage facilities or scanning documents must be considered by every office.

Special consideration should be given to plant and server rooms where a build-up of combustible material could go unnoticed for a considerable period of time.

Office users must be informed at induction of the clean desk policy and to dispose of their own packaging and waste material at designated areas.

7.1 Stored Materials

The storage of materials in corridors, offices and conference rooms is to be avoided. Materials delivered for customer care or site operations should not be stored in offices and especially not in corridors and open plan areas which may compromise escape routes.



8. Smoking and Vaping

All offices operates a smoke free zone (including e-cigarettes). Arrangements must be made for smoking/ vaping away from office buildings

Refer to Smoking and Vaping [Standards](#)

9. Control of Contractors

External contractors employed to carry out works within the office or externally must be subject to the same scrutiny as any sub-contractor employed on our construction sites.

Refer to Contractors and Designers [Standards](#)

This is critical to ensure contractors do not introduce hazards that have not been assessed.

10. Lifts

If lifts are installed suitable fire safety signs and notices must be positioned by the lift.





11. Monitoring

The local Group Health, Safety & Environment Advisor and the Office Manager will keep the office fire safety arrangements under continual review. They will also undertake a formal joint inspection and complete an office fire risk assessment annually, with an interim 6 monthly health check and review of the fire risk assessment.

12. Further Reading

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/fire.htm>

