

Safety Note 39

Fire Warden and Evacuation Officer Duties



Fire Wardens and Evacuation Officers are members of staff who have been nominated to act as responsible persons during a fire or bomb alert evacuation. They are allocated specific tasks to ensure a safe, effective and quick evacuation of the premises during an emergency.

Fire Wardens may be responsible for checking floors or sections of the premises and where required may help to prevent entry to the premises by acting as door wardens.

Evacuation Officers are responsible for the evacuation of the whole premises, supervising the assembly point and collating information received from Fire Wardens in order to account for all building occupants, including any who may need assistance to evacuate e.g. mobility impaired people.

Fire Wardens and Evacuation Officers need to be easily recognised by both their colleagues and the emergency services during an evacuation. Evacuation Officers should therefore wear an **ORANGE** high vis coat or vest, Fire Wardens should wear a **YELLOW** high-vis vest.

There must be sufficient Evacuation Officers and Fire Wardens along with nominated deputies to cater for absences so that a full evacuation team is available during normal building opening hours (as far as reasonably practicable).

Fire Wardens

Fire Wardens carry out the following tasks:

1. On hearing the fire alarm, Fire Wardens should check that the area of the premises allocated to them (floor or section of the floor) has been fully evacuated by all staff, students, visitors and contractors. Make sure toilets, rest rooms, storage areas, common rooms and Refuge Areas (see 9. below) are checked (by looking and calling out).
2. Fire Wardens should instruct/guide occupants to the fire assembly point using the nearest safe fire exit route. Make sure everyone leaves the premises and **nobody** re-enters the building (see duties of the Door Warden). Particular attention should be paid to students and visitors who may be unfamiliar with the premises or anyone who appears reluctant to leave.
3. All persons should be encouraged to keep calm, not to run, not to use lifts and not to stop to gather up their personal belongings. In areas not affected by fire, doors and windows should be closed to help prevent the spread of fire and smoke.
4. On arrival at the fire assembly point, staff/students should report to the Fire Warden for their floor/section. If the Fire Warden has a list of staff/students/visitors who were present in their area prior to the evacuation, they should carry out a roll call to establish if everyone listed has safely left the premises. In practice, a list may not be available and the system will rely upon the Fire Warden liaising with colleagues. This will establish who was in the premises and who cannot be accounted for.
5. When Fire Wardens are satisfied that their area has been cleared safely, they should notify the Evacuation Officer at the assembly point.
6. It is essential that the Fire Wardens inform the Evacuation Officer of anyone who cannot be accounted for, or if they have been unable to fully check an area. This information, together

with any information about the incident, must be passed by the Evacuation Officer to the Fire Service Officer in Charge on their arrival.

7. No-one must be allowed to re-enter the premises until the Evacuation Officer or Fire Service Officer in Charge, have given the “all clear”.
8. During prolonged incidents it maybe necessary to move persons away from the initial assembly point to another assembly area. The Evacuation Officer will inform the Fire Wardens of this, who will assist as required.
9. Where practical, Fire Wardens should be aware of any members of staff/students/visitors who need assistance to evacuate, including wheelchair users. Assistance may include ensuring that they are escorted out of the building, or to a Refuge Area. Refuges are places of relative safety where people with mobility or other form of impairment can wait for assistance from building management to be evacuated to a place of ultimate safety. Their presence in a Refuge Area must be reported to the Evacuation Officer by the Fire Warden or by any other responsible person e.g. ‘buddy’ of the disabled person. A member of staff or other responsible person should remain with the wheelchair user in the Refuge Area pending evacuation. Refuge communications equipment should be used to remain in contact with the University Security Control room and/or members of the building evacuation team.
10. **Lifts must not be used during an evacuation, unless they are clearly designated as an evacuation lift and staff have been trained how to use them.** Where the building is equipped with evacuation chairs, there are staff trained in their use, and it is safe to do so, a mobility impaired person may be evacuated using an evacuation chair.
11. Fire Wardens should also take an active role in fire safety and act as a contact within their area for fire safety matters. They should encourage staff to report such items as blocked fire exits, defective fire doors, poor housekeeping, and should contribute to the fire safety checks carried out by the Building Manager.
12. Fire Wardens should keep their Building Manager or Area Health and Safety Co-ordinator informed of any changes or replacements needed to Fire Warden appointments, to ensure that the building emergency arrangements remain effective.

Door Wardens

Door Wardens are responsible for preventing re-entry to a building until the ‘all clear’ has been given. They may be appointed in advance, or may have the role allocated to them during an evacuation by the Evacuation Officer.

They should ensure that they are easily recognisable to their colleagues and others, by wearing the allocated high vis vest or arm band during any evacuation.

1. Door Wardens should make their way to the fire assembly point, using the nearest fire exit route. They should report to the Fire Evacuation Officer, to be allocated an entrance or fire exit that should be supervised.
2. Door Wardens should position themselves outside the entrance or door as allocated and direct staff/students/visitors to the assembly point.
3. Door Wardens should ensure that no staff/students or visitors re-enter the building. This applies to all persons unless by direct authority of the Evacuation Officer to investigate the cause of the alarm (i.e. University Security staff and Fire Service personnel) or to assist with wheelchair occupants.
4. Door Wardens should maintain their position outside the entrance or door and await further instructions from the Evacuation Officer.

Evacuation Officer

This list of duties for the Evacuation Officer is for guidance. In an emergency, decisions outside this guidance may be needed, dependent upon the circumstances.

1. Evacuation Officers should ensure they are easily recognisable to their colleagues and the emergency services by wearing an ORANGE high vis vest or coat during any evacuation.
2. On hearing the fire alarm, Evacuation Officers should proceed immediately to the fire alarm enunciator panel. These are normally located in a conspicuous position adjacent to the main entrance to the premises.
3. Confirm the location of the incident as indicated on the panel.
4. Collect the emergency folder and associated equipment, for example, plan of building, list of fire wardens and their areas, orange vest, radio or mobile phone, torch, loud hailer and fire box containing keys (contents of the emergency pack will vary for individual premises), then go to the main assembly point for the building.
5. Collate information from the building Fire Wardens about the evacuation i.e. which areas of the building have been checked and cleared, and which have not; whether or not at all occupants have been accounted for; last known location of any missing persons; and whether there are any individuals requiring assistance with evacuation (e.g. wheelchair users in Refuge Areas). In large buildings with several assembly points, it may be necessary to send a 'runner' to another assembly point if the Fire Warden(s) from that assembly point fail to report to you.
6. Collate any additional information available from occupants about the possible cause of the alarm or fire, and the location.
7. The Evacuation Officer should confirm whether the emergency services or University Security have been called by any of the building occupants. If they have not been, and if University Security are not already in attendance, the Evacuation Officer should phone University Security (tel. 0118 378 6300) immediately to pass on all known information about the incident.
8. If the Evacuation Officer has been able to reliably determine the cause of the alarm (i.e. confirmed fire or 'false' alarm) they should advise University Security Control. If it is a confirmed fire, University Security will relay this to the Fire Service. If it is a false alarm, University Security will cancel the attendance of the fire service. Alternatively the Evacuation Officer may phone the emergency services by dialling 999 and asking for the Fire Service.
9. The Evacuation Officer should instruct members of the building evacuation team who have been trained to use refuge communications equipment to go to the master control panel to find out if anyone is waiting for assistance at a refuge. If it is a confirmed fire and people waiting at a refuge can self evacuate, then they should be advised to do so. If it is safe and practicable, trained members of the building evacuation team should be directed to evacuate people waiting in refuges by using evacuation lifts and/or evacuation chairs.
10. Allocate Door Wardens to control access to and from the premises. Provide the Door Wardens with a briefing sheet on their duties (normally kept in the emergency folder).
11. Allocate responsible people to complete the following duties:
 - Patrol around the premises externally to look for any visible fire or persons who have been reported missing;
 - Stand at key points en route to the building and be ready to direct the emergency services to the correct location.
12. The Evacuation Officer should pass on the following information to the emergency services:
 - Progress of the evacuation including persons reported missing and persons waiting at refuges
 - Location of the fire (if known from the digital display on the fire panel)
 - Access to the premises, making relevant keys available
 - Specific hazards in the area
 - The emergency folder (this contains plans of the premises, isolation of services, construction details fire hydrants/dry risers, high risk areas).

13. If there is a need to do so, establish a first aid point adjacent to the Fire Assembly Point or in a nearby building and delegate a trained first aider to provide assistance. If anyone has been seriously injured, an ambulance must be called.
14. If it is a protracted incident, or there is a need to leave the area clear for the emergency services, the Evacuation Officer should move all evacuees to an alternative location that will provide shelter and welfare facilities.
15. The Evacuation Officer should notify the Fire and Door Wardens when to leave the Fire Assembly Point or nominated position and when occupants can re-enter the premises. This decision will normally be made once the all clear has been given by the emergency services or University Security.
16. At the end of the incident the Evacuation Officer should collect the Emergency Folder from the emergency services.

Major Incident Plan

17. A major incident is an actual or anticipated event which threatens:
 - The physical and/or psychological well-being of staff, students, visitors and third parties;
 - The University's core operations;
 - The University's reputation;
 - The University's property;
 - The University's information, data or systems;

and is beyond the scope of resolution by normal decision-making mechanisms.

18. Implementing the major incident plan will provide a co-ordinated response to major incidents (including fires) that threaten University personnel, property or services.
19. The major incident plan can be implemented by advising Security that in your opinion the ongoing incident merits the plan being invoked. You can do this by either speaking to a member of Security on site or by phoning **Security Control Room on 0118 378 6300**.
20. Members of the Major Incident Team will then be notified and will attend the incident. They, in liaison with the most senior person present from the building/area, will decide who should take over as on-scene co-ordinator.

Media contact

21. In the event of public or media interest, members of staff must refer enquiries to the Major Incident Team and avoid comment of their own. All statements to the press will be issued through the **Communications Office who can be contacted on 0118 378 7388**.

Follow-up actions

22. Following a major incident (serious fire or if anyone has been seriously hurt) Health and Safety Services must be informed immediately (extn 8888). They will initiate an enquiry and also decide if the Health and Safety Executive need to be informed. If so, H&SS are responsible for informing HSE.
23. All other accidents and injuries should be recorded in the accident book held on the premises and a report should be made to Health and Safety Services, using the University Incident report form. School/Directorate management are responsible for investigating the cause of the incident and taking any necessary remedial action.
24. Items of equipment that require re-setting may need the attention of the engineers in Maintenance Department, Facilities Management Directorate. The Evacuation Officer should report this to FMD.

For example: Fire Alarms

Electronic security on Fire Exits

Emergency lighting

Fire extinguishers

Securing the building together with any emergency maintenance

25. A damage assessment may need to be made by FMD, with input from the affected Schools/Directorates. Estimated costs should be passed to the University Insurance Officer, extension 8309.
26. Following a serious fire, the Fire Service will normally arrange for a re-inspection of the damaged area. This is to monitor the potential of re-ignition of the fire incident. It is advisable that the University through FMD make its own arrangements to monitor affected areas.

Out of Hours Working

The duties of the Evacuation Officer will normally be undertaken by the most senior person present. If it is not clear who this is, the essential issue is that a responsible person takes control of the situation.

Where a reliable out of hours booking system is in operation e.g. building log book, this should be taken to the assembly point to establish who was in the building at the time of the alarm sounding. Otherwise, the Evacuation Officer will rely upon people who have vacated the premises to provide information when they arrive at the assembly point.

The type of information required by the emergency services will remain as for a normal hours evacuation. However building occupants working out of hours may not be familiar with the fire routine and hence areas may not be reliably checked. If there is any doubt that the premises have or have not been fully evacuated this must be relayed to the Fire Service.

Health and Safety Services

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Telephone extension 8888

Web <http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/health-and-safety/hs-home-2.aspx>