

# Fire safety.

## Schools Safety Guide

### Document information

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## Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Fire risk assessment.....	3
3. Fire emergency plans and PEEPs .....	3
4. Fire drills .....	3
5. Equipment & signage.....	3
6. Fire wardens/marshals .....	4
7. Training.....	4
8. Further information .....	5

## 1. Introduction

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order (RRO) requires the responsible person (head teacher in schools) to: carry out a Fire Risk Assessment; take general fire precautions; implement protective measures; and, maintain a fire emergency plan.

## 2. Fire risk assessment

The assessment must be carried out by a competent person. Given that assessments cover many “technical” aspects of the building and fire protection system (e.g. fire breaks in roof voids, standard of fire doors, type of alarm system), you are unlikely to have the expertise in-house and will probably need the assistance of a suitably qualified fire risk assessor/contractor<sup>1</sup> to carry out the assessment.

The fire risk assessment may identify actions that you need to take; the responsible person (normally headteacher) should ensure these are completed in the timescales stipulated.

Assessment must be reviewed regularly (the initial assessment should state how often) and when there are significant changes to the building, occupancy levels, working practices, etc.

## 3. Fire emergency plans and PEEPs

Each school must have a fire emergency plan in place that considers how all persons can safely evacuate the building without reliance on the emergency services. The plan should also consider action to be taken if you are unable to return to the premises. Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) will be required for persons who require assistance to evacuate the building (see PEEPs guide).

## 4. Fire drills

Fire drills must be carried out at regular intervals. Ofsted requires schools to carry out drills once per term (including one in September to cover the new intake). Pupils, and all those who work or volunteer in the school (including kitchen staff, cleaners, lunchtime supervisors, etc) should all have the opportunity to participate in a fire drill; consequently, they should take place at different times, on different days to ensure everyone can take an active part.

## 5. Equipment & signage

Firefighting and other plant/equipment for fire protection/prevention purposes requires regular maintenance, inspection and servicing.

A template fire logbook can be found on the templates section of the PPS website.

The following table gives examples of the frequency of various checks required:

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<sup>1</sup> Follow links to the national fire risk assessors [register](#) and [Sandwell Council's fire team](#)

Frequency	Action required
Daily	Check availability of escape routes (e.g. exit routes are clear and final doors are not locked or blocked)
Weekly	Test fire alarm system using manual call point, also check that doors on hold open devices have closed, and the electronic door locks on escape routes have unlocked. Where monitored, monitoring station have received signals. Check extinguishers are in place, the seals are intact, and units are charged
Monthly	Check condition of fire doors, self-closers, fire signs, Test green break glass call points etc. Test emergency lighting and maintain as required
Six-monthly	Maintenance/inspection - 50% of fire alarm system
Annually	Service and preventative maintenance of fire alarm system by competent engineer (50% every six months) Full inspection and test of fire extinguishers Full duration test of emergency lighting

Schools must display “fire action” notices that tell people what they must and must not do in case of fire. There must also be pictorial signs that show people the direction they need to go to leave the building in a fire. All signs should be in the approved format (standard colours, fonts and pictograms) - the health & safety team can provide examples if required.

## 6. Fire wardens/marshals

In some schools, trained fire wardens/marshals may be required to assist in the evacuation procedure. This will usually be the case if the signing in and out procedures are not fully robust and always up to date - when employees and visitors leave the site do they always sign out?

The role of the fire warden/marshal is to carry out a visual sweep of a designated area or “zone” on their way out of the building and to report if the zone is clear, or if people are still inside. They report this to the school’s main fire warden/marshal who liaises with the emergency services when they arrive.

**Note:** fire warden/marshal duties do not include putting themselves at any risk by arguing with or trying to physically move people who refuse to leave the building.

## 7. Training

All staff members (teaching and non-teaching) must receive fire awareness training and refresher training at regular intervals.

Staff who are identified to use firefighting equipment, must receive appropriate training. People with no training should not be expected to attempt to extinguish a fire.

However, all staff should be familiar with the location and basic operating procedures for the equipment provided in case they need to use it. If your fire strategy means that certain people (e.g. fire marshals) will be expected to take a more active role, then they should be provided with more comprehensive training. This may include staff who are designated to use specialist extinguishers (e.g. in science, engineering or workshop areas).

In addition to the above, all staff should have regular training in the local emergency procedures/plan.

The health & safety unit deliver fire warden/marshal & practical use of fire-fighting equipment training courses, please see our training pages for further details.

## 8. Further information

Please contact the [health & safety unit](#) if you require further information on fire and evacuation requirements.

Further information on fire is also available on HSE's website:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/fireandexplosion/workplace.htm>

Specific guidance on the RRO for education establishments and for evacuating persons with disabilities can be downloaded from the Communities and Local Government (CLG) website:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/fire/firesafety/firesafetylaw/>