



## Safety Services Guidance



### Arranging fire evacuation practices

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**Target audience:** Fire Trainer & Evacuation Co-ordinator; Practice Organisers; Fire Evacuation Marshalls; Local and School Safety Advisors, Wardens & Tutors in Halls of Residence

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## Introduction

1. This document has been written for people who are responsible for arranging and observing practice fire evacuations. In most academic, teaching and administrative buildings, the University's Fire Training & Evacuation Co-ordinator organises these, but may on occasion delegate to others. In Halls of Residence, Wardens and tutors normally arrange practices at times students are most likely to be in residence. The people responsible for organising the practice evacuations are referred to as the "Practice Organiser" in this document.
2. The following guidance describes the steps which should normally be taken when arranging and carrying out evacuation practices.
3. The annual programme of planned and observed emergency evacuations for all non-residential University buildings is organised by the Fire Training & Evacuation Co-ordinator in Safety Services. The annual programme of planned and observed evacuations of the Halls of Residence is organised by the Director of Residential Services. In some buildings, where there is a high turnover of new students for example, it may be appropriate to arrange more frequent practices.
4. Both programmes are carried out in consultation with the University Fire Officer, Estates (Security), Estates (Maintenance Services Unit) and key staff in each building. Buildings used by new students are prioritised in September and October. The programme is overseen by the Fire Safety Advisory Group ([see Chapter 7](#)).
5. The reasons for arranging fire and emergency evacuation drills are:
  - that the fire risk assessment requires evidence that occupiers are familiar with how to respond to a fire alarm, and have regular training. This is achieved in part by an evacuation practice carried out at least annually;
  - many occupiers use only one or two routes into and out of their workplace and these may not be available in an emergency. Practices provide an opportunity for people to use alternatives which may normally be secured or unfamiliar;
  - the various devices (such as push-bar door openings) and signs provided to help people evacuate are subject to wear and tear. Practice evacuations give building users and those coordinating the event the opportunity to test these fixtures and fittings;
  - some occupiers are or may become unable to exit using the available routes, and their needs have to be identified and addressed. Practice evacuations enable the users and those arranging the events to assess whether Personal

Emergency Evacuation Plans work and whether individuals' needs are being addressed;

- to establish whether the number and competence of fire marshals for each building is adequate.

## Responsibilities

6. The **Head of Safety Services** is responsible for ensuring practice evacuations are carried out in all University buildings.
7. The **Practice Organisers** are responsible for ensuring that the evacuations are carried out in a timely and efficient manner in accordance with the procedure laid out in this document. It is also the responsibility of the Practice Organiser to assemble an appropriate **Practice Team** which will normally consist of members of the University Safety Services, University Fire Officer, Security and Estates Maintenance Services team (or their delegates).
8. The **University Fire Officer** is responsible for, where possible, attending site and providing expert advice on the evacuations and measures in place.
9. The **Estates & Facilities Maintenance Services Unit** will, where possible, provide specialist technicians to set and reset the alarm.
10. The **Estates & Facilities Security Team** will, where possible, provide uniformed attendance at a planned evacuation to control entries and exits to the building.
11. The **Director of Residences** is responsible for ensuring that the practice evacuations are carried out in Halls of Residence.
12. **Heads of Schools / PSS Directorates / Divisions** are responsible for
  - ensuring co-operation with evacuation practices, including acting on reports of behaviour which contravenes University Policies & Procedures;
  - ensuring the safety of their staff during a practice evacuation.

## Guidance

13. Prioritisation of practice evacuations is based on the academic year:
  - Priority 1 buildings are those buildings likely to be regularly occupied by new students. These buildings must have a fire evacuation practice at least once per year, early in the academic year, preferably in October.

- Halls of Residence must undertake practice evacuations in the first two weeks of the academic year.
- Practice Evacuations for all other buildings can be at any other time of the year, although consideration must be given to ensuring that the maximum benefit is gained from each evacuation.

14. At least two weeks prior to the practice evacuation and where appropriate, Practice Organisers should:

- with a proposed date in mind, check with Central Timetabling Unit, conference office or other contacts to establish whether the planned practice will cause unnecessary disruption to events such as exams, conferences, etc.
- check the Admin-USO-FireEvac Event Calendar and book the time slot by entering a meeting at the appropriate time. Make a note of the building and the organiser's name against the entry. Wednesdays and Fridays should be avoided wherever possible and there should be at least an hour between bookings.
- submit a request to the Estates & Facilities Helpdesk for Maintenance Services staff to attend the practice evacuation. Include the start time and building location.
- email [gary.rowe@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:gary.rowe@manchester.ac.uk) and [paul.greenlees@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:paul.greenlees@manchester.ac.uk) to request Security's attendance.
- email [jeffrey.smith@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:jeffrey.smith@manchester.ac.uk) and [philip.unsworth@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:philip.unsworth@manchester.ac.uk) to request the attendance of the University Fire Officer;
- check with Central Timetabling and occupiers' contacts to establish if any individuals with PEEPs will be present. Contact HoS or SSAs to obtain lists of fire marshals and fire plans. Review these to establish whether the building has adequate levels of fire marshal cover. Remind contacts that the practice evacuation should not be made public knowledge.
- refresh the Fire Evacuation Marshals and SSAs understanding of their roles during an evacuation. As their roles are critical to the smooth running of the event, it may be more productive in many cases not to inform them of the date and time of the evacuation.

15. At least one week prior to the practice evacuation, the Practice Organiser:

- should familiarise themselves with the building, its exit routes, assembly points and any potential issues that are present;
- should familiarise themselves with the location of the fire alarm system and its method of operation (i.e. two stage/voice/curtains/etc.);
- request assistance from colleagues, etc. if additional observers are required.

16. Immediately before the evacuation, the Practice Organiser ensure that:

- any member of the practice team who needs to stand at a fire exit, deal with issues or re-enter the building during the evacuation is wearing a tabard or similar to distinguish themselves from the crowd. Security and the Estates technician (Maintenance Services) do not need these.
- the Practice team is assembled before the evacuation and that everybody knows their role.
- if Security are not present, the relevant security office (typically the precinct) has been reminded of the practice evacuation. They will then be able to confirm that the signal is received.
- somebody present is able to reset the alarm.

17. During and immediately after the evacuation the Practice Organiser must ensure that:

- the fire alarm should be started from a break glass panel where possible. Ideally this should not involve breaking the glass;
- for 2 stage alarms, allow the first alarm stage to sound for a few seconds so occupiers can learn to distinguish the 2 alarms, and then ensure it changes into full alarm mode;
- the evacuation should be timed from the start of the evacuation alarm. The time of the last person out should be noted – and if particularly delayed, details of why they took so long should be recorded;
- as many fire exits as possible are observed and comments about crowd dynamics and compliance noted;
- the number, visibility, actions and efforts of the fire marshals and security are observed and comments noted;
- any potential issues raised or poor conduct by staff and students are noted;
- observe the crowd and individual dynamics. People should not be permitted to re-enter the building until the Practice Coordinator is happy that the practice is complete. Sometimes it may be appropriate to allow certain people back into the building first – bank, shop or library staff for example.
- following the evacuation and reoccupation, a sweep of the building and its fire exits must be carried out to ensure that any breakable fittings are identified and replaced.
- if security were not present at the evacuation, the Practice Organiser must contact Security, and advise them the test is over.

18. Unless absolutely necessary a practice evacuation must not be postponed. The evacuation can proceed without any member of the practice team, with the exception of the Practice Organiser, as long as there is somebody present who is able to silence the alarm.
19. Do not attempt to add realism to the exercise, e.g. by using smoke bombs or starting actual fires, without consultation with the University Fire Officer and Head of Safety Services. Such exercises can be helpful, but can also have unintended consequences and as such they require considerable planning. However, it is acceptable to arrange for a member of the practice team to stand at a predetermined fire exit and tell everyone it is not in use, or to deploy the "What Now?" fire board – this will encourage users to find an alternative to their normal exit.

### **Evaluation and report**

20. Following the evacuation the Practice Organiser must:

- collate all reports from the Practice Team, SSAs, evacuation marshals and any other interested party;
- report defective or inadequate arrangements to the Estates Helpdesk. If there are reports of individuals failing to evacuate, pass any details onto the Head of School or senior manager. All reports should be made electronically so that there is a record of it being made.
- send a report on the evacuation practice to the Fire Training & Evacuation Co-ordinator in Safety Services, using the [Practice Evacuation Report Form](#). Those carried out in Halls of Residence should use the Residences online reporting mechanism.

### **Training requirements**

21. Practice Organisers will be provided with briefings by Fire Safety & Evacuation Co-ordinator on a regular basis.

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