

Health and Safety Services
Safety Team
The University of Manchester
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To To all those with responsibility for fire safety: Deans, HoFAs, HOSs, Directors,
From Dr Melanie Taylor, Head of Safety Services
Date 28 June 2011
cc Mr A McMenemy, Prof M Case, Prof M Hebbert, Dr D Barker, Mr J Smith, E
Shillcock, School Safety Advisors, Safety Representatives
Reference Safety Circular 3/2011

Fire safety

Action: Please note key changes in fire safety arrangements, and ensure your local health & safety arrangements are updated to reflect these.

In recent months, the University's Fire Safety Advisory Group (FSAG) has revised and updated our Fire Safety Procedure. This document is now available at

http://www.campus.manchester.ac.uk/healthandsafety/CoPs&Guidance/fire_safety-p.pdf .

The main changes relate to a much simplified approach to the evacuation of disabled people, as our experiences showed the previous arrangement was often not completed satisfactorily.

In January 2011, FSAG received my report about the annual fire evacuation practices, and relayed its concerns to the Health & Safety Committee. The main issues identified last year were the insufficiency of evacuation marshals; slow evacuation times from some buildings; occasional breaches of fire safety procedure by staff not responding appropriately to an alarm and to observations that students tend not to respond promptly when working in computer clusters (typically, without staff presence).

The Registrar asked for an action plan to improve the situation. The resulting plan included a range of measures involving Estates, STDU and others, and implementation was overseen by Professors Maynard Case and Michael Hebbert. Work on some actions is expected to continue.

As part of this exercise, we have considered at length how many fire evacuation marshals would be considered "sufficient". Rather than use floor area, we have moved to a guide criterion of one per floor per protected stair case. We hope this will be easier to understand, and also help to rationalize the areas swept and the exit routes used.

Please note that the primary strategy for ensuring safety during fire alerts is individual responsibility. All staff and students are expected to respond promptly to all fire alarm activations (except the weekly tests at specified times). Staff who are with groups of students or visitors at the time of an alarm are expected to stop teaching or speaking, and to lead the whole group in the evacuation procedure.

Dr Melanie Taylor
Head of Safety Services