

To Deans, HoFAs, HOSs, Directors of Research Institutes
From Dr Melanie Taylor, Head of Safety Services
Date 19 June 2015
cc Mr W Spinks, Prof N Thakker, Prof Y Wang, Dr D Barker, Mr J Smith, Mrs C Gamble, School Safety Advisors, Safety Representatives
Reference Safety Circular 1/2015

Fire Safety

Please use all relevant communication channels in your areas to raise awareness about fire safety. **The key message is to prevent fire in the first place.**

Consider setting SMART goals relating to fire safety in your annual health & safety monitoring reports (eg increase the number of fire evacuation marshals, increase the number of staff completing the fire awareness on-line course, reduce the time taken to evacuate your building).

The following information may be of use in local awareness campaigns and messages:

- The University has a Fire Safety Advisory Group (FSAG). FSAG monitors and steers our fire safety related work, and reports on it to the University Safety, Health and Environment Committee (SHE). Fire is probably the most ubiquitous risk faced by the University community, as well as potentially the most damaging to life and property.
- [Safety Services fire toolkit](#) links to the University's overarching fire safety arrangements in [Chapter 7](#), guidance for managers on moving into new accommodation, guidance on personal emergency evacuations for disabled people, the range of fire safety training courses (including on-line versions), and other relevant documents.
- The programme of annual (and observed) evacuation practices is part of staff and student training in how to respond to an alarm. Please do not take out any personal frustrations about a short-term disruption on the staff organising or marshalling the practices.
- Alarm "tests" are carried out weekly in all buildings. These are at reasonably consistent times (specified on the local fire action notices) and of short duration. There is no need to evacuate unless the alarm continues for an unusually long period.

- The weekly tests are an opportunity to check if occupiers can hear the alarm throughout the building. Any problems with audibility should be reported to estates-helpdesk@manchester.ac.uk or internal phone 52424.
- **All other alarm activations should be treated as “real”.**
- Alarm sounds and systems vary from building to building (simply because of the standards in place at the time they were installed). Some buildings have 2 stage alarms: an initial (usually intermittent) alarm is a first warning; evacuation is not required, although preparations to leave should be made. This allows for those in charge of experiments or equipment to make them safe to leave, in case the alarm converts to a full evacuation alarm (usually a continuous sound). Evacuation should commence immediately if the alarm changes to the second stage sound.
- Details about what to do are on the Fire Action Notices posted along evacuation routes and stairwells in every building.
- Move away from the building entrance and proceed to the assembly point for that building – crowding around entrances prolongs the evacuation time.
- **Never wait** for a fire evacuation marshal or security officer to confirm that you need to evacuate.
- Some buildings with large lecture theatres or many centrally timetabled facilities have very few permanent occupiers compared to the total numbers of people present at any time (eg Renold, Roscoe, Simon). This means that they are unlikely to have fire evacuation marshals present. **It is particularly important that lecturers using these facilities demonstrate a responsible attitude to initiating the evacuation of their classes.** They may not be familiar with the exact exit routes, but they can set an example by promptly responding to any alarm, suspending their class, and instructing their group to leave by the nearest exits and follow the green man signs.
- Efforts are being made by Estates and Facilities Fire Safety Team to reduce the number of unwanted alarm activations from contractors, system faults, etc BUT it is extremely dangerous to assume that any alarm is false or a practice.
- All University buildings have a fire risk assessment (this process is managed by Mr. Jeff Smith, Estates & Facilities). Information about fire risk assessments can be obtained from him.
- Any member of staff can refresh their fire awareness on line [THS41E Fire Awareness e-learning](#) (University log-in required).
- For managers seeking to recruit new or more fire evacuation marshals (FEMs), the Training Catalogue course code is [THS 47 Evacuation Marshal Training](#) (University log in required).

Dr Melanie Taylor
Head of Safety Services