

Fire evacuation and escape planning

The fire safety and evacuation plan should be based on the findings of the fire risk assessment.

Like the fire risk assessment, the plan should be reviewed periodically, so that it remains up-to-date and reflects the changing nature and hazards of the site.

A fire safety co-ordinator could be appointed to take responsibility for the fire safety and evacuation plan and its implementation.

The person who completes the fire safety and evacuation plan could be a member of the existing site management team or, where particular expertise is required, from a consultancy or specialist fire safety organisation.



Essential points to consider

- Make sure that the person managing the fire risks is always aware of the location and types of hazard, and that they are competent enough to develop an effective emergency escape plan.
- Liaise with the local fire and rescue service as necessary, and communicate and co-ordinate with other occupiers of the site/building to develop an effective emergency evacuation plan that identifies emergency escape routes and any changes to them.
- Appoint persons with specific duties, such as a fire safety co-ordinator and fire wardens, to assist in implementing the fire safety and evacuation plan. Fire wardens and fire safety co-ordinators should be given sufficient time to perform their fire safety duties. They should receive training specific to the role, which should be refreshed on a regular basis.
- Identify and designate emergency vehicle access routes, and ensure that they are always kept clear.
- Ensure that there are effective methods of detecting fires and raising the alarm that are suitable for the layout of the site, so that fires can be detected and alarms can be heard in all areas of the site.
- Any refurbishment works should not compromise existing fire stops or areas of compartmentation.
- Design escape routes to be adequate in number and size for the number of people likely to be using them (specialist advice might be needed).
- Clearly designate escape and evacuation routes with signage that complies with the Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996, particularly at changes of direction and level. They must be lit (including standby emergency lighting) if it is possible that they could be used when there is insufficient natural light.
- Do not obstruct escape and evacuation routes: if work is necessary that unavoidably blocks an escape route, you must designate an alternative route during the work, adjust it if necessary as construction progresses, and inspect it at least once a week.
- Identify one or more assembly points with signage, and make sure that there is a system in place for instructing people what to do when they get to an assembly point, as well as ensuring that there are effective methods of accounting for everyone on site.
- Provide appropriate and adequate firefighting equipment at suitable locations around the site, and make sure that a sufficient number of employees are trained in the use of the equipment, if required on site.
- Arrange regular fire drills with practice evacuations, monitor the duration of the evacuations and the effectiveness and accuracy of roll calls to confirm the adequacy of the plan, and highlight any shortcomings.
- Conduct weekly inspections of escape routes, firefighting equipment and access for emergency services, and testing of alarms on detection devices: keep records of all checks, inspections, tests and fire drills.
- Ensure that site inductions make individuals aware of the evacuation plan, the risk of fire and what to do if a fire occurs, as well as making sure that any changes to the plan are communicated to those on site at the time.

Further information

- HSG168 *Fire Safety in construction* (free online Health and Safety Executive publication)
- Construction fire safety: Responsibility and competence matrix (free online Construction Industry Advisory Committee publication).

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