

HARLOW COUNCIL

Addendum to Health and Safety Policy

Fire Safety

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Introduction

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 places specific duties on employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of employees as well as the health and safety of other persons who may be affected by their work activities.

Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 employers must assess significant risks to the health and safety of both employees and other persons who may be affected by their work activities.

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 places further specific responsibilities on employers with regard to fire safety.

Failure to comply with the requirements of this policy is a disciplinary offence, which in serious cases could lead to dismissal.

Summary of Duties

In order to ensure that in the event of a fire correct responses can be made, by building occupants, it is necessary to have a well-documented and rehearsed fire safety plan/assessment.

Fire safety legislation has taken this process one step further by making it a statutory requirement to assess the risks from fire, and to put in place suitable and sufficient arrangements that will bring any identified significant risks down to an acceptable level.

The Health and Safety Team will be responsible for ensuring that fire safety plans/assessments are prepared for all Council buildings and that the completed plans/assessments are placed in the Health & Safety section of the Kaonet.

The development of a fire safety plan/assessment will be based on a fire risk assessment of the building taking into account:

- The measures introduced to minimise the risk from the main fire hazards
- The measures in place to ensure the effective evacuation of the premises
- The measures in place to ensure the effective evacuation of people with disabilities – this will involve the setting up of personal evacuation plans
- Staff training

As part of a fire safety plan/assessment it will be necessary to produce fire procedures for the following specific groups:

- General fire safety information for people using the building
- Information for the person(s) who discover the fire
- Evacuation information for when the alarm is given
- Persons who have specific duties to perform when a warning of fire is given

The current legislation also makes it a requirement that all fire safety systems should be properly inspected and maintained. Arrangements will therefore be introduced to ensure that this is undertaken in respect of all:

- Fire extinguishers
- Fire alarm systems, including smoke detectors
- Emergency lighting
- Fire doors
- Evacuation routes
- Fire safety signage
- Automatic fire doors
- Sprinkler systems

To ensure compliance it is likely that some of the maintenance arrangements will be contracted out.

The fire safety plan/assessment will also include a fire log book that must be used to record relevant information such as fire drills, alarm testing and maintenance etc.

General Statement

Harlow Council accepts that there is a risk of fire in all of the buildings that it is responsible for, and will take all reasonably practicable measures to reduce these risks to an acceptable level.

In meeting the requirements of health and safety and fire safety legislation arrangements will be put in place to ensure that fire risk assessments are carried out in all Council buildings.

A Fire Safety Plan/Assessment is to be completed for all buildings that the Council are responsible for. Upon completion of a Plan/Assessment, a review will take place, within an agreed timeframe, to ensure that any identified recommendations and actions, are being processed and implemented.

Arrangements will be put in place to ensure that fire alarm systems are tested weekly. Buildings containing a fire alarm system should carry out an evacuation drill, as a minimum, twice a year.

Arrangements will be put in place to ensure that an appropriate number and type of fire extinguisher, relevant to the main identified fire risks, are sited in all Council buildings and, where necessary, Council vehicles.

Arrangements will be put in place to ensure that where required aids to assist evacuation for people with disabilities are installed in relevant Council buildings.

Periodic fire safety training will be made available which can include the practical use of fire extinguishers.

In the event of fire the safety of life will override all other considerations such as saving property and extinguishing the fire.

If a fire is discovered the alarm will be raised ***immediately***, and this should always be the first action to be taken no matter how small the fire. All employees are empowered to take this action if they believe that there is a fire: permission does not need to be sought from any other person.

Harlow Council will always support employees who operate the fire alarm system in good faith, regardless of whether or not it is ultimately determined that a fire existed.

Responsibility for contacting the Fire Service normally rests with the person discovering the fire, although this may well be repeated by line management as a response to the operation of the alarm. The Fire Service must always be called on discovery of a fire.

Harlow Council does not require staff to attempt to extinguish a fire, but fire extinguishers may be used if it is safe, and you feel competent to do so. Guidance on the use of fire extinguishers will be included in fire safety training.

Immediate evacuation of the building must take place as soon as the alarm has been raised. All occupants should report to the assembly point indicated on the fire action notice.

Re-entry into the building is strictly prohibited until the Fire Service or the Council Officer in charge declares that it is safe to do so. Silencing of the fire alarm system should never be taken as an indication that it is safe to re-enter.

Employees should report any concerns regarding fire procedures to their Line Manager or the Health and Safety Team.

COVID – Role of Fire Marshal / Process for all staff

Safe System of Work – Evacuation Procedure

1. Sound the alarm on discovery of any fire, no matter how small. Do not wait until you have informed another person such as a manager or fire marshal etc.
2. **Summon the Fire Service without delay (999 Emergency).**
3. Only attempt to extinguish the fire if it is safe and you feel competent to do so. On no account put, yourself at risk. Guidance on the use of fire fighting equipment will be included in fire safety training.
4. Evacuate the building as soon as the alarm has been given. Do not wait to conclude meetings or telephone calls etc.
5. Give any help to people who require assistance during the evacuation. Be responsible for any visitors that are unfamiliar with the building.
6. Switch off any equipment if possible which, if left unattended, may itself constitute a fire hazard.
7. As you evacuate close any doors, particularly those designed to resist spread of smoke and fire.
8. Report to the assembly point. Do not re-enter the building until the Fire Service, or Council Officer in charge, declares that it is safe to do so.
9. **Fire Marshals** - Check that your area has been evacuated and report this to the person who is identified as the Assembly Point Coordinator positioned at an assembly point.

The impact of the Covid 19 pandemic has resulted in many staff working from home. This has therefore caused some fire marshals to be absent and not located within specific areas, to carry out the 'sweeping' of their floor. The process currently in place is that all staff will have guidance,

(via Kaonet), and be able to have direction in the role of a Fire Marshal, and be able to carry out required duties in the event of an evacuation. Posters have also been displayed accordingly to assist in the tasks required throughout buildings.

10. **Evacuation Co-ordinator** - Liaise with the Fire Service and arrange assistance as required.

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Revision History

Revision date	Previous revision date	Summary of Changes	Changes marked
July 2006	None	Original Draft document	
11/03/2008	July 2006	Updates from Draft. Inserted Revision History. Logo changed	No
02/09/08		Updated – Additional paragraph to include Fire Safety Plan information	
01/2014	September 2008	Reviewed – Updated alarm testing to weekly	No
April 2020		Reviewed – Updated dates & reference to names	No
Nov 2021	April 2020	Change of process/reviewed - Covid addition in relation to Fire Marshals role	No
Nov 2023			