

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL



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HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK

FIRE SAFETY POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Human Resources and Organisational Development
Redditch Borough Council
Walter Stranz Square
Redditch
Worcestershire.
B98 8AH

Health and Safety Team 01527 64252

Fire Safety Policy

Fire Safety Policy Statement

The Elected Members, the Chief Executive, Directors and Heads of Service of Redditch Borough Council are committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of their valued employees and recognises that fire prevention is a health and safety issue and acknowledge the importance of identifying and reducing potential causes of fire within the workplace.

Redditch Borough Council actively seeks to create and maintain a working environment safe from the risks of fire, in compliance with the legislation of specific relevance to fire safety:

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmosphere Regulations 2002
- Building Regulations 2000

The Council will ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health safety and welfare with regard to fire, of all its employees and any others who may use their Council buildings. It also acknowledges its responsibility to protect Council buildings and assets from the threat of arson and the accidental outbreak of fire and the risk of serious disruption to Council activities.

The Fire Safety Policy and Procedures supports the Councils Health and Safety Policy. The Council will:

- Provide information, instruction, training and supervision to enable all employees to carry out their duties effectively and safely.
- Provide safe equipment and systems of work.
- Carry out suitable and sufficient fire risk assessments for all areas and implement appropriate remedial actions.
- Be proactive in fire prevention and reactive in fire and near miss investigation.
- Carry out fire drills to test the effectiveness of procedures and equipment as appropriate.

Objectives

To eliminate or minimise so far as is reasonably practicable, the risk of injury to:

- All Council employees
- Staff, Agency workers, Apprentices, work experience and Contractors
- All non-employees of the Council, including the general public, visitors to Council premises, to include Councillors, and any other person who may be affected by the activities or undertakings of the Council or its employees at work.

The Chief Executive is ultimately responsible for ensuring the Fire Safety Policy and Procedures are implemented and that responsibilities are assigned, accepted and

fulfilled at all levels. The Corporate Health and Safety Committee will support the implementation of the Fire Safety Policy and Procedures.

All staff are required to take reasonable steps to ensure that they do not place themselves or others at risk of harm. They have the responsibility for ensuring that they are familiar with and understand the content of any relevant documents that relate to fire safety for the Council and must cooperate fully with the Council in complying with all procedures and measures to protect the safety and wellbeing of all.

Problems relating to fire safety in any Council building must be reported to the Health and Safety Team and Place Partnership (PPL) at the earliest opportunity, so that remedial action may be taken.

Introduction

This document provides all staff with guidance in relation to fire safety at the Council. The Fire Safety Policy and Procedures will be reviewed and updated at least every 3 years or if there are any significant changes e.g. Legislation, technology, new premises etc. by the Health and Safety Team. This document consists of three parts:

- Part One: Fire Safety Policy
- Part Two: Procedures
- Part Three: Roles and Responsibilities

Though Procedures are referred to in this document the Council has a number of premises for which it is responsible. Therefore reference also needs to be made to the Procedures for each individual premise as there will be slight differences.

Part One: Fire Safety Policy

1. Safe Working Environment

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (RRFSO) is the primary legislation for fire safety. The Fire Safety Order applies not only to persons at work, but to all persons lawfully on the premises and those not on the premises that may be affected by a fire on the premises. Risk Assessment is used as the basis for compliance and the “responsible person” for the Council is held liable in case of any breach.

To comply with current legislation, the Council will ensure so far as is reasonably practicable the health, safety and welfare of all people on their premises or affected by their activities, with regard to fire.

In order to create and maintain a safe working environment the Council will:

- Safeguard the wellbeing of all employees, visitors and contractors through adherence to best practice and through managerial support.
- Provide information, instruction, training and supervision to enable all persons to carry out their duties effectively and safely.
- Carry out suitable and sufficient fire risk assessments for all areas. Assess any deficiencies and implement recommended improvements to buildings and procedures as appropriate.
- Provide safe systems of work for all hazardous activities.
- Ensure that flammable substances are stored and used in accordance with DSEAR (The Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmospheres Regulations of 2002) and the Councils policy and technical guidance notes.
- Conduct fire safety inspections of buildings, plant, equipment and work practices to ensure safe standards are maintained.
- Conduct evacuation drills in each building at least twice per year to maintain over all awareness and practice procedures.
- Be proactive in fire prevention and encourage a no blame culture for the reporting of incidents or near misses.
- Be reactive by investigating incidences of fire and false alarms that have occurred, concentrating on the cause and response, rather than just the outcomes.
- Promote risk management by implementing and maintaining effective control measures.
- Ensure visiting contractors activities are controlled in accordance with council policies.
- Ensure that the buildings are maintained to a high standard with regard to fire prevention, containment, detection, alarms, means of escape etc. and in compliance with latest legislation, approved codes of practice and relevant standards.
- Review and audit all the arrangements for fire safety to ensure that they remain current and relevant.
- Carry out fire drills to test the effectiveness of procedures and equipment as appropriate.

All staff should note that the ownership of fire safety responsibility lies with the person in charge of the workplace or activity and is devolved to each member of staff, but every person may contribute to the effective management of risks.

The Council will achieve control by securing the commitment of employees to clear fire safety objectives. Line Managers must take responsibility for controlling factors which could lead to a fire.

The Chief Executive is responsible for ensuring that the details of the Fire Safety Policy and Procedures are implemented and that responsibilities for fire safety are properly assigned, accepted and fulfilled at all levels with operational assistance and advice from the Health and Safety Team. Good working relationships shall be maintained between the Health and Safety Team, Managers and staff so that a partnership exists and any fire safety issues that are raised are resolved through discussion and consultation.

2. Reporting, Measuring and Monitoring Performance

The Council recognises that for fire safety management to be successful, supervisors and managers must monitor all activities. Everyone in the Council is encouraged to be proactive in promoting fire safety in existing practices and systems of work.

The Council recognises that on one occasion the outcome of a fire or near miss may be insignificant and that on another, the result may be serious. Therefore all fires and near misses must be reported to the Health and Safety Team immediately. These will be investigated and suggestions sought as to how such an occurrence may be avoided in the future if appropriate.

The data collected is analysed by the Health and Safety Team to identify trends and make recommendations. All such reports are provided to the Corporate Health and Safety Committee and Corporate Management Team.

Fire Risk Assessments will be carried out for each building or more frequently if required, and remedial action plans will be produced. This process will prioritise any management or building improvements necessary to comply with legislation and best practice.

Auditing will be undertaken by competent persons who are trained in the task and will achieve the following:

- Review the fire safety policy and procedure
- Ensure compliance with Fire Safety Legislation.
- Identify improvements needed to maintain safety standards such as additional lighting, sounders or detection
- Promote fire safety awareness throughout the organisation.
- Assess performance of fire safety systems.
- Check the monitoring arrangements.
- Monitor the effectiveness of fire drills.

The Council promotes quality auditing, which highlights any problem areas, suggests remedial measures and monitors the action taken to control the risks to employees, other persons and property from fire.

3. Fire Safety Training

The Council will provide fire safety training for all staff at the appropriate level. All new employees will receive a fire safety briefing as part of Induction training. Refresher training will be carried out at appropriate intervals.

All staff with an identified role e.g. Fire wardens will receive training sufficient to ensure their competency in their specific role.

Fire evacuation drills will be held for all buildings at least twice per year. Fire drills will be organised by building managers and or the Health and Safety Team and Place Partnership. A record of fire drills will be kept in the building Fire Log Book. The Health and Safety Team will monitor and assist with fire drills where required.

Part Two: Fire Safety Precautions

All Council premises have fire safety precautions in place following the completion of fire risk assessments and a review of fire compartmentation and fire prevention in each building. The complexity of the provisions of fire safety precautions provided depends on the usage and age of the building.

These are all subject to regular checks and maintenance through the Officer in Charge and the provider of the equipment. All defects and concerns are to be reported through the Place Partnership in the first instance for remedial action to be taken.

1. Fire Doors

Fire doors must be kept closed at all times (unless the doors are fitted with automatic closers which activate when the alarm sounds) to maintain compartmentation of the building and to prevent the spread of fire, smoke and toxic fumes.

Corridors, stairways, landings and escape routes must be kept clear at all times of anything that is likely to cause a fire, accident or to impede evacuation in an emergency.

Hazardous materials must be stored, used and disposed of in accordance with all legal requirements and safe working practices.

All firefighting equipment must be kept free from obstruction and be readily available for use in an emergency. Portable fire-fighting equipment must not be removed or repositioned without consultation with the Health and Safety Team

Any damage to equipment provided for fire safety purposes must be reported immediately to the Health and Safety Team and Place Partnership.

2. Means of Escape – routine inspection

All Council buildings will be visually inspected at the start of each working day. The inspection should include that:

- All exit doors and gates are unlocked and readily available for use, or they are capable of being opened quickly and easily in the event of a fire.
- Any emergency fastenings are working efficiently
- Any doors, gates or shutters that are required to be locked in the open position are so locked;
- All escape routes and exit doors are clear of any obstructions
- Fire doors are not held open except with approved devices
- There are no obvious fire hazards on escape routes, such as accumulated waste
- Any evacuation lifts for disabled persons are working where installed.
- All defects reported, logged and programmed for remedy.

Fire doors will be regularly visually checked by Place Partnership or nominated Contractor on a periodic basis. If in the meantime any issues are found they must be reported immediately.

3. Testing and Maintenance

3.1 Fire Alarms

The fire alarm system will be tested weekly by Place Partnership, a member of staff or an external provider sourced by them using a different call point for each successive test. The duration of the test will be sufficient to check that the system operates satisfactorily. Any defects should receive immediate attention to Place Partnership helpdesk. A record of tests will be kept in the Fire Log Book for each property. The fire alarm system will be maintained in the manner and at the intervals recommended by the manufacturers of the equipment.

In the event of a fire alarm failure:

If the failure is due to last for more than 12 hours additional security arrangements and fire watches/patrols will be introduced for that respective building. All staff will be briefed through Communications on the actions to take and kept up to date.

In such circumstances any activities/works being undertaken which could pose a fire risk will be suspended until the fire alarm is up and running again i.e. hot works.

If the outage is due to last for the working day staff are to be advised of the outage and everyone is to remain extra vigilant for the duration including Fire Wardens, Caretakers and Managers.

3.2 Portable Fire Extinguishers

All portable fire extinguishing equipment will be tested and maintained on an annual basis by a competent person. Place Partnership has responsibility for organising this contract for all Redditch premises.

3.3 Emergency Lighting

All emergency lighting systems will be regularly tested and properly maintained to an appropriate standard. Most existing systems will need to be manually tested. However, some modern systems have self-testing facilities that reduce routine checks to a minimum. The monthly testing is either done by staff within the building or sub-Contracted out by the Place Partnership.

A record of the tests will be kept in the Fire Log Book and any formal reports will be held by Place Partnership but at least an electronic copy should be available on site.

3.4 Special procedures

In some situations (e.g. gas isolation, shut downs, personal emergency evacuation plans etc.) there may be a need to have special procedures in place. These procedures will be produced by the relevant department in conjunction with the Health and Safety Team. The relevant department will ensure that members of staff have been trained or briefed on the procedure as appropriate.

4. Fire Log Book

A Fire Log Book is kept and maintained in each Council premise. The Fire Log Book includes:

- Useful telephone contacts
- Senior Advisor's (Health, Safety & Wellbeing) and Fire Wardens' details
- Visits by the local Fire and Rescue Service
- Fire Alarm System – record of tests
- Fire Alarm System – Contractors record of maintenance
- Emergency Lighting System – record of tests
- Emergency Lighting System – Contractors record of maintenance
- Fire door Inspection – Record sheet
- Fire door Inspection Guide
- Staff Fire Instructions/Evacuation Drill-Record sheets
- Fire Evacuation Record

5. Fire Action Procedure

Fire action notices are posted throughout each building and can be found on exit routes normally adjacent to call points or portable fire equipment. These will identify the location of the Assembly Point and how to contact the Emergency Services.

If you discover a fire:

- Raise the alarm immediately by shouting fire
- Operate the nearest fire alarm call point (break-glass box located at all exits).
- Leave the building via the nearest and safest exit
- Report to your designated assembly point.
- Do not stop and collect personal belongings.
- Do not use the lift.

If trained to do so and if minimal risk exists, tackle the fire with appliances found at exits and other key locations.

Fire Wardens will carry out their duties as described in part three of this policy. The Officer in Charge will coordinate information and activities as described in part three of this policy.

6. Disabled People

People with disabilities which may hinder the evacuation in an emergency situation must have a personal emergency evacuation plan (PEEP) in place. These can be drawn up in consultation with the Health and Safety Team.

Visiting persons with disabilities are required to inform a member of staff if they require help evacuating a building in an emergency.

7. Cooperation and Coordination

The Council will take all reasonable steps to coordinate the arrangements for managing fire safety, where premises are shared with other organisations.

Part Three: Roles and Responsibilities

1. Overall Responsibility

The Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council has ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the arrangements for managing Fire Safety are in place and regularly monitored. This ultimate responsibility cannot be delegated. However, the functions related to that responsibility may be delegated.

Contained within the Fire Safety Order is reference to a 'responsible person' who has overall responsibility for fire safety within workplaces under his control. The 'responsible person' within the Council is the Chief Executive who is ultimately responsible for the following:

- To take such general fire precautions as will ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety of all their employees.
- In relation to relevant persons who are not their employees, take such general fire precautions as may reasonably be required in the circumstances.
- Establish procedures to be followed in the event of serious and imminent danger to relevant persons.
- Arrange for fire safety matters to be discussed by the corporate management Team where necessary.
- Ensure arrangements are made for joint consultation of all employees with regard to all fire safety matters.

2. Directors

The Directors are responsible to ensure the discharge of the fire safety function on behalf of the Chief Executive through the following means:

- The implementation of the Fire Safety Policy and Procedures
- Acting upon the recommendations and requirements of the fire risk assessment
- Fire safety linked to a particular process or procedure under their control
- Ensure that adequate fire safety information, instruction, training and supervision is provided to all employees within their directorate.
- Appointing suitable responsible persons to undertake all necessary fire arrangements and procedures.

3. Heads of Service

Fire safety legislation as it affects each directorate, together with training, administration and day to day working requirements, justify the need for delegation to personnel under the directorate control. For this purpose, Heads of Service are responsible to the Chief Executive and Directors (as applicable) for all matters relating to fire safety within their service area through the following means:

- Corporate safety arrangements, instructions and section guidance relating to fire safety are practised and information relating to regulations and codes of practice is disseminated to those employees for whom they are responsible.

- Publish written and signed safe working arrangements (systems of work) where necessary to safeguard against the risk of fire and to bring them to the attention of their employees.
- Maintain fire safety when reorganising workplaces, changing systems of work or introducing new plant or machinery. In consultation with the Health and Safety Team and or Place Partnership.
- Ensure that the responsibilities of their managers/supervisors are carried out.
- Support the Chief Executive and Directors in implementing & discharging their duties under the Fire Safety Order.
- Identify and ensure that suitable and sufficient information, instruction, training and supervision is provided and that all employees in their Service Areas are competent in the fire safety aspects of the work they are required to undertake.
- Identify and appoint a sufficient number of fire wardens for their service areas.
- Ensure that the appointed fire wardens receive suitable & sufficient information, instruction, training and supervision to fulfil their role.

4. Line Managers and Supervisors

Line Managers/Supervisors are responsible to their Head of Service for all matters relating to fire safety within their area of responsibility. Each manager or supervisor will be responsible within their section for ensuring that:

- Corporate safety arrangements, instructions and section guidance relating to fire safety are practised & information relating to regulations and codes of practice is disseminated to those employees for whom they are responsible.
- They will also ensure that safe working methods are practised at all times and necessary controls are maintained.
- They are familiar with the Corporate Fire Safety Policy, Organisation and arrangements document, and any safety rules or codes of practice developed from it.
- All fire hazards are identified, the necessary risk assessments completed and control measures developed or maintained to reduce or eliminate the risk of harm to all persons who interface with the work area or operations.
- Suitable and sufficient information, instruction, training and supervision is provided and that all employees in their section are competent in all aspects of fire safety.
- Fire wardens are appointed and additional fire safety training is provided for the appointed fire wardens within their areas of responsibility.
- Employees under their control comply with safe working arrangements and systems at work as it relates to fire safety.
- Fire safety provisions or procedures as set out in the Section 3 Arrangements document (see below), or elsewhere are understood and followed by all persons within their section including visitors and contractors.
- All new employees attend a health and safety induction course that covers basic fire safety procedures, followed by on the job fire safety training and familiarisation or refresher training (where necessary).
- Fire safety inspections are carried out to determine the effectiveness of the safe working arrangements.

- To work closely with the Health and Safety Team and Safety Representatives in respect of matters that may affect the fire safety of their employees.
- To maintain and update their skills, information and knowledge relating to fire safety matters.
- Plant, machinery and equipment used at work as it relates to fire safety, is safe, maintained in good working order and used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and inspection and maintenance records kept.
- Adequate supervision is available at all times where necessary, especially where young people are involved.

5. Health and Safety Team

The Health and Safety Team is responsible for conducting fire risk assessments and for providing advice, training, monitoring and auditing of the Fire Safety Policy and Procedures. The Health and Safety Team will have the following responsibilities:

- Provide or arrange assistance, on fire safety matters for the Council and its officers, to enable management to meet their statutory obligations and ensure consistent application of the Council Fire Safety Policy.
- The maintenance, amendment and distribution of the Fire Safety Policy and supporting documents.
- Advise and assist management to fulfil their responsibilities for the fire safety of employees and others affected by their actions.
- Source information and advice on the design and implementation of safe systems of work, selection, provision and use of appropriate fire safety equipment.
- Promote regular fire safety training for all employees in collaboration with all Heads of Service.
- Promote and deliver fire safety training for all fire wardens at appropriate intervals.
- Liaise with statutory bodies such as the HSE and the Fire and Rescue Service as necessary.
- Carry out periodic assessments, inspections or audits and draw to the attention of the appropriate Head of Service, concerns as to any unsafe working practices, procedures, plant or any breach of legislation concerning fire safety and wherever possible, advising on remedial action.
- Assist Line Managers, through on site visits where appropriate, to ensure that contractors comply with all fire safety considerations and other relevant requirements affecting their undertakings on behalf of the Council.
- Promote a positive fire safety culture in conjunction with line management, encouraging fire safety consciousness at all levels within the organisation.

6. Fire Marshal

Sufficient numbers of Fire Wardens will have been identified for each premises to assist the evacuation of staff and visitors from the building in the event of a fire or another emergency occurring.

A workplace fire warden must not put themselves at risk while carrying out their duties, they are essentially there to carry out many elements of a fire risk assessment, to increase the chances of preventing a fire in the first place. There are often times where fire occurs, and the warden needs to react. In a reactive position, their responsibilities are:

- Attend any training in relation to their duties for the building in which they are responsible.
- Fighting fires / use of fire extinguishers if they feel it is safe to do so.
- Raise the alarm via the nearest call point and ensuring all staff in their area make their way to a place of safety outside.
- Sweep all rooms where safe to do so ensuring toilets and places like walk in cupboards are checked.
- Assist disabled people where identified.
- Close all windows in rooms and corridors and close all doors and fire doors as they make their way out of the building.
- Report to the Chief Fire Marshal that their area is clear, any observations etc.
- Ensure that all new staff (in their Service area) are familiarised with the layout including exit routes within the first day of their arrival by either themselves or their Manager.
- Ensure through regular inspection that all walkways, exit routes etc are kept clear and tidy within their work area.
- Report any deficiencies in fire-fighting equipment, alarms etc to the Health & Safety Team and Place Partnership.
- Ensure that all staff evacuate from their work area in a timely manner should the fire alarm sound including checking toilets, meeting rooms etc.
- Refer any persons who may have difficulty evacuating the building in the event of a fire to the Health and Safety team for a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan to be drawn up.

7. Officer in Charge (OIC)

A member of staff has been nominated as an OIC for each Council premise and will take day to day responsibility for ensuring that all systems in place are running as required and for reporting any deficiencies to Place Partnership.

8. Place Partnership

Place Partnership is responsible for the implementation of the Fire Safety Policy and Procedures where it applies to building structure.

9. Safety Representatives

In addition to their general duties as employees, Safety Representatives have fire safety responsibilities to their members to:

- Promote co-operation between management and employees and monitor the local arrangements for effecting the authority's Fire Safety Policy.
- Make periodic inspections of selected areas of the authority's work places and equipment in the interest of fire safety in conjunction with management and/or the Health and Safety Team

10. All other employees

Staff must be familiar with and comply with the Fire safety policy and procedures and report any shortcomings in fire precautions to their manager. All staff must familiarise themselves with the fire procedures for the building in which they work as each may differ slightly due to building use, layout, numbers of staff etc. All employees will comply with the following requirements:

- To co-operate with their employers so far as is necessary to enable the employer to comply with their legal obligations.
- To act in accordance with all fire safety procedures, safe systems of work or instructions that have been initiated by management for their health and safety.
- To take reasonable care of their own health and safety and the health and safety of any other person who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work.
- Not to intentionally or recklessly interfere with or misuse anything provided in the interests of fire safety.
- Report without delay any work situation to that person's line manager that represents a serious and immediate danger to fire safety.
- Report without delay any matter to that person's line manager that represented a shortcoming in the Council's protection arrangements for fire safety.

11. Visitors

Visitors must comply with the Fire Safety Policy and Procedure. These will be provided to them on arrival and be printed on the reverse of their Identity badge.

12. Contractors

Contractors must comply with:

- The Fire Safety policy and procedures
- The Safety Guidelines for Contractors specifically the fire precautions element.