GUIDANCE ON CONTROLLING FIRE RISK IN THE WORKPLACE

This note is intended to provide brief guidance on what can be done at a local/departmental level to reduce both the chance of fires/false alarms occurring and to mitigate the risks from fire should one occur.

The importance of good housekeeping in both the prevention of fire and in minimising fire spread cannot be over-emphasised. Almost all fires can be prevented and regular attention in the following areas will help to significantly reduce the level of risk to both life and property.

1. Control of Ignition Sources

a) To comply with the law and for the safety of all building occupants smoking is not allowed in University buildings.

b) Take care when cooking:

   i. Make sure any appliances (including those brought in from home) are tested and maintained in good condition.

   ii. Rooms/areas where staff cook lunch/snacks should be provided with a fire blanket. Request a fire blanket from EFM Helpdesk if you don’t already have one.

   iii. Any cooking should be supervised until it is finished and the appliance switched off.

   iv. Cooking or boiling kettles must not take place in rooms provided with smoke detection since this can lead to false activation of the fire alarm. It is also important to keep kitchen doors closed to prevent smoke or steam activating detectors in other areas.

c) Ensure that any electrical equipment that you use has been tested and inspected to reduce the possibility of a fault occurring that may cause a fire.

d) Be vigilant to the possibility of arson especially outside of normal working hours.

e) The use of portable heating appliances is strongly discouraged but if there is no alternative to their use, then an oil filled thermostatically controlled radiator is the safest option.

2. Control of Flammable Materials

a) Take care that flammable materials do not come into contact with heat sources.

b) Don’t allow rubbish to accumulate. Never store rubbish or redundant furniture etc in stairways or escape routes, even temporarily.
c) Try to keep your workplace tidy and where possible avoid accumulating excessive quantities of flammable materials.

d) Special storage arrangements may be required for any highly flammable materials. If in doubt ask Health & Safety for advice.

3. Escape Routes

a) Keep escape routes free from obstruction and available for use at all times. Storage of furniture, equipment or other materials on escape routes is not permitted.

b) Take care not to obstruct fire exits on the outside by careless parking or the thoughtless discarding of rubbish.

c) Exit doors must be able to be easily opened from the inside without the use of a key. Make sure that any additional security devices such as bolts are left in the open position whenever the building is occupied.

d) There are limitations on the size and location of notice boards on escape routes. Contact Health & Safety if you require advice in this regard.

e) Take care not to compromise the safety of escape routes by wedging fire doors open. Whenever possible doors to unoccupied rooms should also be kept closed.

f) Ensure that the fire-fighting equipment remains free of obstruction and available for use at all times.

g) Bicycles are not permitted in University buildings. Cycle racks can be provided by EFM if required.

4. Maintenance

a) If you are aware that any of the safety provisions are damaged or require maintenance then contact EFM Helpdesk immediately.

b) It is good practice to check exits that are rarely used to ensure that doors are unobstructed and will open easily. External parts of escape routes may require pressure washing or clearing of vegetation periodically. Any problems should be notified to EFM Helpdesk.

c) The fire alarm should be tested on a weekly basis. Any problems noted with the audibility or correct operation of the system must be reported to EFM Helpdesk immediately.

d) The fire fighting equipment will be serviced twice per year. If at any time you feel that the fire fighting equipment requires attention, contact EFM Helpdesk.

5. Training

a) All new staff and students should receive departmental induction training as soon as reasonably possible after joining the University.
b) Remember that all staff must undertake fire training annually, as must anyone requiring out of hours access.

c) Health & Safety will arrange an annual fire evacuation drill where appropriate.

d) Any visitors, guests or students should be supervised and if they are to be left unaccompanied, they must be made aware of the fire procedure for the building.

e) Consider the needs of staff, students and visitors who have disabilities that may affect their ability to evacuate unaided in the event of fire. Health & Safety can provide information and assistance in this regard if required.

6. Liaison

a) To enable H&S to keep the fire risk assessment for the building up to date we would appreciate your help by informing us of any changes in the following areas:

i. Any increase in the number of occupants/visitors in your building
ii. Proposed alterations to the structure or layout of the building.
iii. Any change of work activity that introduces a new or increased risk of fire.

If you require any further advice or clarification then more detailed guidance can be found in the University’s Fire Safety Policy and Procedures [http://www.shef.ac.uk/hs/policies](http://www.shef.ac.uk/hs/policies) or alternatively by contacting the Fire Safety Team [http://www.shef.ac.uk/hs](http://www.shef.ac.uk/hs)

Please remember that safety is everyone’s responsibility and your help and co-operation are fundamental in helping to minimise the risk of fire.