

Provision of Fire Wardens Guidance

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1. Introduction

To comply with the current University Fire Safety Policy and fire safety legislation, trained fire wardens (aka floor wardens, fire marshals) should be provided in each building. The role is voluntary but nominees should be obtained where volunteers are not forthcoming.

2. What is the role of a fire warden?

A fire warden will effectively have two roles: a day-to-day role and one for when the fire alarm sounds.

2.1 Day-to-day role:

- To keep an eye on the general fire safety of the area, building or floor the warden has been allocated,
- Keep an eye on corridors and walkways to ensure combustible materials are not stored there,
- Monitor escape routes to see they are kept free of obstructions,
- Check that fire doors are not tied, propped or wedged open where they should not be,
- To check that final exit doors are not obstructed,
- To check that extinguishers are where they should be and no obvious misuse or defect has occurred,

During scheduled fire alarm tests over a period of weeks or months, check that the alarm can be heard in all rooms and all parts of their allocated area,

Possibly assist with the creation of personal emergency evacuation plans (PEEPs) if requested by their Manager, School or Service Advisers (SSA) or Head of School or Service

Possibly assist with fire risk assessments (FRA) if requested by the Facilities Manager (FM).

This may seem like a lot of extra work but in reality it can be done as part of the “day job” just by being a little more observant. Any problems or defects need to be reported to the appropriate person, be that the SSA for “user” problems, the FM or Maintenance Services helpdesk (89898) for buildings-related issues.

2.2 Role when the fire alarm sounds:

- Put on the yellow high-visibility jerkin or armband,
- Sweep through their allocated area, turning off equipment and closing doors/windows in passing but not delaying their own escape unduly, while encouraging people to leave via the nearest fire escape route. The fire warden should normally be the last person off their floor.
- Checking all accessible rooms including toilets and offices to make sure people are beginning their evacuation,
- Checking any refuge in their area in case someone is waiting for assistance to evacuate
- Reporting to the person in charge of the evacuation, at the assembly area or just outside the building, to advise their area is clear (or to report anyone who can't or won't leave the building)
- To assist the officer in charge with crowd control, verbally encouraging people towards the assembly area.
- To take part in any post-alarm de-briefing to identify any shortcomings in the evacuation procedures.

Schools or services may want their fire wardens to do other things in addition to the roles outlined above.

Lecturers should act as fire warden for their lecture theatre if an alarm occurs during a lecture

3. What extra responsibilities does a fire warden have?

Apart from the actions listed above, a fire warden will not take on any additional responsibility for fire safety. That remains with the School or Service Manager and Head of School or Service

4. Who is responsible for providing fire wardens?

The Head of School or Service is responsible for fire safety. Day-to-day activities and the practical actions of fire safety may be delegated to the SSA or other nominated person. In practice it is likely to be the SSA or similar who makes sure there are enough fire wardens for the building. Where buildings are jointly used the respective SSAs must co-ordinate this to ensure adequate coverage. If a fire warden permanently leaves the building a replacement should be found and trained.

4.1 How many fire wardens are needed in a building?

Ideally there should be sufficient wardens to cover all areas of a building. However, this is complicated by the size of a building and the complexity of its layout, plus the nature of peoples' work as it often takes them out of their own building. Add to this scheduled holiday and other absences and it becomes apparent quite a few wardens could be needed!

As a rule of thumb, if a floor or area takes longer than three minutes to sweep, there needs to be more fire wardens. Here are two examples:

1. A small building with a single staircase and offices etc off may only need one fire warden if that warden is stationed on the top floor and rarely leaves the building. A deputy is needed to cover for absences. Ensuring all staff know their role and responsibilities in a fire alarm will make the warden's role less onerous.
2. A large building with lots of rooms and complicated escape routes may need to have each floor divided into sweep areas and a fire warden, plus deputy, provided for each sweep area. This can only work where there are sufficient staff in the building so again, all occupants need to know their roles and responsibilities with respect to fire alarm procedures.

4.2 What if there are not enough people to act as fire wardens?

As an organisation the University must do the best it can with the resources it has. Therefore, if there are too few people to act as fire wardens it is imperative that building occupants are given basic fire safety training and know what to do when the fire alarm sounds. Failure to act correctly when a fire alarm sounds could have serious, possibly life-threatening consequences if there is a real fire.

Where only a few people can act as fire wardens, they should ensure other occupants are aware of their own responsibilities. Effectively, everyone in the building then acts as an unofficial fire warden and looks out for everyone else.

4.3 What happens if a fire warden is not on their floor when the alarm sounds?

In a nutshell, if the fire warden is out of their area when the alarm sounds they must report to the officer in charge to advise they have not swept their area. This is less of a problem when all occupants know what to do and act appropriately. The officer in charge will need to record this fact and, if the Brigade are called, pass that information to the chief fire officer so he can decide what to do.

4.4 How do fire wardens get training?

Fire warden training, plus all other forms of fire safety training, is available from the Fire Safety Adviser. Courses can be booked via the staff development website or, if there are sufficient people to be trained in one building, the Fire Safety Adviser can deliver an event there. Courses booked via the staff development website are delivered from the safety training room in 1-9 Old Park Hill and are recorded on the Personnel training database. Training delivered in other locations is only recorded within the Safety Office and the school or service involved.

Refresher training would normally be required every two years.

To enrol on an event at Old Park Hill go to <http://www.iser.bris.ac.uk/cgi-bin/sdev/courselist.pl?sect=st#SS1FWT>

To arrange an event in a specific building please contact the Health and Safety Office on ext 88780

or email Bristol-safety@bristol.ac.uk.

5. Where can I get more information?

The slides for the fire warden training event are available on the Health and Safety Office website at <http://www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/Safety/Fire/FireSafety.shtml>. Watching the slideshow will not constitute formal training but the slides can be used as part of a Department's way of raising general fire safety awareness.

Other advice and information can be obtained from the Fire Safety Adviser directly:

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