



# Compass Learning Centre

## Fire Safety Policy 2023-24

<b>Statutory Policy:</b> NO	<b>Governor Action:</b> NO			
<b>Governors' Committee Responsible:</b>	Full Governing Body			
<b>Link Governor:</b>	Health & Safety Governor			
<b>Link SLT:</b>	School Business Leader			
<b>Person Responsible:</b>	School Business Leader			
<b>Date Reviewed:</b>	1 June 2023			
<b>Next Review Date:</b>	June 2024			
<b>Key Link Policies / Documents:</b> <i>This list is not exhaustive and further policies / documents may also need to be consulted in addition to these dependent on circumstances</i>	Resilience, Emergency & Business Plan Health & Safety Safeguarding Fire Risk Assessment Lock down			
<b>Policy Suite:</b>				
HR	Curriculum	Student Behaviour & Welfare	Finance	Premises & Health & Safety
				✓

*Our aim is to help all our learners unlock their potential in life and work*

**Signed:** *Alison Glazier* **Headteacher** **Date:** 01/06/23

**Signed:** *CM Rev* **Link Governor** **Date:** 22/06/23

## Equality Impact Assessment – initial screening record

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What area of work is being considered?</li> <li>Upon whom will this impact?</li> </ul>	Fire Policy																																				
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<p>Do you consider that a full Equality Impact Assessment is required?</p> <p><b>No</b></p> <p>Initial screening carried out by School Support Manager</p> <p>Signed: Kerry Taylor Dated: 20/09/2019 reviewed 27/04/2020</p> <p>Comment by Headteacher:</p> <p>Date .....</p>																																					

# **FIRE SAFETY POLICY**

## **THE COMPASS**

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## **What to do**

It is the responsibility of the Head Teacher and Management Committee of the premises to ensure that fire evacuation drills are carried out.

The dangers which may threaten persons if a fire breaks out depends on many different factors, consequently, it is not possible to construct a model procedure for action in the event of fire which would be suitable for use in all premises.

Each fire routine must be based upon a simple, efficient procedure which is specifically designed for the premises in which it has to operate.

It is therefore important that the following points must be given prime consideration:

### **The Purpose of the Fire Drill**

Fire drills are intended to ensure, by means of Training and Rehearsal that in the event of fire:

- The people who may be in danger act in a calm and orderly manner.
- Those people who may have designated responsibilities carry out their tasks to ensure the safety of all concerned.
- The escape routes are used in accordance with a Predetermined and Practiced Plan.
- Evacuation of the building is achieved in a speedily and Orderly manner.
- To promote an attitude of mind where-by persons will react rationally when confronted with a fire or other emergency at school or elsewhere.

### **The Occupancy of the Premises**

Consideration must be given to the age of the pupils attending the school and as to whether there are any children with special needs who may require assistance with evacuation of the building.

Consideration also needs to be given to any staff or regular visitors who may require assistance with evacuation of the building. Students, Staff and regular visitors can be provided with a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) which will be tailored to their individual needs and gives detailed information on their movement requirements during an escape.

Compass Fire Policy follows the Dorset Council guidelines on Means of Escape for Disabled People and recognises that it should not be assumed that because a person has a disability they will need or ask for a PEEP. Conversely, there is an opportunity for other people who may not be considered as having a disability to request an escape plan.

### **Fire Drill Routine**

A fire routine is based on a critical sequence of events, these being:

#### **Alarm Operation**

- Anyone discovering an outbreak of fire must, without hesitation, sound the alarm by operating the nearest fire alarm call point using the key to set off the alarm.

## Calling the Fire Service

- All outbreaks of fire or any suspected fire, however small, should be reported immediately to the Fire Service by the quickest means available. This task could well be designated as the responsibility of the school admin team as a telephone will be readily available at that location.

## Evacuation

- On hearing the fire alarm, pupils must be instructed to leave the building in single file and in a calm, orderly manner.
- The person in charge of each class, teacher or Instructor must indicate the exit route to be used and everyone must be directed to a Predetermined Assembly Point.
- Specific arrangements must be made for pupils, staff and regular visitors with physical or mental disabilities to ensure that they are assisted during evacuation following their PEEP.
- No running is to be permitted to avoid panic.
- Overtaking of individuals must not be permitted.
- Anyone who is not in class when the fire alarm sounds must go immediately to the assembly point.
- No one must be allowed to re-enter the building until told to do so by the Fire Service in attendance, **or**, in the case of a fire evacuation drill the senior person in charge.

## Assembly

- The assembly point is along the MUGA fence facing the drive.

## Roll Call

The HeadTeacher as Fire Officer has overall responsibility to ensure that a roll call is conducted in the event of evacuation of the premises; partial responsibility is delegated out to named staff members.

### **ALL Teaching Staff should:**

**Go to the Assembly Point, with the group they are teaching, bringing their own records of the students expected in that lesson with them. If the fire alarm is activated before lesson 1, during morning break or lunch then they should take all students in their duty area with them to the Assembly Point where the Deputy Head Teacher or other Designated person will carry out the roll call using the Invenry Fire Evacuation App.**

Any visitors or contractors in the premises at that time must be included.

- **The count at the assembly point must be checked with the attendance log and visitors log on Invenry Fire evacuation to verify that everyone is out of the building.**
- **It is vital that all students, visitors and staff who have left the premises before the end of the school day, sign out on the Invenry system so that the fire evacuation log is correct and to verify everyone is out of the building**

## Meeting the Service

- The person in charge of the roll call must identify him/herself to the Fire Service on their arrival. In doing so vital information can be relayed to the Fire Officer which will dictate the necessary actions to be carried out by the Fire Service.

Typical information the Fire Service will want to know:

- Is everyone accounted for?
- If anyone is missing: How many? What is their usual location? Where were they last seen?
- Where is the fire? What is on fire? (It may not be apparent).
- Are there any hazardous substances involved in the fire or stored in the building? (I.e. Chemicals, Solvents, Liquefied Petroleum Gas or Acetylene Cylinders etc).

## **Instruction, Training and Recording**

During the first week of term or as soon as practically possible thereafter, all new entrants being students, staff or support staff, should be conducted around the primary and secondary escape routes of the school. They should also receive instruction on the school fire evacuation routine.

All members of the staff shall receive instruction and training appropriate to their responsibilities in the event of any emergency.

All members of staff shall have access to this policy available in the policies folder via their desktop.

They shall receive verbal instructions given by a competent person in each 12 month period. Such instruction shall include details of how to call the Fire Service. In the case of newly engaged staff, instruction shall be given as soon as possible after appointment.

A record of the training and instructions given and fire drills held, shall be entered in the log book and will include the following:

- Date of the instruction or fire drill;
- Duration;
- Name of person giving the instruction;
- Names of persons receiving instruction;
- Nature of instruction or fire drill.

Fire drills, which may be combined with the instruction given above, shall be carried out at least once per term.

Each fire drill should be started by a pre-determined signal and the whole premises checked as if any evacuation was in progress.

Effective arrangements shall be made for a deputy or deputies to carry out the above duties in the absence of the nominated persons.

In smaller premises one specific person shall be made responsible for organising staff training and for co-ordinating the actions of the staff in the event of fire. Effective arrangements shall be made for a nominated deputy to be available to carry out the above duties.

## **Lockdown**

**For Safety Reasons, the fire alarm will not override the lockdown system during lockdown. All staff have an override key which will release the fire doors and set off the fire alarm call points should a fire be discovered during lockdown. They will receive a coded instruction via the tannoy or in person from SLT members should there be a genuine need to evacuate the building due to fire. The coded instruction will announce the name of the person issuing the instruction (first name) , if the message starts with 'Mr or Mrs (Surname)' then the message should be ignored and staff and students should stay in lockdown.**

## Frequency of Fire Evacuation Drills

Fire evacuation drills should be held at least once per term, preferably at the commencement of each term.

## Supplementary Notes

### Notices

Each fire alarm point shall, where necessary, be clearly indicated "**Fire Alarm**" in accordance with the Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations followed by the appropriate operating instructions. **These points can only be activated in the event of discovering a fire by using the override key given to all members of staff.**

A notice should be displayed adjacent to the telephone or switchboard giving clear instructions for calling the Fire Service in case of fire.

Notices should be displayed for staff detailing their actions in an emergency in conspicuous positions i.e. staff room and classrooms.

### Firefighting

Any attempt to fight the fire must always be secondary to life safety.

Circumstances will clearly dictate whether firefighting should be attempted. **This would normally only be attempted if both the primary and secondary route of escape is blocked by fire.**

Any attempt to fight the fire must be based upon the type and degree of training received in the use of firefighting equipment employed in the premises.

Regular fire drills will ensure that the evacuation procedure applying to a premises meets its aim satisfactorily and will highlight any area of the procedure which may need to be reviewed. Staff or students with a PEEP or any other staff or student with reduced mobility or sensory skills will not need to practice the evacuation of the building during every fire drill or false alarm. They will be informed as soon as possible when fire drills are taking place or if the alarm is false. However, escape plans should be practised on a regular basis and at least every six months.

### Multi Building Sites

In the event of an alarm actuation, contact is made to the other buildings on site either by telephone, walkie talkie, tannoy system or by a designated person.

Once contact has been made, evacuation of the other buildings will be determined by the Headteacher (by operating the fire alarm, tannoy message or personally with each class). **This delegate's responsibility to members of staff to quickly search all rooms including toilets and to report to the designated responsible persons that their area is "clear".**

## Notice 1

### Fire Instruction students and/or visitors to Compass

#### Fire Notice

##### Any Person Discovering A Fire Must:

- Operate The Nearest Fire Alarm **by notifying a member of staff**
- (The Fire Service Will Be Called Immediately By Dialling "999" Using The Nearest Telephone). Headteacher, School Business Manager or Office staff will call.

##### On Hearing the Fire Signal:

- When In Class The Order To Evacuate Will Be Given By Your Teacher, Who Will Indicate The Route To Be Followed.
- When Not In Class Form Single File And Move By The Most Direct Route To The Place Of Assembly.
- At All Times Act Quietly And Calmly.
- Do Not Stop To Collect Your Personal Belongings.
- Do Not Attempt To Pass Others On Your Way To The Place Of Assembly

The Place of Assembly is the Fire Assembly point on the left hand side of the drive by the MUGA fence. Numbers at the Assembly point indicate where each Year group should line up. **Visitors** and all non-teaching staff should gather at **point 7**.

## Notice 2

### Instructions for Person Responsible For Calling the Fire Service

#### On Hearing the Fire Alarm

Call the Fire Service by Exchange Telephone

Dial "999"

Give the Operator Your Telephone Number and Ask For

**"Fire Service"**, When the Fire Service Replies

Give The Call Distinctly:

Fire At: Compass PRU, 307a Chickerell Road, Weymouth DT4 0QU

At the top of the driveway facing the junction with Abbotsbury Road and adjacent to the Admiral Hardy public House.

Do Not Assume That the Call Has Been Received Until

It Has Been Acknowledged By the Fire Service

**Note:** If Informed Of Any Outbreak of Fire by Word Of Mouth, First Operate the Fire Alarm



And Then Call The Fire Service As Above.

### Notice 3

#### Instructions to All Staff In Case Of Fire

In The Event Of Fire It Is The First Duty Of All Concerned To Prevent Injury Or Loss Of Life. For This Purpose You Should Make Certain That You Are Familiar With All Means Of Escape In Case Of Fire.

Since There May Be An Opportunity In The Event Of Fire, For You To Attack It With The Nearest Fire Extinguisher, You Should Also Be Familiar With How To Use Them. The first priority is to evacuate all students and staff and use of the fire extinguishers **should only be used if your fire exit route is compromised by fire and there is no other alternative means of escape.**

As the Compass Learning Centre uses four buildings, main Compass Building, the Hub, the Elms and the bungalow, each building has its own fire alarm and in the first instance the alarm should only be activated in the building where fire/smoke has been discovered. A member of staff using either walkie-talkie, the tannoy system or in person will instruct those in the other buildings whether there is a need for them to evacuate the building.

Immediately You Discover A Fire Or One Is Reported To You, You Should:

**Sound the Alarm – If you are working in the bungalow, Elms or Hub you should also immediately contact the admin office to notify them of fire. This can be done by walkie-talkie, mobile or sending another member of staff to the office.**

**For the main Compass Building the following people are responsible for:-**

**Headteacher (Fire Marshall)** should check the Hall, Staff Male toilet and Students boys' toilet. Headteacher is responsible for checking whole building with the SBM and receiving instruction from Deputy Headteacher of persons missing.

**SBM/Data Manager** is responsible for ensuring that the Fire Service Is called immediately on the sounding of the Fire Alarm. Immediately The Fire Alarm Sounds You Should Assist All Pupils To Leave The Building. Will check building with the Headteacher.

**Attendance Officer / Receptionist** is responsible for taking walkie-talkie, student signing in log, and I pad with fire evacuation log loaded to the Assembly Point so that staff and visitors c register can be checked.

**Teaching staff** are responsible for bringing their **record** to Assembly Point and ensure they have all their students from their lesson (if fire alarm is activated during lesson time). Any missing students should be reported to the Deputy Head teacher as soon as possible. **The Deputy Head Teacher or person acting in this role will carry out the roll call using the Inventory fire evacuation app and will also carry out the roll call** If the fire alarm is activated before lesson 1 at break or lunchtime Missing students should not include those students who are timetabled to be offsite on day of evacuation (ie; college courses, offsite activities etc)

Close windows in their classroom and shut the door on exit.

Ensure they are the last person from their class to leave the premises.

**Finance Officer /Data Manager** responsible for checking visitor reception, student reception and photocopying room. Admin person to be responsible for taking tannoy and emergency bag including a

laptop pre-loaded with student contact details to the Assembly Point. In the event of Attendance Officer/Receptionist not being in attendance any admin staff should take all logs and the I pad loaded with the Inventory evacuation App to the Assembly point. At the Assembly Point telephone or physically alert our neighbours on the site.

**SBM** is responsible for taking mobile phone and call the fire Service. SBM will also deputise for Headteacher and act as second person carrying out a sweep of the building including staff and student toilets.

**Assistant Headteacher** In absence of Deputy Headteacher, take control of Fire Assembly point run the student fire evacuation roll call and report missing persons to Headteacher.

**Deputy Headteacher(Fire Marshall)** is responsible for taking control of Fire Assembly Point and reporting missing persons to Headteacher by walkie-talkie.

**Instructor - Catering** should check kitchen is clear, turn off gas on the way out of the building.

**KS3 – Year 7 and 8** the teachers working with Year 7 and 8 at time of fire alarm sounding, one will be responsible for checking the toilet and that all areas are clear whilst the other teacher escorts the children to the Assembly Point.

**Hub, Elms and Bungalow –** all staff working in the Hub, Elms or Bungalow either on own or with students will be responsible for evacuating these buildings when instructed to do so or alarm is activated in their building. They should report to the attendance officer at the assembly point.

**Headteacher – on receiving report of fire in any of the school buildings will determine if full evacuation of all buildings needs to take place and will notify members of staff through a message via walkie-talkie, the tannoy system or in person and arranging activation of fire alarms in all buildings where evacuation is deemed necessary.**

**REMEMBER** you all have a responsibility to keep safe.

If you become aware of a fire or smoke within the building – raise the alarm, and evacuate following procedure – advising a senior member of staff of the location as soon as possible

On Arrival at the Assembly Point Which Is along the MUGA fence facing the drive

A Roll Call of Staff and Visitors Should Be Taken By: Attendance Officer / Data Manager/ Finance Officer

A Roll Call of students should be taken by: Deputy Head Teacher or Person deputising for Deputy Head Teacher

SBM / Headteacher will Be Responsible for Informing The Fire Service Of Persons Not Accounted For.

Please find attached:

*Appendix 1 Means of Escape for Disabled People*

*DC Policy adopted*

## **Staff Assigned to Roles 2023-24**

<b>Assistant Headteacher</b>	<b>Paul Knight</b>
<b>Attendance Officer</b>	<b>Jodie Caswell</b>
<b>Data Manager/HR</b>	<b>Michelle Nokes</b>
<b>Deputy Headteacher</b>	<b>Mark Fisher (Paul Knight to deputise)</b>
<b>Finance Officer</b>	<b>Helen Lancaster</b>
<b>Headteacher</b>	<b>Alison Glazier (Kerry Taylor to deputise)</b>
<b>Instructor Catering</b>	<b>Catherine Rickards</b>
<b>SBM</b>	<b>Kerry Taylor, (Sue Walker to deputise)</b>

# Means of Escape for Disabled People

Dorset Council  
Human Resources and Exchequer Services  
Health and Safety Team  
September 2008  
Executive Summary

Recent changes to fire safety legislation means that organisations such as the Council must take primary responsibility for ensuring that all people, including disabled people, can leave our buildings safely in the event of a fire.

Previous arrangements for safe evacuation of disabled people have relied on the Fire and Rescue Service playing a lead role in the rescue of staff and visitors from designated refuge areas. This reliance is no longer an option under the revised legislation and the onus is on a 'responsible person' to provide a fire risk assessment that includes a plan for evacuation of all staff and visitors.

Disabled staff and/or visitors using our buildings must be involved in discussions about what their concerns and/or actual capabilities would be in the event of a real fire. The outcome of which will form an action plan for each disabled person that should then be shared with all relevant parties.

It should not automatically be assumed that disabled people cannot leave the building independently, therefore not all apparent disabled people will require an assisted escape plan.

However, it is vital that we discuss these issues with disabled people to ensure the Council does not discriminate or fail to meet with legal fire safety requirements.

Further detail of the process and options available is included in the policy which will be subject to regular monitoring of it's effectiveness and reviewed in line with the Council's commitment to continuous improvement.

This procedure has been produced from supplementary guidance issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government.

Full details can be found at [www.firesafetyguides.communities.gov.uk](http://www.firesafetyguides.communities.gov.uk)

## 1. Legal overview

- 1.1 Under current fire safety legislation it is the person(s) having responsibility for the building who is required to provide a fire safety risk assessment that includes an emergency evacuation plan for all people likely to be in the premises, including disabled people. The 'responsible person' also must give details of how that plan will be implemented.
- 1.2 Such an evacuation plan should not rely upon the intervention of the Fire and Rescue Service to make it work. This could present a particular problem in multi-occupancy buildings when the different escape plans and strategies need to be co-ordinated from a central point.
- 1.3 The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) does not make any change to these requirements: it underpins the current fire safety legislation in England and Wales (the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 ) by requiring that employers or organisations providing services to the public take responsibility for ensuring that all people, including disabled people, can leave the building safely in the event of a fire.
- 1.4 Where an employer or a service provider does not make provision for the safe evacuation of disabled people from its premises, this may be viewed as discrimination. It may also constitute a failure to comply with the requirements of the fire safety legislation mentioned above.

## **2. Management practice**

- 2.1 The DDA requires organisations to review their policies, practices and procedures in order to ensure that they do not discriminate against disabled people, and attention is focused on getting into premises. However, if we are going to enable disabled people to fully use our buildings, we also need to enable them to leave safely.
- 2.2 It is important that both managers and disabled people understand that planning for means of escape is about planning for exceptional circumstances (i.e. not an everyday event). When writing escape plans that include disabled people, there is sometimes a tendency to overplay the safety issue to the detriment of the independence and dignity of disabled people. The purpose of this guidance is to provide Managers/Headteachers with clear information so that they are able to deal with these issues in a practical, equality-based manner.
- 2.3 It should also be remembered that what a disabled person is prepared to do in exceptional circumstances may differ significantly from what they can reasonably manage in their everyday activities. Escape plans for disabled people should be prepared with the view that what is required is for 'the real thing'. The level of effort required of a disabled person may not be acceptable for a practice, false alarm or in everyday activities. The procedures put in place should take account of this and allow for simulation in the case of fire drills or other emergency evacuation practices.

## **3. Evacuation plans for occasional visitors**

- 3.1 It is understood by most people that when a fire alarm is activated they must all leave the building by the nearest exit, as quickly as possible, and reach a place of ultimate safety. The management of the building or workplace is required to keep escape routes clear and free from obstruction and to ensure that exits are readily available for use. However, everyone using a building for whatever purpose should also take some responsibility for their own safety wherever possible.
- 3.2 This responsibility also applies to disabled visitors, therefore disabled people can be expected to identify themselves so that they are informed of the availability of a choice of evacuation plan and co-operate by giving any information necessary for the safe execution of the plan.
- 3.3 Visitors to the building are unlikely to spend time alone. Rather than provide a focused escape plan for each individual person, a philosophy should be adopted that gives staff the responsibility of ensuring that their visitors leave the building safely, whether or not they have a disability. This would be preferable to providing extensive and possibly unappreciated escape training for the casual visitor
- 3.4 An example of the sort of information that could be displayed and/or handed to occasional visitors on arrival in our buildings is attached at Appendix 1. Where establishments have existing fire safety information, staff should ensure it includes guidance for visitors who may need assistance due to a disability.

## **4. Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) for employees and regular visitors**

- 4.1 Where staff and regular visitors to a building require assistance with evacuation, they can be provided with a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) which must be tailored to their individual needs and gives detailed information on their movement requirements during an escape. It is also possible that there may be some need for minor building or workplace change to facilitate their escape and to reduce the need for personal assistance.
- 4.2 It should not be assumed that because a person has a disability they will need or ask for a PEEP. Some will be confident that they can get out of the building unaided. Conversely, there should also be an opportunity for other people who may not be considered as having a disability to request an escape plan. All staff in a building should be given the opportunity to have a confidential discussion about their escape requirements and be clear that, if they need help, it will be provided. The service provider should adopt an approach that enables people to ask for a plan, when needed, without them feeling that it will affect the provision of that service to them in any other way.

## **5. Reducing unnecessary escapes**

- 5.1 Some disabled people are put at greater risk when carry-down procedures (see 7.6) of any kind are used. It is therefore necessary for the evacuation policy to include a method of reducing or removing the need to escape for a false alarm. It is likely that many more disabled people will be willing to facilitate their own escape when they know that this is not going to be a requirement of them during a practice or for a false alarm.
- 5.2 Good communication with disabled people about the fire or emergency evacuation process is vital to ensure its success and to reduce the need for emergency escapes except in exceptional circumstances.

## **6. Interviewing employees and regular visitors**

- 6.1 An interview should be organised with each disabled employee and regular visitor to establish a suitable evacuation plan (PEEP). There is a questionnaire at Appendix 2 that can be used as a guide for the interview, but individual people may want to have more information recorded and considered as part of the process.
- 6.2 It should not be automatically assumed that a disabled person cannot leave the building independently. It is vital that disabled people are consulted about their evacuation plan. They should be given information about the building systems and their opinions and experience should be both sought and respected.
- 6.3 The matrix at Appendix 3 gives some options that **may** be suitable for disabled people. This should be used alongside the information that is provided from the questionnaire. The two can be matched together to form an individual evacuation plan.
- 6.4 Most disabled people are likely to have a very clear idea of what it will take to get out of the building. In some instances, the person will be able to facilitate their own escape if suitable aids and adaptations have been provided.
- 6.5 It should be made clear to disabled people (while working with them to develop a suitable plan) that the circumstances of escape are considered to be exceptional. That means solutions that may not be appropriate in most circumstances could be used, such as allowing a disabled person to move down the stairs on their bottom. It would not be acceptable for them to do this in any other circumstances.
- 6.6 Not all people who have an apparent disability will require an assisted escape plan.
- 6.7 All staff should be given the opportunity to discuss emergency evacuation as part of their induction. The reason for this is that some people may have difficulty in evacuation situations that they would not have normally, e.g. people who have asthma may be affected in smoky conditions caused by a fire, or people might be affected by the stress of an emergency situation.

## **7. Mobility impaired people**

- 7.1 There is a vast range of people who fit into this category. Issues relating to this group of people may also be relevant for people who have heart disease, asthma or other medical conditions.
- 7.2 It should also be remembered that escape from the building within two to three minutes may not be possible for this group of people.

- 7.3 The level of fire protection available and identification of elements such as compartmentation and fire alarm zoning within the building will help buy the time required for disabled people to either facilitate their own escape or leave with assistance.

### **Wheelchair users**

- 7.4 This group of people is considered most at risk in terms of escape. However, in some instances, a person who frequently uses a wheelchair may be able to walk slightly and therefore be able to assist with their own escape or even facilitate independent escape. It is essential that the disabled person is asked the relevant questions tactfully and in a way that produces the best escape plan.
- 7.5 Assumptions should not be made about the abilities of wheelchair users and they should not be excluded from a building because of concerns about their ability to leave the building safely.

### **Carry-down procedures**

- 7.6 Disabled people may not feel confident using these chairs and it is not always possible for wheelchair users to transfer into an evacuation chair or to maintain a sitting position once seated in one. Therefore, evacuation chairs should not be considered as an automatic solution to the escape requirements of wheelchair users.
- 7.7 It is unlikely that an evacuation chair will be effective unless both the user and the operator are well trained and familiar with the piece of equipment. Regular practices should take place. In most instances, these may not need to include the disabled person, although some may wish to practice being moved in the evacuation chair. Using an evacuation chair may put the disabled person at risk of injury, so it is best to limit their use by disabled people to a real evacuation situation.

### **The interview**

- 7.8 When writing a PEEP (see 4) with someone who has a mobility impairment, or who uses either an electrically or manually powered wheelchair, the following information should be discussed:
- Which routes have handrails provided;
  - How far the distance of travel is on particular routes;
  - The provision of evacuation chairs;
  - Which staircases are provided with handrails and what side of the stair they are situated on;
  - How far can you walk unaided?
  - Can you slide down the stairs?
  - How many flights can you manage?
  - Would this be increased if assistance were made available?
  - How many times might you need to stop to rest?
- 7.9 Once this process has taken place, some people will decide that they can facilitate their own escape using the systems within the building. Others will decide that they require assistance from one or more people.

## **8. Hearing impaired people**

- 8.1 Hearing impaired and deaf people need to know that there is an escape in progress. Where only an audible fire alarm system is present, they may not be able to hear the alarm or any additional information.
- 8.2 The preferred options to alert hearing impaired people that an emergency exists and an evacuation is about to occur are the use of flashing beacons installed as part of the fire alarm system and/or the use of a paging system.
- 8.3 Other systems exist whereby a colleague or 'buddy' is assigned to a person with a hearing impairment to ensure they are made aware of the emergency and relevant action to take.

## **9. Visually impaired people**

- 9.1 People who are visually impaired are helped to escape by the provision of good signage and other orientation clues. It should be noted that many visually impaired people have some sight and that they will be able to use this during the escape in order to make their own way out of the building as part of a crowd.
- 9.2 Use can be made of existing elements within the building that might help visually impaired people to facilitate their own evacuation. These may be elements of building design, such as good colour contrasts, handrails on escape stairs, step edge markings on escape stairs, colour contrasted or different textured floor coverings on escape routes or other directional information.
- 9.3 Where there is a lack of orientation information, staff assistance may be necessary to provide guidance out of the building.

## **10. People with cognitive disabilities**

- 10.1 People with cognitive disabilities can have problems comprehending what is happening in escape conditions, or may not have the same perceptions of risk as non-disabled people. Provision of good orientation facilities and measures within the building is essential.
- 10.2 There may be reluctance by some to take an unknown route from the building. Some people with cognitive disabilities may fall into the group of unknown disabilities, such as dyslexia, dyspraxia and autism.

## **11. Practice**

- 11.1 Practice for PEEPs will depend on the type of escape required. Generally, escape plans should be practised on a regular basis and at least every six months. All of the people involved in the plan should take part; however, it may be more appropriate to simulate means of evacuation or carry-down (if relevant) so as not to cause unnecessary risk to the disabled person. (see 2.3 and 7.6)

## **12. Co-ordinated information**

- 12.1 Once each plan is written, a copy should be passed to the responsible person within the building. This will ensure that the plans for each building and its occupants can be co-ordinated.
- 12.2 Under fire safety legislation, the responsible person has overall responsibility to ensure that all emergency plans are updated as necessary and whenever the fire risk in the building changes.
- 12.3 Disabled people who have agreed on a PEEP should ensure that they tell their line manager or the responsible person of any change in their circumstances that would affect the plan.

## **13. Assisted/facilitated escape options**

- 13.1 This section explains each option shown in the matrix attached at Appendix 2. In order to use the matrix, look at the escape option suggested for each disability type. The corresponding number in this section gives additional information on each type of escape. The two can be used together as part of the planning process for each person's PEEP.
- 13.2 The options can be used as a discussion tool in order to establish the most effective method for safe evacuation of the building. This may mean that the disabled person requires different plans for different buildings.

### **A Meet assistance at a refuge**



Some disabled people will require assisted escape. In these cases it will be necessary to have a pre-arranged meeting place. If the disabled person is likely to move around the building, a means of communication will be necessary between the escape volunteer and the disabled person. They can then arrange to meet at a particular refuge point during the escape.

People should never be left in a refuge point to wait for the Fire and Rescue Service. The refuge can be used as a safe resting place as well as a place to wait in a phased evacuation while the go-ahead for a full escape is established.

## **B Meet assistance at a workstation**

Some people will need to meet their assistant(s) at their own workstation. In this instance the allocated escape volunteer(s) should go straight to the disabled person's workstation at the beginning of the evacuation procedure. The assistant(s) could be someone who works alongside the disabled person (buddy system), therefore they can set off on their escape journey together.

## **C Make own way down stairs slowly**

Some people who use wheelchairs may be able to make their own way down the stairs if they have a little mobility. It may be necessary to ensure that there are suitable handrails and step edge markings present. The preferred solution is where the escape plan enables disabled people to leave the building by their own efforts. This reduces the chance of confusion and the chance of the plan breaking down. In these instances the person may rest along the way in refuges.

Disabled people who choose this independent method of escape are likely to move slowly down the stairs and it may be better for them to wait for the main flow of people to leave the building. Escape stairs that are incorporated in a fire-resistant shaft should be safe for up to 30 minutes. This greatly enhances the escape time, especially when fire alarm systems incorporate advanced fire detection measures. This reinforces the importance of building occupiers keeping self-closing fire doors shut and observing good housekeeping practices when occupying buildings.

Where this escape method is chosen, it is important that it becomes part of the PEEP and is recorded and monitored should there be a problem during the escape. The fire warden should report to the control room or the person in charge of the evacuation process that a disabled person is slowly making their way out of the building. This information must be passed on to the Fire and Rescue Service on their arrival at the incident.

## **D Move down stairs on bottom after main flow**

While some people will prefer to take responsibility for their own escape by walking down the stairs, others may prefer to make their own way out by shuffling down the stairs on their bottom. Again, it will be best for this group of people to wait until after the main flow of people has evacuated. Wherever possible, they should be monitored to ensure that there is no problem with their progress. The fire warden should then report to the control room or the person in charge of the evacuation process. This information must be passed on to the Fire and Rescue Service on their arrival at the incident.

## **E Evacuation chairs**

Where this is the preferred method of escape, the responsible person will provide an evacuation chair at a suitable refuge point close to them.

In the case of a visitor who requests this method of escape, the person who is responsible for meeting with them should contact the appropriate responsible person to ensure they are aware.

Provision of evacuation chairs should always be accompanied by a full system of escape for disabled people as they are only a part of the solution. Regular training of staff in the use of evacuation chairs is essential.

## **F Carry-down**

Where a disabled person wishes to be carried out either using their own wheelchair or by another method, a manual handling risk assessment should be carried out and a suitable team should be assembled and trained to take them out safely.

## **G Move down stairs in own chair with support**

Some wheelchair users are strong and skilled enough to tip their chair on its axis and travel down the stairs in this way. Others can do this with assistance. Where this method of escape is considered, expert training will be required and the technique should be practised regularly. Again, the escape should take place after the main flow of people leaves the building. It is only acceptable for short flights of stairs.

## **H Move down stairs using handrails**

Some people will be able to make their own escape but will require a handrail to support them to get out of the building. This will be to either the right or left of the stairs. Some will not be able to use the right and others the left. Once you have established that they require a handrail, check each staircase in the building proposed for their use to ensure that a suitable handrail is provided. Where one is not available then assistance may be required. Provision of handrails may be considered a reasonable adjustment.

## **I Assistance from one to two people**

Some people will require a buddy to assist them out of the building. Some will be happy to organise this themselves on a casual basis. If this is the case, a check should be made to ensure that the disabled person will always be in a group of their peers or regular staff who are able to provide this. If not, then it may be necessary to establish a formal procedure for times when they are likely to be alone.

## **J Orientation information**

Where a person requires additional orientation information, it may be sufficient to give them a guided tour of the escape routes from the rooms they use. There are a number of disabilities where additional orientation information is required.

## **K Colour contrasting on stairways**

To assist their orientation needs, some people will require an orientation strategy to assist way-finding within the building. This can be achieved through colour coding or contrasting the escape routes.

## **L Step edge markings**

Some people will be more confident about making their own way out of the building if there is sufficient contrast on the nosings on the stairs. If a person requests this option, the stairs should be checked to see if the step edges are highlighted. If they are not, the person may require a buddy to help them out of the building. It may also be appropriate to allocate a working area close to where there are suitable step edge markings. It would be advisable to provide contrasting nosing on all stairs in order to reduce the need for assistance.

## **M Assistance for the person and their dog**

Where a person uses a guide dog, they may prefer the dog to assist them out of the building. The escape routes should be pointed out to them. Others will prefer to take the responsibility away from the dog for means of escape and request a human assistant. In these cases, a buddy should be allocated to the person. It may also be necessary to provide a person to look after the dog. Again, this may be provided in an informal or formal manner.

## **N Need doors to be opened**

Some people may have difficulty negotiating self-closing fire-resisting doors. It should be ensured, therefore, that all such doors and their self-closing devices (including those that are normally held open by electromagnets linked to the fire alarm system) comply with the recommendations of the appropriate British Standard regarding opening and closing forces.

However, some people may still require assistance to open the doors, for example those with upper limb impairments. Again, this can be a formal or informal arrangement. Where a person may be alone in a building that has doors that may be difficult for them to open, it may be necessary to provide a more formal level of assistance.

Managers should ensure that a fire door self-closing device is not set at too strong a pressure and they may need to adjust it, but it must also be remembered that such doors are designed to hold back smoke and fire to protect all the people in a building and facilitate their escape.

## **O Large print information**

Some people will need fire evacuation information provided in large print. This can be obtained through a number of organisations that provide accessible information services. Alternatively, it is possible to produce large print information in-house. Ask the person what size of print is suitable for them.

## **P Identification of escape routes by reception**

Visitors to the building may need reception staff to show them the escape routes when they arrive at the building. This task should be allocated to the most suitable person for each building.

## **Q Flashing beacons**

Hearing impaired or deaf people need to be made aware that an evacuation is taking place. Where they are likely to be alone in the building, they may need to be provided with a flashing beacon or other similar device. If this type of system is required, check with the appropriate person to see if there is one available within the building. Where there is not, then a suitable buddy system will be required. Flashing beacons may not be appropriate in all buildings, for instance where other lighting conflicts with the beacons.

## **R Buddy system**

A buddy system may be the most suitable method for alerting a hearing impaired or deaf person to the operation of the fire alarm. This should not be done on an informal basis in case everyone assumes that someone else has given the warning.

## **S Vibrating pagers**

Vibrating pagers can alert hearing impaired and deaf people that there is an emergency and they need to leave the building. The pagers can be used to inform people that there is a need to escape and also to tell them which direction they should travel in.

## **T Alternative alarm systems**

There are other methods of contacting disabled people; these can be either through the telephone system or through the intranet. It is recommended that where a person cannot use the existing system or needs support to use it, all other communication options are explored.

## **U Additional checks by fire wardens**

In order to provide back-up wherever there is an assisted escape system in place, it is also necessary for the fire wardens or fire marshals in the building to be aware of who is present and

what escape plans are in place. They should then be trained to provide suitable assistance where necessary.

## **V Horizontal evacuation**

In some buildings, it is possible to evacuate people horizontally through the building into another fire compartment and away from the emergency situation. When the alarm goes off, people who cannot use stairs are directed to move along the floor level they are on to another fire compartment.

Information about where to go is required in order for this system to work. Where horizontal evacuation is not immediately available on the affected floor, it may be available on a lower floor. This may be more acceptable than travelling all the way to the ground floor. The opportunity to do this should be identified as part of the building fire safety risk assessment and then offered during the interview.

## **W Taped information**

Where a person cannot read the fire drill instructions, they may benefit from their provision in tape format. This should be produced in Plain English and in other languages where appropriate.

## Appendix 1

### Dorset Council

### Health and Safety - Information for Visitors

#### Emergency Evacuation of Visitors

- On hearing the alarm, visitors should immediately leave the building by the nearest exit and assemble in the designated place (see fire notices)
- DO NOT USE THE LIFT
- You should not re-enter the building while the alarm is sounding or before authorised to do so by the Building Manager.
- You should not stop to collect personal belongings in an emergency.
- Anyone discovering a fire or other serious imminent danger should immediately raise the alarm by operating the nearest "break glass" fire alarm call point.
- **If you are not able to leave the building unaided, please make this known to a member of staff on arrival.**

## Appendix 2

### Dorset Council

#### Emergency Evacuation Assessment - employees and regular visitors

Name of employee/visitor .....

##### A. Hearing Impairment

1. Can you hear the fire alarm in normal circumstances?

Yes  No

2. If you have difficulty in hearing a fire alarm, would a visual indicator assist?

Yes  No

3. Is there any special or purposely designed hearing system or device that might assist you to hear the fire alarm more clearly?

Yes  No

Details:

4. Would you need assistance from another person to help you respond to an alarm and evacuate safely?

Yes  No

##### B. Visual Impairment

5. Do you have a visual impairment, which would have an impact on your leaving the building unassisted in an emergency?

Yes  No

6. Do you require an aid to help you move around safely such as a cane, guide dog or other equipment?

Yes  No

Details:

7. How long does it take you to leave the building in normal circumstances from your place of work, unaided?

Time in minutes:

8. Could you find your way to exit the building by an alternative route, if your normal route was unavailable?

Yes  No

9. Do you think that the speed at which you would be able to leave the building may have the potential to cause delay for other people or put you at risk of injury as they pass you more quickly?

Yes  No

10. Would tactile signage or contrasting colours/surfaces be of assistance to you?

Yes  No

**C. Mobility Impairment**

11. Can you leave the building unassisted?

Yes  No

12. If not - do you require help from an assistant to leave the building?

Yes  No

13. Do you need or use a wheelchair?

Yes  No

14. Is your wheelchair required at all times?

Yes  No

15. Is the wheelchair standard size or electrically powered with wider dimensions?

Normal  Electrical  Width:

16. Are you able to transfer to an evacuation chair if required?

Yes  No

17. Are there any other problems / observations / solutions?

Details:

**D. General Information**

18. Do you understand the concept of a fire refuge area?

Yes  No

19. Do you think any special training is required to give you the assistance you would need in an emergency?

Yes  No

20. Are you aware of the emergency evacuation procedures that operate in the building(s) in which you work or visit?

Yes  No

21. Are the signs which mark the emergency exits and the routes to the exits clear enough?

Yes  No

22. Could you raise the alarm if you discovered a fire?

Yes  No

Assessment carried out by:.....on (date).....

Signature of employee/visitor:.....

**Notes/further action required:**

**Appendix 3**

	Type of escape	Electric wheelchair user	Manual wheelchair user	Mobility impaired person	Asthma & other breathing/health issues	Visually impaired person	Hearing impaired person	Dyslexic / orientation problems	Learning difficulty / autism	Mental health problems	Dexterity problems
A	Meet assistance at refuge		4	4		4					
B	Meet assistance at workstation	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
C	Make own way down stairs slowly	4	4	4	4	4	4				
D	Move down stairs on bottom after main flow	4	4	4	4						
E	Use evacuation chair or similar	4	4	4	4						
F	Carry down procedure	4	4	4	4						
G	Travel down in own chair with support		4								
H	Can get downstairs using handrails	4	4	4	4	4			4		
I	Needs assistance to walk down stairs 1-2 people	4	4	4	4	4			4	4	4
J	Need orientation information					4	4	4	4	4	
K	Need colour contrasting on stairways					4		4	4	4	
L	Need step edge markings			4		4		4		4	
M	Needs assistance for person and dog				4	4					
N	Needs doors opening				4						4
O	Large print information					4		4	4		
P	Identification of escape route by reception staff					4	4	4	4	4	
Q	Provision of flashing beacon						4				
R	Buddy system					4	4	4	4	4	
S	Provision of vibrating pagers						4				
T	Provision of alternative alarm	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	
U	Additional checks by fire wardens	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
V	Horizontal evacuation	4	4	4	4	4					
W	Need for taped information					4		4	4	4	