SECTION 3

Fire Safety Guidance and Check Lists for All Staff

The information below should be used as guidance for completing the risk assessment audit in Section 4 and to supplement the inspections detailed in Section 5. These activities are usually carried out by responsible members of staff who have been nominated by the Manager of the work place.

It is also intended that this section should provide all staff with general awareness of fire precautions so that potential problems are prevented and so that existing problems are identified and reported to Managers.

The information included in this section should be used as a general guide. This information, along with the premises arrangements, formulated in accordance with the information contained in Section 2, will provide the basis for all staff instruction with respect to Fire Safety.

Means of Escape

It is recommended that the day-to-day maintenance of exits and escape routes becomes the responsibility of all staff, contractors, visitors, residents and pupils. This is a way of ensuring that escape routes are kept free of all storage and obstructions. Other hazards to be aware of include moss and algae (which may be growing on paths), ice and uneven surfaces. Staff should know of the nearest escape routes. In larger building these may be indicated on standard Fire Notices.

Fire doors are provided to prevent the spread of heat and smoke, and should always be kept shut unless automatic door release units are fitted. They should never be wedged open and self-closing devices should not be removed. Special arrangements should be considered for occupants who have impaired mobility.

Corridors and stairways should be kept clear of storage and waste materials. Secondary escape routes, such as rooms with adjoining doors, should not be obstructed. Fire Notices should have clear instructions and should be prominently posted in every room, hall, workshop etc. They should also be clearly visible (i.e. not obscured by displays etc.). Fire Notices should contain only essential information that can easily be read in an emergency. Example Fire Notices are reproduced on pages 2-13 and 2-14.

Escape Routes

For an evacuation plan to work effectively it must be possible to evacuate the average building in approximately three minutes. Whilst assessing the evacuation time, account must be taken of response time. Response time is the time taken from hearing the fire alarm to the commencement of evacuation. This can vary depending on usage of the building or various parts of a building and on

individual tasks carried out, e.g. kitchen staff will have to make the kitchen safe before leaving.

The more people trying to get through one door will slow down the evacuation time and could lead to panic and injury. To this end it is generally accepted that a single door is only acceptable for up to 50 persons.

Where a room has only one exit it is vital that no potential fire risk is placed near to it, such as cookers, school experiment cabinets etc. All fire risks should be located so as not to impede evacuation in an emergency.

Escape routes must be kept free from combustible materials, which include coat hooks, photocopiers or notice boards. Any fire occurring here renders the escape route unusable. They must also be kept clear so that every route is available and no trip hazards are present. Where a route contains a door it is vital that the route beyond the door is also kept clear, for example no vehicles should be allowed to park outside exit doors. For an escape route to be used to its full potential, a suitable number of acceptable signs must be placed along its route, located where any possible confusion as to the route to be followed may exist.

Any doors encountered along an escape route must be easy to open without the aid of a key. Only in exceptional circumstances would keys in boxes be permitted (confirmation should be sought from the Fire Safety Function). Where a room holds more than 50 persons, a panic type fastening should be provided to exit doors, such as a push bar or push pad. In order to prevent injury whilst using an escape route, the surface should be non-slip and free of potential trip hazards. Special consideration should be given to ensure that external parts of the escape route are maintained in a safe manner. For example moss or lichen should not be allowed to build up and create a slipping hazard. In order to prevent the risk of people getting crushed, all doors to rooms holding more than 50 persons should open outwards.

It is essential that that provision be made to ensure that disabled persons can be safely evacuated from the building in an emergency. All types of disability should be taken into account, including mobility, sight, hearing or learning. In most cases practical and effective arrangements can be made by management to ensure safe evacuation of disabled persons. If these arrangements cannot be implemented specialist advice should be sought.

Evacuation of People with Disabilities

As the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act become fully effective, it is increasingly likely that persons who have impaired mobility, sight, hearing or other disability will be occupying a building. Procedures can easily be formulated to assist them in the event of an evacuation. Disabled people should be escorted by an able-bodied helper throughout the evacuation, and led to a place of safety. **The concept of a 'stay-put' policy throughout Council buildings, and particularly residential care premises, should only be implemented after consultation with the NFRS Fire Safety Department and this may require the completion of a Personal**

Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP), information about which is given below. Evacuation should commence as soon as possible after the alarm has actuated.

During evacuation of all establishments, managers should be aware of and utilise the techniques of progressive horizontal and vertical evacuation of people and, where necessary and appropriate, utilise refuges indicated within the fire arrangements for the premises.

All special arrangements involving such techniques must be detailed in the emergency procedures for the establishment and displayed as part of the evacuation notices utilised within the premises. Disabled persons should be accompanied whilst waiting in the refuge. Alternatively, a means of facilitating escape, such as using an EVAC chair, should be considered and staff given specific training in relation to its use.

The equipment must be checked regularly along with other emergency equipment.

When fire drills are undertaken account should be taken with regard to the evacuation of those persons with disabilities.

Where a new member of staff is disabled or any existing member of staff becomes disabled (either temporarily or permanently) this should trigger a review of the fire risk assessment and suitable arrangements should be put in place. These do not always necessitate physical adaptations to the building or its services but could involve a change in management procedures. Visitors and other persons likely to frequent the building should also be taken into account.

Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP)

Background

The fire safety risk assessment contains an emergency evacuation plan which takes into account all people in the building who may have special requirements, including disabled people, and details how that plan will be implemented.

Aim

The aim of a PEEP is to provide people who cannot get themselves out of a building unaided during an emergency situation, with the necessary information and/or support to be able to manage the escape from the building. This will also provide the establishment concerned with the definitive information about the correct level of assistance that is required.

Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Line Manager in conjunction with the responsible person to complete the PEEP and involve the member of staff (or student, where appropriate) affected. Reference should also be made to all appropriate information, including any healthcare plan. This will determine the level of assistance required in the event of an emergency.

Further guidance on writing the PEEP is contained in appendix 4, and the blank proforma is also located there. The proforma and associated checklist recognises impairments to both hearing and sight, and the need to use wheelchairs. Managers should take account of question 8, part 1 of the fire risk assessment as well.

Awareness in Relation to Escape Routes

Staff should be generally aware that:

- fire doors are self closing, of good fit and never wedged open
- fire doors in corridors are labelled **Fire Door Keep Closed**
- all doors, especially those enclosing stairways, and separating corridors, are closed at night
- lighting for external stairways is in good order
- all exits lead to a place of safety
- escape routes are free of all forms of storage and obstructions
- all escape doors are easily operable from the inside, and fire exit signs in place
- all escape doors fitted with panic bolts are clearly labelled "Push Bar to Open" or other wording as appropriate.
- stairway treads are in good order
- external stair treads are free from ice and mould growth and not unreasonably slippery
- dangerous activities are not carried out near the exit doors of rooms such as kitchens, laboratories or workshops
- escape routes from the building are not unnecessarily blocked by builders or other workmen etc.
- Escape routes are indicated by suitable signs throughout their route.

Dead Ends and Inner Rooms

A 'dead end' is a term used to describe a situation where only one direction of travel is available. All rooms situated in a ‘dead end’ should have doors that are fire resisting and fitted with a self-closing device. Travel distance in ‘dead end’ conditions should be short and alternative means of escape provided where possible (expert advice should be sought from the Fire and Rescue Service if an unprotected ‘dead end’ condition is identified). For the fire resistant doors to be effective, it is of equal importance that the walls containing them are of a similar standard of fire resistance. Any glazing should be fire resisting and be fixed shut. These measures would prevent a fire in such a room rendering the escape route impassable and trapping occupants in those areas using the dead end as the primary means of egress.

In order to reduce the effect of a fire in a room on the entire corridor system, it is accepted that corridors of excessive length should be subdivided by fire doors; this should be confirmed by reference to the Fire Safety Function.

An inner room (or room within a room) is an area where access is made to it from another room, not a corridor. Inner rooms can only be accessed through

one other room. The means of escape from an inner room can be regarded as satisfactory providing that:

- the access room is not classed as a high fire risk; and
- a clear glazed vision panel is provided in the partition wall or door between the inner room and the access room **or**
- a suitable smoke detector is provided in the access room **or**
- the walls of the inner room are stopped 500mm short of the ceiling.

Fire Alarms

The type and sophistication of the alarm system within a building is dependent on several factors, primarily the size and layout of the building. Methods of raising the alarm include:

- a manual system, such as a bell, klaxon, whistle etc or simply to shout 'FIRE!'.
- an electrical system with break glass call points only
- an electrical system with break glass call points and automatic fire detectors

In order to avoid any confusion and to ensure a rapid response to the fire alarm, the signal emitted must be distinct from any other signal used in the building. For example, the class change bell within a school can be used to raise the alarm provided a continuous tone is used as a warning for fire (or other emergency) and an intermittent tone for class changes.

For an alarm system to be effective it must be clearly audible throughout the building. The sound emitted by an alarm at source may be over 100 decibels dB(A). However, it is crucial that even in remote parts of the building a level of 65 dB(A) should be achieved in all occupied rooms with all the doors closed. In practical terms this means the sound level of the alarm should be at least equivalent to a normal spoken voice within the room. Account should be taken for rooms where a significant amount of background noise is normal, for example music rooms, kitchens and workshops. In these areas the audibility of the alarm should be five decibels above the normal background noise (minimum 65dB(A)). If this cannot be achieved other solutions should be sought, such as the provision visual alarm devices.

If a fire occurs, the person discovering the fire should leave the building by the nearest exit. In order to avoid any delay in warning occupants located elsewhere in the building that a fire has occurred, a means of raising the alarm should be provided at each exit. For an alarm system to be fully effective it must be actuated as soon as possible once a fire has been discovered. With this in mind, it is important that if manual apparatus is provided it must be constantly available for use at its designated location. Where a manual system is the chosen system, managers must ensure that the alarm is audible throughout the building from each actuation point.

Certain premises may have areas that have been sound-proofed. If so, additional sounders should be provided within those areas or other devices, such as

flashing beacons to warn occupants, should be considered. In circumstances where persons on the premises have hearing difficulties *(or if they are wearing headphones or ear defenders)* special arrangements may be required. This may mean simply ensuring that they are not left alone and are accompanied by a person who can hear and respond to the fire alarm. In some cases special equipment, such as a vibrating pager, can be purchased to alert a profoundly deaf person that the alarm has been actuated.

With regard to split sites, there is no necessity for detached buildings to have linked alarms. Arrangements for roll calls must be effective in establishments with split sites.

Awareness in Relation to Fire Alarms

Staff should be generally aware that:

- the system is tested weekly using a different call point each week to ensure that all points are checked in rotation
- the fire alarm system should be in full working order with battery back up in accordance with British Standard BS 5839 Part 1.
- hand bells etc. (where provided) are in position and indicated by a notice 'Fire Alarm'
- Break glass call points (where provided) are indicated by a suitable sign where necessary
- where provided, indicator boards are in full working order
- all staff know how to operate break glass points
- during any temporary disconnection of the fire alarm system for servicing etc., alternative arrangements are made to inform occupants in the event of a fire.
- Details of all maintenance, testing and actuations should be recorded in the Fire Log Book, Form A.

Fire Fighting Equipment

Fire extinguishers are provided as an initial fire fighting measure and are only to be used in the early stages of a fire. In order to facilitate this, a person should not have to walk too far in order to reach an extinguisher. 30 metres is the recognised maximum distance that a person should travel in order to reach one.

When extinguishers are provided they should be suspended from special wall brackets. It is important that they remain in place so that they are available for use in an emergency. A monthly check should be carried out to ensure all extinguishers are serviceable, full and ready for immediate use.

Awareness in Relation to Fire Fighting Equipment

Staff should be generally aware that:

- all extinguishers are serviced annually (by the relevant internal County Council Department or arranged via the Property Helpdesk)

- all equipment is located in its correct position and unobstructed. A list of equipment and its position should be maintained for ready reference in Section 4
- all staff should be instructed as to the hazards associated with using extinguishers
- a suitable number of designated, named staff should be trained in the use of extinguishers (only these staff would tackle any fire, if safe to do and without taking personal risk)
- Clear instructions should be found on each canister and are provided in Section 2.
- used equipment is removed immediately and re-serviced (by the relevant internal Department or via the Property Helpdesk)
- fire extinguishers are not used for any purpose other than in the event of fire
- Records of all maintenance and testing should be recorded in the Fire Log Book.

Emergency Lighting

An emergency lighting system is secondary lighting that operates when the normal lighting fails. Generally emergency lighting falls into one of two categories:

- *Non-maintained*

  These units are not normally lit and only come on when the normal lighting fails.

- *Maintained*

  These units are lit continuously and remain lit on a failure of the normal lights. This type of unit must be installed where alcohol is to be served.

Where an emergency lighting system is installed it is imperative that it fulfils the function it was designed to do, that is to assist in the evacuation of a building or part of a building during periods of darkness by illuminating the route and exits that people are expected to take if the normal lighting fails. To this end, areas of occupation have to be identified and escape routes recognised. If any of the highlighted areas are to be used during the hours of darkness then they should be provided with a secondary form of lighting (emergency lighting). When evaluating the effectiveness of escape routes it is important that the assessor follows each route to a place of ultimate safety, well away from the building. Particular attention should be paid to:

- exits
- exit routes (internal and external)
- changes in level
- changes in direction.

If a fire knocks out the normal lighting system it is important that the fire alarm can still be raised. In order to assist in this operation during periods of darkness when the premises is occupied, the fire alarm actuation points should be illuminated by the emergency lighting system. Likewise the fire fighting equipment should also be illuminated.

As a rule, *all* escape routes (internal and external) and circulation areas should be provided with adequate *normal* electrical lighting that could be operated with a switch. Particular attention should be paid to external stairs and rendezvous points. Any areas that are windowless, such as basements and central core staircases and corridors may become unusable due to failure of the normal lighting, even during daylight hours they should therefore be given due consideration when deciding on the provision of an emergency lighting system. The periods of darkness during which persons are on the premises should be identified. These include normal working patterns, seasonal working, evening classes etc. An emergency lighting system may therefore need to be installed.

Consideration must be given to those members of the work force not normally associated with the main function of the building, such as cleaners, caretakers and maintenance staff who may be on the premises for a limited period of time during the hours of darkness. It may be acceptable for these persons to be provided with a hand torch to use in the event of a normal lighting failure.

If the manager of a premises holds or intends to apply for a Premises licence under the Licensing Act 2003, such as a Drinks Licence, it is a requirement that exits and escape routes are provided with emergency lighting for those areas licensed. Special provisions can be made where an occasional licence is applied for, such as, for a one off event.

If any areas of the building are used on a regular basis, say, four or more times a year during the hours of darkness, and are not subject to any licensing regime, as in the case of PTA functions or council meetings, consideration should be given to the provision of an emergency lighting system. Areas used less frequently should be provided with some means of providing secondary lighting, such as the provision of hand torches to designated staff.

Awareness in Relation to Emergency Lighting Systems

Staff should be generally aware that:

- individual units should be visually checked each day to ensure they are in working order (i.e. lights normally lit are working, those not normally lit have a small red light working)
- once a month, the system should be checked by simulating a mains or partial mains failure by operating the emergency lighting test facility
- the entire system should receive annual maintenance by an electrical engineer
- during power cuts, the lighting battery supply will only last a pre-set time (usually 3 hours), back up arrangements may need to be set up, i.e. hand torches
- candles should never be used as emergency lighting
- records of all testing (except the daily visual) should be recorded in the Fire Log Book.

Awareness in Relation to Fire Procedures

Staff should be generally aware that:

- a fire evacuation routine exists for each building and that all occupants, including visitors, know of its contents
- the frequency of fire drills are determined by the findings of the fire risk assessment. Generally fire drills are carried out at least every six months (each term in schools) and once per year for small establishments (namely, those with up to 10 residents in residential care premises)
- the frequencies are for each staff member and **NOT** for the premises. Arrangements should be made to ensure that all staff participate in fire drills
- fire notices detailing the procedure to follow in the event of fire are positioned throughout the building at strategic positions
- occupant/class registers and visitor books are available for roll call
- where it is not possible to use roll call, floor wardens are used.

Fire Safety Signs

Suitable signage containing pictograms and text, where necessary, should indicate all emergency exits.

Exit routes should be provided with signs that are clearly visible indicating the direction of travel to be taken along the length of the route. Care must be taken not to cause confusion by providing too many signs; this can almost be as bad as providing too few signs. Directional arrows should be used where an exit route changes direction.

Where extinguishers are clearly visible from all viewing areas, it is not necessary to provide a sign above the extinguisher. If, however, an extinguisher is located within a cupboard, recess or cannot be easily seen, then its location should be highlighted by the use of a sign.

Where break glass call points or manual fire alarm sounders are clearly visible, it is not necessary to provide a sign indicating the presence of the device. If for any reason the location of any device is not clear, a sign should be provided.

All fire doors should be indicated by the appropriate sign, namely, ‘FIRE DOOR - KEEP SHUT’. Where a door forms part of an escape route and a possibility exists that the door may become inadvertently obstructed, a sign should be provided on the relevant face of the door stating ‘FIRE EXIT - KEEP CLEAR’.

Where self-closing fire doors are fitted with suitable hold open devices, a sign indicating ‘AUTOMATIC FIRE DOOR – KEEP CLEAR’ should be in place.

General fire notices should be positioned at strategic points throughout the building e.g. fire alarm call points, staff rooms and reception. These notices should contain basic information as to the procedure to be followed on:

- hearing the fire alarm
- discovering a fire
- how to call the Fire and Rescue Service

A notice should also be displayed in the room where the Fire and Rescue Service would normally be called from (usually reception) detailing the correct procedure for calling them.

These general notices should be detailed as previously indicated on page 2-4. Any storage areas for flammable substances, gas cylinders, oxygen cylinders etc., should be suitably signed to indicate the presence of dangerous substances and avoidance of ignition sources, such as ‘flammable’ - ‘no smoking’ - ‘no naked lights’.

Laboratories, Workshops and Outbuildings

In order to assist in the avoidance of accidental spillage, the containment of leakage and restriction of vapour spread, all flammable liquids should be contained within a purpose made approved cabinet or bin which is kept locked shut when not in use. In order to avoid any chemical reactions, flammable liquids etc. should be stored separately.

As the risk of accidents is increased once a flammable liquid is removed from the store, only the amount necessary for normal daily use should be removed. Any remaining stock should be returned to the store at the end of the day, this includes any empty containers, as these will still contain flammable vapours.

All gas cylinders must be stored, used and secured in the upright position and protected from misuse. This is especially true in the case of acetylene. Consideration should be given to determine whether piping in the supply is preferable to using the gas direct from the cylinder within the building. Gas cylinders (either full or empty) pose a potential risk within a building, especially in a fire situation. Storage of such cylinders should preferably be in a secure external store.

Awareness in Relation to Laboratories, Workshops and Outbuildings

Staff should be generally aware that:

- all chemicals should be returned to the proper store at the end of each day
- stocks of highly flammable liquids should be stored in metal storage bins and cabinets
- flammable liquids, oxidising agents and acids should be stored separately
- no more than 500ml of any one highly flammable liquid should be kept on laboratory benches or shelves, and only sufficient for daily use is kept out
- the content of a single container must not exceed 570ml (1 pint)
- stocks of flammable materials should be kept at the minimum consistent with the efficient working of the Department
- stocks of potassium, sodium and phosphorus should be small and well stored, and that phosphorus in water is well separated from the alkali metals
- all large compressed gas cylinders should be secured in an upright position and well away from flammable materials
- all Bunsen burners, gas torches, forges etc. should be turned off at the end of each day

- any impregnated cloths are deposited in a metal container in a safe place
- all equipment should be switched off except that which may require to be on continuously or for a prolonged period
- all waste should be cleared away daily
- ventilation equipment, where provided, should be kept in full working order
- hot items or materials should not be put away until reasonably cool.

Kitchens

Kitchens, by their very nature, are a high fire risk area. In order to contain any fire, it is *desirable* that such rooms have fire doors and fire resisting hatches, which should be closed when not in use.

Fire resisting hatches to kitchens can be very costly and other solutions are often possible when trying to restrict spread of fire. It may be possible, for example, to make the door to the canteen fire resisting if this room leads directly to the kitchen, thereby effectively screening off the canteen and kitchen from the remainder of the building. (Confirmation should be sought from the Fire Safety Function).

Ventilation and extraction systems can soon become impregnated with things like grease deposits and dusts leading to a potential fire risk. Any grease traps, filters and similar equipment should be cleaned or replaced at the frequency stated by the manufacturer and in the manner recommend by them.

Awareness in Relation to Kitchens

Staff should be generally aware that:

- cookers and other appliances should be switched off at night unless required to be kept on continuously (e.g. fridges, freezers etc.)
- electrical appliances should also be turned off at the isolator switch, if supplied and if practicable
- all doors and hatches enclosing this area should be securely closed at night
- any refuse accumulated should be removed to dustbins immediately
- ventilation or extraction systems should be cleaned of grease deposits at least annually, and at any other appropriate interval.

Heating

Boiler rooms are constantly open to abuse as they are often perceived as a convenient storage room. These areas must be kept clear of storage, especially materials such as flammable liquids. However, on occasion limited storage can take place in large boiler rooms, providing:

- Permission has been obtained from the Fire Officer
- access to boiler plant is not obstructed
- suitable fire fighting equipment is provided

Awareness in Relation to Heating

Staff should be generally aware that:

- boiler rooms should be kept clear of all forms of rubbish, should not be used to store equipment or materials, particularly flammable liquids, and should not used for any other purpose
- oil storage compartments or catch pits should be kept free of rubbish and storage and, in the case of outside locations, free of rain water
- arrangements should be made to have the fire valve tested every six months to ensure that it operates efficiently (release fusible link wire to operate)
- the malfunctioning of boilers should be reported without delay
- the access door into the oil storage compartment should be kept closed at all times
- every care should be taken when lighting Calor Gas type heaters. Any doubt as to the efficient working of the appliance should result in shutting down the appliance, and reporting the matter immediately
- areas used for the bulk storage of paraffin should be kept free of rubbish and that the tank taps are locked, where possible, when not in use
- proper guards should be provided and kept unobstructed and fixed in position for heaters of the open element type
- paper, flammable liquids or other potentially flammable materials should not be placed on or near heating units
- portable electric heaters should be disconnected at the end of the day
- where temporary heating is used, a fire risk assessment should be carried out first. Further information is given in the relevant section of the Health and Safety Policy.

Bunds

Bunds are physical barriers, usually brick, around storage tanks and are there to contain the total contents of the storage tank should a spillage or fracture of the tank occur along with any foam used for fire fighting purposes. It is important that these areas are kept clear to allow the bund to fulfil its function and to remove any potential fire risk from the contained fuel

Outbuildings (General)

Specific note should be made of any fire precautions in place where the outbuildings are used for mains services intakes or shut off isolators.

Building Work

The occupants of an establishment can be put at risk when building work or remedial work is carried out. It is important that the consequences of any proposed work are formally risk assessed *before* work begins. This is particularly important in the case of hot work.

All contractors must report to the building manager before work commences. Contractors and visitors should be made aware of emergency procedures. Where signing in books and badge systems are in use information should be provided on their arrival. Where no such system is in place Managers should inform them verbally. Where a permit to work is required procedures as detailed in the relevant section of the Health and Safety Policy Manual must be followed, for example hot work.

Details of any automatic fire detection system should be conveyed to the contractors to ensure that appropriate precautions are taken in order to avoid inadvertent actuation of the fire alarm system.

A review of the fire risk assessment might be necessary and interim arrangements made, as appropriate.

Awareness in Relation to Building Work

Staff should be generally aware that a suitable means of initiating and completing a safe evacuation is in place if:

- means of escape are affected
- the fire alarm or automatic fire detection system is affected
- the emergency lighting system is affected, which may include the provision of torches
- any 'hot work' is to be carried out by contractors, which will necessitate the implementation of a ‘hot work permit’.

A simple record of these temporary arrangements should be made and communicated to all staff, contractors and users of the building.

MISCELLANEOUS GUIDANCE RELATING TO FIRE

General Areas

Staff should be generally aware that:

- all appliances should be turned off when not in use
- refuse should be cleared away at the end of each day
- electrically operated equipment should be turned off, and if possible isolated, at the end of each day. In certain situations equipment must be left on and in others it may be advantageous to leave equipment connected. Examples would be security systems or computers. Where this is the case, it should be specified on the equipment.
- displays should not obstruct escape routes, conceal notices, fire alarm call points, fire fighting equipment or seriously add to the fire risk
- decorations should not be fixed near heat sources
- at the end of evening activities a visual check should be made of all areas after use

- stocks of paper or other flammable materials should be carefully and compactly stored and stocks kept to the minimum consistent with the efficient working of the establishment
- flammable materials should not be stored in loft areas
- any non-smoking policy should be strictly enforced
- measures should be taken to reduce the risk of arson
- flammable substances and materials should be safely stored
- in buildings, refuse containers should be regularly cleared of combustible materials
- cardboard boxes and other combustible containers should be stored separately in a safe place.
- real Christmas trees can easily be set alight by a naked flame, particularly if the tree has not been regularly watered and has become dry. For this reason, the use of artificial Christmas trees is preferable in any establishment.

Electricity

Staff should be generally aware of the arrangements that have been made to ensure that:

- all portable electrical equipment has been tested at an appropriate frequency by qualified personnel (unqualified staff are not expected to undo plugs to check fuses or wiring)
- the outer insulation on portable electrical equipment is held by the cable grip
- the fuse box has not become hot - if it has, report it immediately
- blown fuses are never replaced by a piece of copper wire or other conductor - only by the proper fuse, appropriately rated
- all switches, lights, plugs etc. are kept in good order, and broken plugs adaptors, etc. immediately replaced. Damaged plugs should never be taped up and kept in use
- the use of multi-adaptors is avoided wherever possible and if absolutely necessary is strictly controlled to avoid overloading the circuit
- when cable reels are used, these should be fully unwound so as not to present a trip hazard and switched off and un-plugged when not in use
- portable equipment is disconnected at night, and checked regularly for frayed leads and hardening of insulation
- where any equipment is to be left on overnight a responsible person is informed
- electrical switch cupboards are not used as store rooms. Where this is unavoidable it is essential to avoid storing any flammable materials, particularly flammable liquids, to avoid using isolator levers for hanging items of equipment or clothing on, and to ensure a clear passage is always maintained in front of the switches to ensure ready access in an emergency. Never store liquids above isolator switches
- when residual current devices are fitted, arrangements should be made to have them tested quarterly by staff
- all portable electrical equipment has been tested annually (individually owned electrical equipment must be tested before being used in the workplace).

Storage of Dangerous Substances

Information on the Storage of Dangerous Substances and the requirements of the 'Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmospheres Regulations 2002' (DSEAR) is given in Section H7 of the Corporate Health and Safety Policy, **Click here** to access that guidance.

Refuse

Check that:

- If possible, all refuse should be kept within an external compound that is 6 metres from any building and is locked shut at the end of the day
- If possible, no combustible materials (including wheeled bins) should be left in the vicinity of buildings unless in a locked compound.
- If a compound is not available, attempts should be made to chain and padlock the wheeled bin to a secure post at least six metres from any building
- The above is the ideal solution. It is accepted that in many workplaces such measures will not be feasible.

Access for Emergency Services

Check that:

- roads on the premises are not blocked so as to prevent a fire appliance from reaching all parts of the roadway system
- any fire hydrant sited within the premises is maintained unobstructed, and is conspicuously marked with an indicator plate
- a responsible person knows the location of all compressed gas cylinders, liquid petroleum gas cylinders, radioactive sources, and major stores of highly flammable liquids so that he/she is in a position to inform the Fire and Rescue Service on arrival, particularly if fire occurs after normal working hours. The details of any such materials or substances should be added to the Register of flammable of toxic materials provided on Form N. A fire plan can also be used for this purpose.

FIRE SAFETY IN RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS

Routine Inspection

The Fire and Rescue Service arranges for routine inspections to be carried out in all categories of County Council establishments.

Fire Safety Reports

Following routine inspections, the Fire and Rescue Service will produce a fire safety report indicating remedial action and distribute it as follows:

- Premises Manager
- Property Services
- The Care Quality Commission (only for premises providing care).

Emergency Action

Property Services will be responsible for arranging immediate action to be taken to remedy any hazards, defects or emergency situations which are highlighted in the reports and inform the relevant Directorate/establishment and Chief Fire Officer in writing, of the details of all orders placed with contractors.

Property Services *will not* at this stage authorise any improvement work.

Other Action

The relevant Directorate will decide on the priorities for funding any other improvements indicated in the reports and inform the Fire and Rescue Service of the timescale for completion of the improvements. A copy of the Fire Prevention Report and any other correspondence will then be sent to the Manager of the establishment concerned.

Responsibility of the Premises Manager

To ensure that all work ordered is completed within a reasonable time, the premises Manager should liaise with the Property Services.

Soft Furnishings

All new purchases of soft furnishings must comply with appropriate standards.

Furniture - General

Furniture within the premises should satisfy, as a minimum, the standard cigarette and match ignitability test specified in BS 5852: part 1: 2006 and the crib ignition source 5 test. “Assessment of the ignitability of upholstered seating by smouldering and flaming ignition sources”

Sitting Areas in Corridors, Stair-wells and Escape Routes

Only soft furniture of Standard BS 5852: part 1: 2006 of CRIB Source 7, may be placed in approved small sitting areas, such as sitting areas outside lounges and dining areas, alcoves etc where they have open access to exit corridors.

Residents Furniture (and furnishings)

Residents should be *encouraged* to "personalise" their own room with the use of ornaments, pictures, plants, etc., and, **as far as reasonable**, be given the option of bringing in their own furniture and beds. However, due to the

increased fire risk, residents should be discouraged from bringing in their own soft furniture or bedding.

There is no guaranteed method known to the Fire and Rescue Service for upgrading soft furniture by spray applications, therefore, if a resident is adamant that they wish to bring in a favourite chair, this *must* be confined to their own *personal* bedroom.

The furniture should be marked and a written agreement entered into between the home and the resident with regards to personal furniture, which will include a section stating that all personal furniture *will be* removed when the resident leaves for whatever reason and destroyed or reclaimed by the family, as agreed. This will be held in the resident's personal file.

The employer/manager should use their discretion in this matter and advice is available from the Fire and Rescue Service or the Care Standards Commission on request.

The establishment's insurance details must be checked to ensure that such furniture can be used.

Fire Doors

The Care Quality Commission and the Regional Fire & Rescue Service recommend that no means other than an automatic door closer control should be used to render the self-closing device on a fire-resisting door inoperative.

Such a control should be fitted only to a door, which cannot be kept closed because of difficulties created for residents going through the doorway in the day-to-day running of the premises.

Where such devices are not in place, the establishment should instigate a plan that will see them installed. A prescribed time period for such works will be agreed with the relevant Fire Authority and the Care Quality Commission.

Doors fitted with an automatic door closer control should be physically closed at a pre-determined time each night, for example 8.00 pm, to ensure that fire compartmentalisation is complete at the time of most risk.

Dorgard automatic door closer controls are an acceptable method of holding open fire doors.

Automatic Sliding Doors

Where automatic sliding doors are fitted, these should be of the type that 'fails to safety'. This means that in the event of a failure of the main power supply or the locking mechanism, the doors will remain open or can be easily opened with minimal force.

A manual override should be provided adjacent to the door(s). This manual override may be in the form of a break glass switch (similar to a fire alarm call

point, but of a different colour, preferably green), push button or push pad facility. The doors should be included in the routine maintenance and testing regime, and the results recorded in the Fire Log Book, section 5 Form D. Maintenance should be strictly in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and engineers reports held in the Fire Log Book, section 6.

Oxygen

Oxygen - General

Persons who have respiratory diseases and other medical conditions are increasingly using oxygen. Oxygen itself does not burn, it is odourless and colourless and when used properly, it is of great benefit to those who need it. Used wrongly, however, it allows materials that to burn more rapidly and even violently.

Oxygen behaves differently from air, compressed air, nitrogen and other inert gases. It is very reactive. Pure oxygen, at high pressure (often stored in a cylinder) can react violently with common materials, such as oil and grease. Other materials may catch fire spontaneously. Nearly all materials including textiles, rubber and even metals will burn vigorously in oxygen.

The main causes of fires and explosions involving oxygen are:

- Oxygen enrichment from leaking equipment
- Use of materials not compatible with oxygen
- Use of oxygen in equipment not designed for oxygen service
- Incorrect or careless operation of oxygen equipment.

Bottled Oxygen

The manager should ensure that the administering pharmacist's advice is sought and followed and:

- Where oxygen cylinders are being used for a resident they should be safely stored in that resident's bedroom and a sign erected to warn against smoking or naked flames in the vicinity
- If spare cylinders are required to be stored elsewhere in the Home advice must be obtained from the Fire Safety Function regarding the safe arrangements for achieving this
- The local Fire Station is notified each time that oxygen is introduced into the Home.

Liquid Oxygen

Due to advances in medical care, liquid oxygen is starting to be used for certain types of breathing difficulties. Whilst the risks are generally the same as bottled oxygen great care needs to be taken.

Liquid oxygen is stored at temperatures of –180^{o} Celsius. Its properties are the same as normal oxygen, namely it is colourless and odourless.
Its hazards are that:

- It will accelerate combustion and increase the risk of fire and explosion
- Prolonged inhalation of high concentrations may cause coughing and adverse lung effects
- Contact with the liquid will cause frostbite and freeze burns to exposed tissue
- Heating of the container may cause it to explode.

Risk Assessment on the use of Oxygen

Employers are legally required to assess the risks when using oxygen in the workplace and take all reasonably practicable precautions to ensure the safety of workers and members of the public.

Risk Limitation

The dangers of oxygen can be easily avoided if attention is paid to the following points:

- Do not smoke or allow anyone to smoke in a room where oxygen is stored or used
- Do not allow the plastic tubing or the cylinders to be close to any source of heat, such as open fires, gas or electric fires, or any other heaters, electrical light fittings etc.
- Do not allow children or anyone unfamiliar with the equipment to tamper with or handle it
- Do not put oil, grease or petroleum jelly on any valves or connections and wash hands before changing cylinders
- Do not hang anything on the cylinder itself – keep it clear at all times
- Store and use all cylinders upright, never store cylinders beside paraffin, petrol or any other flammable liquid
- Keep the number of cylinders within the room to a minimum; spare cylinders should be kept in a specified storeroom
- Where possible, secure the cylinder to avoid unnecessary movement, which may lead to damage to the valves, connections or hose
- Use the approved adaptors when filling a small cylinder from a large cylinder and always do this in the open air
- Read the instructions for each piece of equipment before it is used
- Have all the equipment checked every six months.

Signage

- A "No Smoking" sign should be placed on the door to any room where oxygen is used or stored
- A warning sign indicating "Oxygen" should be placed on the door to any room where oxygen is used or stored.

Oxygen Enrichment

Oxygen enrichment is the term often used to describe situations where the oxygen level is greater than is usually found in air. The presence of an oxygen-enriched atmosphere cannot be easily detected by the human senses.

The main danger to people from an oxygen-enriched atmosphere is that clothing or hair can easily catch fire, causing serious or even fatal burns. For example, people can easily set their clothing and bedding on fire by smoking while receiving oxygen treatment for breathing difficulties.

Smoking, as already stated, should be forbidden where oxygen is being used.
Oxygen enrichment is often the result of:

- Leaks from damaged or poorly maintained hoses, pipes and valves
- Leaks from poor connections
- Opening valves deliberately or accidentally
- Not closing valves properly after use
- Poor ventilation where oxygen is being used.

Consequently, the main ways to prevent oxygen enrichment are to keep oxygen equipment in good condition and to take care when using it. Good ventilation will also reduce the risk of oxygen enrichment.

If oxygen enrichment from a leak is suspected, the supply should be turned off. The room should be well ventilated and the source of the leak identified and repaired. It is possible that oxygen may contaminate any clothing in the area. If this is suspected, the clothing should preferably be removed and taken outside for airing and ventilating.

Cleanliness

- Keep oxygen equipment clean. Contamination by particulate matter, dust, sand, oils, greases or general atmospheric debris is a potential fire hazard. Portable equipment is particularly susceptible to contamination, and precautions should be taken to keep it clean
- Use clean hands or gloves when assembling oxygen equipment, for example attaching the pressure regulator or making connections.

Smoking

It is the responsibility of the manager and staff to ensure appropriate measures are in place to minimise the risk residents may place themselves in when smoking. This should be done without placing unnecessary restrictions on individuals or infringing their civil rights. Residents should not be forbidden from smoking.

Where clients wish to smoke, this should be included in the care plan. This should

include the name of the smoker, whether he or she needs supervision whilst smoking and when a review is required or has taken place. The County Council has produced a Smoking policy which is available on the staff intranet.

Communal Areas

Designated communal smoking areas should be identified where residents are able to smoke and where staff can supervise, if required, discreetly.

Bedrooms

Clients should not be allowed to smoke in bedrooms. Staff should monitor to ensure that clients do not smoke in their bedrooms.

Locks on Doors

Final Exit Doors

All doors forming a means of exit from the building should be capable of being easily opened from the inside without the aid of a key.

It is accepted that there has to be a compromise between means of escape for staff and residents and the need for security to avoid unwanted intrusion, as well as to prevent clients wandering around, thus placing themselves at risk.

This can be achieved by several methods ranging from electromagnetic locking arrangements linked to the fire alarm system, fitting a second fastening (baffle lock) or providing a local alarm to the door.

Any device is acceptable providing that it can be used at all material times including emergencies and that all members of staff and visitors can operate any device.

If *any* member of staff cannot use the additional fastening then it must be removed.

Bedroom Doors

Any lockable bedroom doors must comply with the following:

They must be capable of being locked and opened on the room side without the aid of a key. It must also be capable of being easily used by the room's occupants.

In addition, the door should not automatically lock as the result of closing.

All members of the staff on duty should carry a master key. Additional keys should be available for use by Fire and Rescue Service personnel in the event of a fire.

Information regarding the provision of lockable bedroom doors and the master key arrangements should be given to Fire and Rescue Service personnel carrying out routine inspections of Residential Care Premises.

Small Residential Care and Childcare Premises (less than four residents)

There will be cases where the provider of care cannot supply a suitable locking arrangement on exit doors that does not require a key**.** In these circumstances, the inspecting officer will risk assess the premises and may, at their discretion, allow a key to be provided in a box adjacent to the door(s). The provider should be informed to check with their insurers first to ensure that this arrangement does not compromise their insurance.

Stair Lifts

General

Stair lifts should only be installed in commercial and public buildings where it is not reasonably practicable to incorporate a passenger lift in accordance with BS 5655 or, where vertical travel is not greater than 1.98m, a powered lifting platform in accordance with BS 6440.

The characteristics of a disabled person in a private dwelling can be identified and the installation can be tailored to suit the individual. The characteristics of the potential passengers on a stair lift in a commercial or public building will generally not be known. The stair lift cannot be tailored and the installation should allow for a wide range of disabilities. Installation, maintenance and insurance conditions should therefore reflect this.

Stair lifts should not be used as a means of escape.

Where a stair lift is to be installed within, or on a stepped approach to a building that is subject to Building Regulations, then the provision of handrails should not be compromised.

Consultation

Before purchasing or installing a stair lift, the building owner, the building manager, the Architect, Surveyor or other professional agent acting on behalf of the building owner or manager should consult with the following:

- The Fire Authority
- The Environmental Health Officer
- The Building Control Department
- The Health Authority (where applicable)
- Care Quality Commission (where applicable).

Stair Lifts Operating Between Storeys

Single Stair Buildings

A stair lift should only be installed in a single stair building where the stairway width required for means of escape is maintained beyond the incursion into the stairway width of any fixed part of the stair lift installation (i.e. when the chair etc, is in the housed position).

Multi-Stair Buildings

In a building containing more than one stairway, the stair lift should be installed on a stairway that is not used as a primary means of escape.

Residential Homes

- Generally stair lifts should not be installed in single stair buildings.
- Stair lifts should only be considered where it is expected that a limited number of persons will use it. When deciding on the suitability of a stair lift in these circumstances the NCSC Inspector will refer to the National Minimum Standards as these may allow possible exemptions where a very small number of users and a more domestic setting is involved.
- A minimum clear width of 1000mm should be maintained on the stairway with the chair in the housed position.
- In a building with two or more stairways between storeys, the installation of a stair lift should, where possible, not be on a stairway to be used as a means of escape.

Public Buildings

Generally stair lifts should not be installed in single stair buildings.

The available clear width of stairway when the stair lift is installed should be adequate to cater for the means of escape requirements for all floors' occupancy capacities. The minimum width is 1100mm.

Where the above minimum width cannot be achieved, it would be considered acceptable to instigate a management policy to limit the numbers of persons on upper floors. Written confirmation should be obtained and held in the premises file.

Sheltered Housing

In the case of sheltered accommodation it is permissible to provide a chair lift/stair lift in a single stair building provided that:

- The staircase provided is of concrete construction
- The walls and ceiling are to class 'O' standard
- The staircase does not contain any cupboards, meters or furnishings

- A suitable form of smoke detector is provided in the staircase enclosure
- The wiring for the lift is on a separate circuit with its own fuse facility and is suitably indicated
- A clear width of 800mm should be available along the whole length of the stair when the lift is in operation.

Other Buildings

The installation of a stair lift between storeys in commercial buildings used as a workplace should only be considered in respect of designated disabled employee(s).

A minimum clear width of 800mm should be maintained with the chair in the housed positioned.

Stair Lifts Operating Within Storeys

Within a storey of a building, a stair lift may be necessary to facilitate access for disabled persons to a stage or platform, or between floors that are not at the same level.

Where possible, access to different levels within a storey should be provided by a ramp or a lifting platform conforming to BS 6440.

Only where it is not practicable to provide either a ramp or a lifting platform, should a stair lift be considered.

Notices

Appropriate safety signs and instructions for use should be clearly displayed at each end of travel of a stair lift.

Servicing

The stair lift should be thoroughly serviced by a competent person within six months of commissioning.

A competent person should service the stair lift at intervals not exceeding 12 months following installation.

The competent person carrying out maintenance should provide a written report in accordance with BS EN 81-40:2008

The competent person may determine an inspection frequency greater than that indicated above depending on the type of chair lift and use of the stair lift. The competent persons advice must be complied with.

Reports

Any accidents relating to the stair lift and any modifications should be recorded.

Any defect should be recorded as appropriate and reported to the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) or Service Company.

Loft Spaces

Loft spaces should not be used for storage unless specifically designed for this use.

Where storage is required in loft spaces that were not designed as storage areas at the planning stage, this will require a Building Regulation application.

To satisfy the application, loft storage spaces should have:

- Fire resisting construction to the remainder of the roof space
- Fire doors to the loft space
- Automatic fire detection within the loft space
- Adequate means of escape or management procedures to safeguard staff using the loft space.

Where conversion work is carried out in a loft space, the contractor should give written confirmation that such work has not breached any fire compartmentalisation. Where it has been necessary to breach compartments, again, written confirmation should be given that any holes have been fire stopped. These confirmations should be held in the Fire Log Book.

Loft spaces should receive particular mention in the fire risk assessment.

Notification Following a Fire

Every actuation of the fire alarm must be treated as an indication of a real incident. Consequently, the first action of the staff must be to call the Fire and Rescue Service via 999 irrespective of the premises being linked to an Alarm Receiving Centre (ARC).

The manager of the care home has a duty to inform the Care Quality Commission following any fire, no matter how small. The Fire and Rescue Service will not carry out this task.

Details of any alarm actuation and any fire must be detailed in the Fire Log Book, giving sufficient details to allow an inspector to get a clear picture of what happened and where.

Following a fire within the premises, or notification of a fire in comparable premises, a review of the fire risk assessment must be undertaken.