

Fire Policy Practice Guidance Note		
Fire Risk Assessments in Trust Premises – V04		
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KEY POINTS

- The responsible person, in any place of work, has a duty of care for the safety of all persons in that workplace with regard to fire.
- Under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, every NHS workplace, ward, department and community premises must have a fire risk assessment and the responsibility for ensuring it is carried out lies with the responsible person.
- In multi-occupied premises, each department must have a responsible person although one fire risk assessment may suffice for the whole building.
- The fire risk assessment is a legal document and can be produced in a court of law as evidence.

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Fire Practice Guidance Notes form part of the CNTW Group's approach to managing health and safety and it is expected that staff will follow the guidance contained within them unless there is a compelling reason to deviate from it. Such reasons should be documented whenever the circumstance occurs and notified to the Head of Estates so that modifications to future editions can be made if necessary.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 A fire risk assessment is a document produced by the responsible person in charge of wards, villas and departments. Its main purpose is to identify the risks associated with fire, the persons at risk and measures taken to reduce the risks.
- 1.2 The purpose of this Practiced Guidance Note (PGN) is to set out specific guidelines to enable the Trust to be assured that the fire risk assessment is clearly understood by Trust employees.

2 Scope

- 2.1 This PGN together with any associated procedures and guidance notes, shall be observed by all employees of Cumbria Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust, (the Trust) and NTW Solutions Limited (NTWS) and is applicable to responsible persons and their nominated deputies

3 Statement

- 3.1 The Trust are committed to effective management and control of fire safety in order to reduce the risks to patients, staff, visitors and members of the public.
- 3.2 The Fire Safety Advisors will actively assist all responsible persons in ensuring the fire risk assessment is carried out in a satisfactory manner.

4 Who is Responsible?

- 4.1 Under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, every workplace within the Trust must have a fire risk assessment. In small businesses the owner/occupier is normally responsible for carrying out a fire risk assessment.
- 4.2 In larger organisations such as the NHS the job of carrying out a fire risk assessment will be delegated to a responsible person in each work area. It may be permissible for the fire risk assessment to be undertaken by a competent person nominated by the responsible person providing that person has experience of carrying out such a task. For the Trust this expertise will be provided by the Fire Safety Advisors.

5 The Fire Risk Assessment.

- 5.1 Generally there are five steps to follow in undertaking any risk assessment. This includes fire risk assessments:
 - Identify any fire hazards (ignition sources, fuel, oxygen etc.)
 - Identify who is at risk
 - Evaluate the risks (reduce or remove the risk, reduce any hazards)
 - Record the findings (keep a written record of what you find)
 - Review (review risk assessments regularly and make changes if necessary)

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- 5.2 In most Trust areas the fire risk assessments should already be in place. If this is the case all staff need to do is familiarise themselves with the risks identified and review the assessment annually to ensure it is still current.
- 5.3 As the fire risk assessment is a legal requirement under current law, it is important that it is kept up to date and satisfies the needs of the premises. Important areas to bear in mind are:
- Under current law, a separate risk assessment must be provided if persons under the age of 16 are employed
 - The fire risk assessment must be completed to a satisfactory level. The use of tick boxes offering 'yes/no' answers must be accompanied by more in-depth information regarding the answer given
 - The fire risk assessment will be deemed unsatisfactory when audited by the Fire Service if they feel there is insufficient evidence provided
 - Under current fire safety legislation, it is a requirement for the contents of the fire risk assessment to be made available to all staff so they can acquaint themselves with any risks that are identified. It is the responsibility of the **Individual** to familiarise themselves with the risks in their workplace.
- 5.4 The Trust Fire Safety Advisors have a template that will be used for all CNTW Trust fire risk assessments and will typically include:
- Premises/department address
 - Contact details (email, telephone etc.)
 - Responsible person details
 - Hours of business
 - Numbers of persons likely to be on the premises (staff, visitors, clients)
 - Main sections
- 5.5 Each main section will include a number of questions regarding fire safety measures and only requires the details of those measures. Most premises or departments will differ from the next one, so the information needs to be site specific and not copied from another buildings fire risk assessment.
- 5.6 The following areas are some of those that should be identified in the fire risk assessment:
- Sources of ignition such as naked flames, heaters, waste build-up etc.
 - Persons at risk such as our clients, the elderly, lone workers, pregnant women, special needs persons.
 - Adherence to the smoking policy
 - Removal or reduction of hazards
 - Any areas requiring remedial action.

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5.7 The term 'suitable and sufficient' appears in text throughout the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and refers to the level of information included in the risk assessment. Because these assessments are legal documents, it is vital that the information gathered and included is sufficient and adequate to provide guidance for staff. It is not acceptable to have only 'yes' or 'no' answers. Evidence to substantiate these answers must be given, particularly the 'yes' answers. The fire service may deem the assessment not suitable or sufficient and will require it to be re-assessed. These documents can be used in a court of law as evidence, so they need to reflect the any risks and the current method of controlling those risks.

5.8 Once a fire risk assessment has been completed it must be reviewed periodically to ensure that any changes in the building's circumstances have been addressed and recorded. The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 – Part 2 Section 9-1, states:

9-1 (3) – “Any such assessment must be reviewed by the responsible person regularly so as to keep it up to date and particularly if”

a. There is a reason to suspect it is no longer valid.

b. There has been significant change in the matters to which it relates including where the premises, special technical and organisational measures or organisation of the work undergo significant changes, extensions or conversions.

5.9 This is normally carried out on an annual basis however if any circumstances change during the year the fire risk assessment must be amended to identify those changes. Change of circumstances may include:

- Any internal/external structural work carried out on the premises that may affect the current means of escape
- Employing of special needs or young persons
- Change of use of the premises
- There is a reason to suspect the risk assessment is no longer valid
- New risks become apparent - such as uncontrolled access to lighters and smoking material

6 Summary

6.1 Current fire safety legislation only requires that everything reasonably possible is done where necessary to provide precautions to deal with a possible risk from fire. Some buildings are difficult to manage regarding fire safety perhaps because of their size, age or intricate lay-out.

6.2 Whatever the status of your workplace, you are only expected to do what is reasonably practicable for that area with regard to fire safety and assistance will be given in carrying out a fire risk assessment if required.

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