

**Report of the Health and Safety Manager.
Emergency Lighting – Teesdale House**
Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

1. Summary

This report follows the recommendation issued to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 13th August 2008, with regard to the fire safety measures in Teesdale House. The report identifies the immediate, short term and longer term actions necessary to increase resilience and mitigate the foreseeable risk of fire or other emergency occurring.

2. Action Taken

Members of the Health and Safety team have surveyed the existing fire safety measures, reviewed the premises fire risk assessment and identified measures to improve the safety management safeguards to an acceptable standard.

3. Background

The legislative framework for health and safety is now well established through the *Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974*, the *Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992*, including the civil duty of care imposed by the *Occupier's Liability Acts 1957 & 84* in respect of the duty owed as an occupier of premises due to the dangers associated with the state of the premises, things done or omitted to be done on them, and with regard to people other than visitors.

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 replaces all previous fire safety legislation, consolidating a number of disparate duties under one statute.

In a workplace, the responsibility for complying with the Order rests with the 'Responsible person'. In the workplace this may be the employer and any other person who may have control of any part of the premises, ie the occupier or owner.

In all other premises, the person or people in control of the premises will be responsible.

4. Recommendations

It is recommended that CMT give their approval to the review and the recommendations contained therein of the fire safety measures, supporting the effective leadership of occupational health and safety within the council.

5. Immediate – short term measures

In conjunction with the Democratic Services Officers, to issue the guidance attached at **Appendix 1** to all Members and Council Officers, to remind them of their obligations in respect of the safety of their invitees, as Chair and host of Council meetings.

To introduce measures to identify in advance if any invitees due to attend Council meetings have a mobility or sensory impairment, in order to ensure that appropriate arrangements can be prepared in a timely manner.

To ensure suitable Fire Action Notices are prominently displayed in meeting rooms and within the workplace, detailing the actions to be taken in the event of a fire occurring, the directions of the nearest escape route and the location of the nearest fire assembly area.

The provision of refresher training for designated fire wardens.

6. Medium term measures.

To arrange to install emergency lighting luminaires in the Council Chamber and the foyer area of Teesdale House, to enable invitees to 'way-find' to a place of safety in the event of a power failure occurring, due to fire or other emergency. Luminaires could be maintained (energised at all times) or non-maintained (operate when the supply to normal lighting fails).

Some of the existing fire call-points (push-points) were found to be problematic to test and consideration should therefore be given to replacing the existing various push points with a common design, for consistency.

7. Longer term measures.

To procure from competent suppliers quotations for the design and installation of a suitable emergency lighting system for the premises of Teesdale House and its curtilage, to the current appropriate British Standard.

The accompanying plan provides a suggested emergency lighting scheme, but subject to variance, ie, to accommodate the basement, attic and external spiral staircases or any other influencing factors.

8. Findings of the review of the fire safety measures in Teesdale House.

A proposed scheme of emergency lighting is attached in the accompanying document.

Financial and Legal implications

A robust safety management system, embedding the ownership and strong organisational leadership, will mitigate the likelihood of a breach of statute, or a civil duty of care, thereby increasing the Authority's resilience to the threat of civil or criminal actions and consequent punitive financial penalties and associated costs.

Risk Assessment

Reviewing and updating the premises fire safety control measures combined with strong demonstrable leadership will assist in the identification and mitigation of known organisational risks.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the content of the report be noted and that suitable measures are implemented to :-

- continue to build upon existing good practice, demonstrating a commitment to the effective leadership of occupational health and safety
- ensure the continued effective systems for managing health and safety.

Contact Officer

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Health and Safety Notice

Guidance for Chairs or meeting organisers.

In order to ensure Teesdale District Council fulfils it's duty of care to visitors and invitees to its premises, it is crucial that some simple, basic measures are considered during the planning and at the start of each meeting.

The attached guidance outlines the steps that must be taken during the preparation of a meeting and the duties required of a Chair whilst hosting a meeting.

Please take the time to familiarise yourself with the guidance, any special requirements of attendees and the steps which you may need to take to conduct a safe and orderly evacuation of the venue. Remember, as Chair this is your responsibility.

Do not rely upon a 'roll call' following an evacuation, as it is unlikely that every attendee will have signed in prior to the meeting commencing. Any evacuation will be supported by local fire wardens who will sweep the immediate area to ensure all personnel are asked to leave by the nearest available fire exit route.

Thank you for your co-operation in this matter.

Derek MacDonald
Health and Safety Manager

General Health and Safety Guidance For Meeting Chairs and Attendees

Ensure meeting venue is fit for purpose, suitable and sufficient for the type of meeting (consider layout, seating arrangements, facilities, accessibility, locality, security, etc)

It is prudent for the Chairman or Vice-Chairman of the meeting or an officer from Democratic Services to familiarise themselves with the building in which the meeting is to be held, identify any potential escape routes and the nearest exits before the meeting commences.

Familiarise yourself with your designated assembly point and know your nearest emergency exit route and the alternatives (remember the nearest exit may be blocked). Evacuation routes and assembly points information is often displayed on blue Fire Action notices displayed in all circulation areas and other prominent locations, and again, it is necessary to understand where in relation to the building / meeting venue this is.

All Council staff and elected Members have a duty to make adequate provision for the safe emergency egress of visitors to a place of safety in the event of fire or other such emergency. Before any meeting is convened, the meeting organiser must request '**special requirements**' information from attendees and identify anyone having disabilities or special needs in terms of access / egress.

It is the responsibility of a meeting organiser or Chair, to ensure the appropriate **risk assessments and Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans** are in place prior to any meeting proceeding, and to ensure the safe emergency egress of their meeting attendees. Where visitors have a significant mobility or sensory impairment, it will be necessary to devise and conduct a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan. A formal plan must be drawn up in consultation with the individual, to accurately ascertain the extent or limitations of the impairment, in order to establish appropriate and proportionate measures to ensure a safe and orderly evacuation.

Give housekeeping instructions at the commencement of each meeting, which include the following information: -

- 1) Day/time fire alarm tests are carried out - if a fire alarm test is not expected during the period of the meeting, then this needs to be reiterated to meeting attendees
- 2) If the fire alarm does sound, attendees must make their way to the nearest exit (give a description where this is) and proceed to the specified assembly point (again, tell them where this may be)
- 3) Explain where the nearest suitable toilet facilities are located

In the event of an emergency or evacuation, council staff and members must escort all members of the public, official visitors, meeting attendees and disabled colleagues out of the building.

Evacuate the room and close the doors. Leave the building by the nearest emergency exit.

In an emergency or evacuation **never use the lifts**.

Know your alarm signals – refer to fire notices for explanation on how they may sound or ask a caretaker. Fire alarm signals often differ from building to building.

If they are close at hand and you can do so easily then take coats, bags, keys, etc with you. However, never put yourself at risk and never return to a building unless authorised to do so.

On leaving the building, proceed immediately to your assembly point, unless instructed otherwise.