

**AGENDA ITEM 9
REPORT NO. VAL/10/21**

THE HIGHLAND & WESTERN ISLES VALUATION JOINT BOARD

Policy and Guidance on Fire Safety Management

Document Control

Document last saved: 26 May 2021

Version	Changes	Author	Date
1.0	First release	M Thomson	26/05/21

Introduction

The Board acknowledges its responsibilities as a duty holder under the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 (as amended) and related subordinate legislation.

The Board is committed to delivering high standards of fire safety performance to ensure the safety of employees, service users and visitors. This will evidence the demonstrable commitment to continuous improvement in health and safety performance.

Statement of Intent

The Board will take all reasonably practicable steps to provide and maintain an environment that is safe from the effects of fire for all its employees, clients, and any other people who may be affected by its activities in premises where the Board has control to any extent: this may be rented or leased. Where premises are shared with other organisations, managers must ensure that the standards set out in this document are met as a minimum requirement.

The Board is committed to continually improving its fire safety performance to ensure that there is no disruption to the delivery of its services. This standard will be achieved by:

- Creating and maintaining a positive fire safety culture which secures the commitment from all members of staff;
- Meeting all responsibilities to employees and to others who may rightfully be in our premises;
- Implementing a planned and systematic approach to the management of fire safety, namely:
 - Identifying those premises where a fire risk assessment (FRA) is required;
 - Recording significant findings from the FRA and developing and monitoring Action Plans;
 - Ensuring that FRAs are reviewed in the event of any changes of structure or procedures within that which may impact on fire safety provisions;
 - Maintaining positive working relations with Scottish Fire and Rescue Service;
 - Maintaining records of all fire incidents and ensuring that fire reports are prepared and reported as necessary;
 - Providing fire safety training to relevant staff.

Legislation and Board Polices

This document has been developed to meet the requirements of:

- The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- The Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 (as amended)

- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (as amended)

This document should be read in conjunction with:

- Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Policy and Guidance on Risk Assessment
- Employee Induction

Organisational Responsibilities

General health and safety responsibilities are set out in the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy. Specific, additional responsibilities in relation to fire safety are detailed below:

The Assessor

- Ensuring that management of fire safety is an integral part of the management culture by developing a positive attitude to fire safety among employees;
- Advising all staff of fire safety issues;
- Developing a fire safety system that includes planning, organisation, monitoring, implementing and reviewing measures required to remove, reduce or control issues relating to fire safety;
- Ensuring arrangements for co-ordination and co-operation are in place where premises may have two or more employers with responsibilities for fire safety;
- Ensuring that fire safety (including the monitoring of FRA action plans) is a regular item at Management meetings;
- Providing advice on issues that have any impact on fire safety implications for the Board;
- Overseeing the delivery of the department FRA plan.

Assistant Assessors

- Provision of specialist technical support, including the production of guidance for staff in completing fire safety audits and subsequent actions;
- Management of the Fire Risk Assessment programmes;
- Assisting in the development of training programmes;
- Assisting with delivery of regular fire drills and staff training.

Employees

- Familiarising themselves with all fire safety managements arrangements in Board premises they work in or visit;
- Co-operating with fire safety arrangements;
- Reporting fire safety concerns to line management.

Control of Contractors

The Board will control the activities of Contractors to minimise the risks presented to employees. In this respect the Assessor will make arrangements to ensure:

- Contractors are made aware of the fire safety arrangements within any premise that they are working;
- Contractors will not make any determination on works that could have an impact on the fire safety arrangements without the prior approval of the Assessor who may seek guidance from the Fire Safety Advisor at Highland Council;
- Any works proposed that results in any change to the fabric/layout of the building must fully include additional fire safety provisions such as detection alarms, firefighting equipment and means of escape.

It is vital that Board audits all works prior to signing off and where there are discrepancies it is at this point they should be recorded and remedied before the Contractor leaves the site.

Fire safety documentation

There are a number of documents (in addition to the fire risk assessment) and record keeping which are required for compliance with fire safety legislation. These documents should be held on the premises to which they refer and managed and updated by a senior member of staff. Fire Safety Log books in which to record pertinent information are available from the Highland Council's Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team.

Premises Fire Safety Policy

Each premises is required to have in place a specific fire safety policy which details local fire safety management arrangements. A template policy is included in Appendix 1 for completion by a senior member of staff in each Board location.

Emergency Fire Action Plan

A written Emergency Fire Action Plan along with arrangements to implement the plan is required for each premises. The evacuation of all persons, including disabled persons, is a line management responsibility that cannot be delegated to the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

The Emergency Fire Action Plan should be compiled by line management. It must set out the action that staff and other people in the premises should take in the event of a fire. The plan should be kept on the premises and be available in other languages, as required, including Braille.

Additional guidance on the contents of the Emergency Fire Action Plan is included at Appendix 2.

Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans

Individual Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEP) must be completed for any disabled staff member or disabled person who frequently uses or visits a Board workplace, for example, service users or regular visitors.

PEEP's must be completed by the line manager in conjunction with the disabled person. PEEP forms and guidance are detailed in Appendices 3-5.

Record of maintenance/inspection of fire related and firefighting equipment

This includes the alarm system, fire doors, firefighting equipment, emergency lighting and the means of escape.

The premises, equipment and any other fire safety measures must be kept in efficient working order and covered by a suitable system of maintenance. Checks must be undertaken in accordance with guidance provided and recorded in the Fire Safety Log Book.

Record of Fire Drills

Fire drills should be carried out to check that staff understand the emergency fire action plan (including all relevant PEEPs), to ensure that staff are familiar with operation of the emergency fire action plan, to evaluate effectiveness of the plan and to identify any weaknesses in the evacuation strategy. Records of fire drills must be recorded in the Fire Safety Log Book. Further guidance on the management of fire drills is included at Appendix 6.

Fire Safety Training

Fire Safety Training is vital as it underpins the commitment of the Board to fire safety compliance. All staff should be given information, training and instruction on the fire safety measures to be taken or observed on the premises, including the action to be taken in case of fire. Training in fire safety arrangements should

be included in any induction programme. Fire safety training must also be conducted prior to any works to the premises which results in changes to the arrangements.

Induction

Induction for all new staff (permanent or temporary) must include an awareness of the premises and fire safety arrangements in place. This should include:

- Understanding the emergency plan/fire procedure;
- The importance of fire doors;
- Guidance on the use of relevant firefighting equipment e.g. fire extinguishers, fire blankets – to protect escape route;
- Reporting to the assembly area;
- Exit routes including alternatives;
- General matters of fire safety e.g. keeping combustibles away from possible ignition sources;
- Assisting visitors and any disabled persons from the building.

Fire Marshal and fire extinguisher training is available from the Highland Council's Learning & Development Team.

Monitoring and review

This policy shall be reviewed on an annual basis.

Premises Specific Fire Safety Policy and Guidance

Introduction

This policy is designed to contribute to the safety of employees, and other users, in Board premises as part of a demonstrable commitment to the continuous improvement in fire safety performance as stated in the Policy on Fire Safety Management which reflects the legal obligations placed upon The Board by The Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 (as amended).

Senior managers are responsible for ensuring that the chances of a fire starting are kept as low as possible and for ensuring that all fire safety measures for the protection of staff are in place and maintained in good order.

This document requires the commitment, support and action from everyone working within Board premises and will be central to the ongoing effective management of the fire safety arrangements.

Policy

The Assessor will take all reasonably practicable steps to provide and maintain an environment, which is safe from the effects of fire for all employees, clients, and any other people who may be affected by the activities in Board premises. Line managers are committed to continually improving the fire safety performance in Board premises to ensure that there is no disruption to the delivery of services.

This standard will be achieved by:

- a) Gaining, and maintaining, the commitment and participation of all in these premises in creating and maintaining a positive fire safety culture;
- b) Meeting the responsibilities to employees, to others and to the environment in a way which recognises that legal requirements are the minimum standard;
- c) Adopting a planned and systematic approach to the implementation of these premises' fire safety policy to ensure that:
 - i. the maintenance of arrangements which allows persons to escape if a fire occurs;
 - ii. the maintenance of plant and systems of work to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, the chances of a fire starting are kept as low as possible;
 - iii. arrangements for ensuring, so far as is reasonably practicable, fire safety measures connected with the use, handling, storage and transport of flammable articles and substances;
 - iv. the provision of such information, instruction, training and supervision as is necessary to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the fire safety of its employees and other persons;
 - v. With guidance from the Highland Council's Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team, identifying and assessing the fire risks associated with all activities in the premises with the aim of eliminating or controlling the risks, so far as is reasonably practicable.
- d) Allocating sufficient resources to meet the requirements of these premises' fire safety policy;
- e) Monitoring and reviewing performance to ensure that high standards are maintained or improved where necessary;
- f) Maintaining arrangements for co-ordination and co-operation with other employers where Board employees or clients share premises, facilities or activities with another organisation.

Distribution

This Policy will be drawn to the attention of all staff within Board premises. A statement will be issued annually reminding all staff about the policy statement, its principles and the management's commitment to it.

Organisation and responsibility

Senior staff should identify a responsible person to carry out the role of fire warden in each Board premises. A list of responsible persons will be held centrally.

The duties of this person are:

- Ensuring proper control of contractor's activities in relation to fire safety;
- Implementation of this policy and the Policy on Fire Safety Management in these premises;
- Ensuring compliance with all relevant fire safety legislation, guidance documents and procedures;
- Ensuring that new entrants receive an induction which must include an awareness of all fire safety precautions and procedures applicable to the job/activity and emergency procedures;
- Ensuring that any fire safety responsibilities delegated to staff within these premises are clearly identified;
- Ensuring that a member of staff has responsibility for accompanying visitors, including making them aware of the fire evacuation plan;
- Every employee is responsible for their own acts or omissions and the effect that these may have upon the safety of themselves or any other person. Whilst management accepts main responsibility for the implementation of this policy, individuals are legally obliged to co-operate in order to ensure a working environment safe from the effects of fire.

In addition, all employees must:

- Ensure they are aware of the precautions to be taken to prevent the outbreak of fire;
- Participate in fire evacuation practices which the management organizes;
- Inform their line manager of anything relating to the premises which could represent a serious or immediate fire safety danger;
- Report any faults/improvements on the fire safety arrangements;
- Co-operate with Board management so far as is necessary, to allow them to comply with their fire safety responsibilities.

Arrangements

Organisational responsibilities

The recognition and management of fire safety/risk assessment is an integral part of the Board's responsibility to its employees, and the role of managers and employees in addressing fire safety related issues is vital. Responsibilities for the management of fire safety within the workplace are clearly defined within the Policy on Fire Safety Management.

Fire Safety Management

All line managers will pursue progressive improvements which will lead to the reduction of the chances of a fire starting and the protection of staff.

Emergency Fire Action Plans

There will be a written emergency fire action plan for Board premises which sets out the action that staff and other people in the premises will take in the event of a fire. It will be kept on the premises and be available in languages understood by all. It will be known by staff and form the basis of training and instruction.

Fire Safety Training

The actions of staff are crucial to the safety of all in these premises. It is essential that staff know what they have to do to safeguard themselves and others on the premises and to have an awareness of the importance of their actions. This includes risk reduction, maintenance of fire safety measures and action if

there is a fire. Management will actively support training by providing the necessary resources and organisation to carry out such training.

Maintenance of Fire Safety Measures

The premises, internal and external emergency routes and exits, firefighting equipment, fire alarm, fire detection, emergency lighting, Fire and Rescue Service facilities and other fire safety measures will be kept in efficient working order and covered by a suitable system of maintenance. There will be regular checks, periodic servicing and maintenance and any defects will be put right as quickly as possible. Records of these items will be maintained by the responsible person in each Board location.

Fire Drills

Fire drills will be carried out so that staff understand the emergency fire action plan (including all relevant personal evacuation needs), ensure that staff are familiar with operation of the emergency fire action plan, to evaluate effectiveness of the plan and to identify any weaknesses in the evacuation strategy. They will take place at least twice a year with each member of staff participating at least once a year. Records of fire drills will be maintained.

Communication

Employees have an important contribution to make to the overall organisational fire safety culture. The Assessor will ensure that fire safety is an integral part of the management system and seek to develop a positive attitude to fire safety among employees by:

- Visibly demonstrating a clear commitment to improving fire safety performance;
- Ensuring the communication of necessary fire safety information to all employees;
- Securing the competence of employees by including fire safety within the induction process and systematically identifying fire safety training needs.

Raising Fire Safety Concerns

Employees should raise a fire safety concern with the relevant line manager and be followed up in writing.

Review

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Emergency Fire Action Plan

Introduction

A fire emergency evacuation plan is a written document which includes the action to be taken by all staff in the event of fire and the arrangements for calling the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. It should be kept on the premises, be available in a format understood by all, as well as being known by staff and forming the basis of the training and instruction which is provided. The plan should be available for inspection by the enforcing authority.

The purpose of the plan is:

- To ensure that the people on the premises know what to do if there is a fire;
- To ensure that appropriate action is taken in the event of fire and that the premises can be safely evacuated.

The Plan

The plan should include the contingency arrangements in place for the welfare of people who may have been evacuated from the building, to short term shelter where this is necessary to avoid hazardous weather conditions or because the building or part of the building has become unusable.

The plan should set out details of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire. It should be specific to the premises and should include:

- How people will be warned if there is a fire;
- What staff should do if they discover a fire;
- What staff should do in the event of the alarm being activated;
- The arrangements for calling the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service;
- The specific action to be taken by the person in charge when the fire alarm activates, or a fire is discovered;
- The procedure to be followed to evacuate the premises taking into account any personal emergency evacuation plans;
- Where persons should assemble or be taken after they have left the premises and procedures for checking whether the premises have been evacuated;
- Arrangements for fighting fire by staff trained in the use of portable fire extinguishers;
- Any processes, machines or power supplies that need to be stopped or isolated if there is a fire;
- Procedures for meeting the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service on its arrival and notifying it of the circumstances of the incident, whether all persons are accounted for and the presence of any special dangers.

Copies of the plan should be located at different points throughout the building where staff and visitors can read it and become familiar with its contents.

For small premises a simple notice may be suitable; for larger, more complex premises a more detailed plan will be required which, e.g. shows the location of fire escape routes, etc. may be required.

In multi-occupied premises or complexes, the emergency fire action plan will need to be detailed and compiled after consultation with all occupiers and other responsible people such as centre management or owners who have control over the building. In most cases this means that a single emergency plan covering the whole building will be necessary.

Action on hearing the fire alarm

The plan should instruct all personnel – should the alarm be activated - to act in accordance with the agreed evacuation strategy.

Any staff allocated fire responsibilities proceed to pre-determined positions to assist members of the public and staff to leave the building by the nearest safe route.

Contacting the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

Arrangements should be in place for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service to be contacted regardless of whether the alarm is connected to the Service. These arrangements should cover normal working hours and any out of hours use of the building.

Identification of Key Escape Routes

In premises where members of the public or people unfamiliar with the layout of the premises are present there should be means available to identify the key escape routes. They could include schematic drawings supplemented with a satisfactory emergency escape sign.

Where possible the places of assembly should be indicated on the plan.

Places of Assembly and Roll Call

Pre-determined assembly points should be identified and arranged. The person who is in charge of the assembly point should report to the person who has been nominated as Fire Service Liaison Officer indicating whether all persons have been accounted for, or for anyone missing, where they were last seen.

The assembly point(s) should be far enough away from the building not to put people in danger of radiated heat and falling debris. They should be located so as to give ample room so as not to interfere with firefighting operations nor jeopardise the actions of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

The nominated person in charge of the assembly point should be able to communicate with the nominated Fire Liaison Officer who should be located near the main entrance.

Monitoring and Review

The Assessor should monitor development of Fire Safety Management regularly at Management meetings.

Guidance on evacuation of disabled persons from buildings

Introduction

This document provides information and guidance on evacuation of disabled persons from buildings. It should not be assumed that disabled persons will have a passive role in the event of a fire.

PEEP Principles

An evacuation plan for disabled persons is commonly known as a PEEP: a Personal Emergency Egress Plan or Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan. The plan explains the method of evacuation to be used by a disabled person in each area of a building. It should not be assumed that because a person is disabled that they will need or ask for a PEEP. Some will be confident that they can get out of the building unaided. Also, it should not be assumed that people with 'hidden impairments' such as a heart condition or epilepsy, and who normally would not have an access problem, might not require assistance in an emergency situation. Temporary PEEPs may be required where employees have time-limited mobility issues due, for example, to an injury.

Arrangements for the evacuation of disabled persons should be compatible with the general evacuation strategy and the emergency fire action plan for the premises. The responsibility for implementing the plan and evacuating persons safely in the event of an emergency will rest with responsible person in each Board location: an evacuation plan for disabled persons must not rely upon the intervention of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service to make it work.

The following principles should guide the preparation and implementation of a PEEP:

- The same rules of courtesy and respect apply to disabled and non-disabled people alike. Disabled people should not be treated as a "health and safety" problem to be resolved;
- See the person not the disability; needs and preferences vary widely between individuals;
- Disabled people should be meaningfully involved at all stages in the development and review of their PEEP;
- In an evacuation, ask, don't assume when determining what assistance a person might need. The individual disabled person best understands the nature of his/her impairment.

An Emergency Evacuation Questionnaire should be completed by staff who may need assistance should evacuation of the building be required. The employee's Line Manager should then develop the PEEP in conjunction with the employee following the guidance set out in this document.

A number of evacuation options are contained in section of this document.

PEEPs

Co-ordination

A co-ordinating role is necessary in order to ensure that any plans provided are understood throughout the premises. The responsible person in each Board location should act as the coordinator. In addition, a system is required to ensure regular review and updating of plans. Line managers should take responsibility for ensuring that the PEEPs for their staff are kept up to date. Disabled people should be advised to tell the person of any change to their circumstances.

Plans for each premises and the occupants need to be co-ordinated. This is especially important where there is the potential for a number of people to be evacuated to ensure that there is no conflict. In multi-occupied buildings, where responsibility may rest with a number of persons for each occupying organisation there are potential problems if evacuation plans and strategies are not co-ordinated. It is therefore important that duty holders co-operate and co-ordinate their evacuation plans for disabled

persons as part of their requirement under fire safety law to co-operate and co-ordinate aspects of fire safety.

Building features

Some building adaptation may facilitate evacuation and reduce the need for personal assistance. Fire safety measures such as fire compartmentalisation, automatic life safety suppression systems (such as sprinklers) and automatic fire detection may extend the time available for disabled people to make their own evacuation or leave with assistance.

Lifts

Purpose designed evacuation lifts and firefighting lifts have features and safeguards which may allow their use in the event of fire. Other lifts are not normally considered suitable for fire evacuation purposes.

Doors

Some people may have difficulty opening self-closing fire doors. These doors and their self-closing devices (including those that are normally held open by devices linked to the fire alarm system) should comply with the recommendations of the appropriate British Standard regarding opening and closing forces. Such doors are designed to hold back smoke and fire to protect the people in a building and facilitate their evacuation.

Doors which are fitted with automatic opening for accessibility may have the opening facility disengaged automatically in a fire situation by a link to the fire alarm system. This is likely to be the case where the door is a fire-door. This needs to be considered and disabled people informed that these doors, which they may normally be able to negotiate without difficulty, may pose a difficulty in the event of fire or operation of the fire alarm.

Open Risers

Open risers on stairs may not pose difficulty where the stair is being used for descent only, but when ascending a stair open risers on the stair can cause difficulty. Some people are at risk of trapping the toes of their shoes beneath projecting nosings and tripping as a result.

Stair Enclosure

The fire-resisting construction of escape stairs will offer protection to persons using the stair and this increases the available escape time. This reinforces the importance of building occupiers keeping self-closing fire doors in the closed position and observing good housekeeping practices.

Fire Compartmentalisation

Some buildings are divided into separate fire compartments and it may be possible to evacuate people horizontally through the building into another fire compartment and away from the emergency situation. Where such evacuation is not available on the affected floor it may be available on a lower floor and this may be more acceptable than travelling all the way to a ground floor designated exit point.

Temporary Waiting Space

Disabled people should not always be required to wait for the main flow of people to be completed. Where a person may need to rest, or they feel uncomfortable with people behind them, it may be appropriate to design a plan that allows resting in temporary waiting spaces provided along the route. However, if they are likely to cause obstruction to other people leaving the building it may be safer if they follow the main flow. A temporary waiting space (often described as a refuge) is an area that is separated from a fire by fire-resisting construction and provided with a safe route to a story exit, thus constituting a temporarily safe space for disabled persons.

People should not be left in a temporary waiting space to wait for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. A temporary waiting space can be used as a safe resting place as well as a place to wait during evacuation until the necessity for a full evacuation is established. A temporary waiting space may be equipped with a communication point.

Many temporary waiting spaces within stairs can accommodate only one wheelchair. This should not be a problem where there is more than one wheelchair user provided that there is a suitable evacuation strategy in place. As one person progresses on their journey the next person will take their place in the temporary waiting space.

Visitors to public buildings

Visitors to a building may fall into two categories: those that are invited to a building such as clients attending meetings with members of staff, as opposed to casual visitors who attend of their own volition. The system of standard plans can be presented to them on arrival by the reception service. Visitors should always be offered an evacuation plan, but staff should not be concerned if a person who has an apparent disability does not accept one. It is possible that the person is confident that they can make their own evacuation. This can be the case for wheelchair users. Plans should be provided in a manner which encourages people who have conditions such as asthma, heart disease, epilepsy or mental health problems to ask for assistance, if they wish to do so. Some people may have difficulty in evacuation situations that they would not have normally, such as people who have asthma may be affected in smoky conditions caused by a fire or people who might be affected by the stress of an emergency.

The approach should be to enable people to ask for a plan, when needed, without them feeling it will affect the provision of the service to them. Requesting a suitable evacuation plan should not result in a restricted use of the building. It is advised that a sign should be displayed at reception informing the public that there is a system of assisted evacuation for disabled visitors and that they should inform the receptionist of their individual requirements.

Managing reasonable adjustments

Disabled people are individuals with individual needs and each person should be treated accordingly. When developing a plan, there is often a tendency to over-play the safety issue to the detriment of the independence and dignity of disabled people. What a disabled person is prepared to do in exceptional circumstances may differ significantly from what they should reasonably manage in their everyday activities, especially if basic reasonable adjustments, such as those suggested below, have been made. Evacuation plans for disabled people should be prepared with the view that what is required is for 'the real thing' and should consider what is practical and achievable in exceptional circumstances. This level of effort required of a disabled person may not be acceptable for a practice or in everyday activities. This means that solutions, which may not be appropriate in most circumstances, could be used.

Some disabled people may have more than one impairment and their needs may be quite distinctly different. For example, a person with dual sensory impairment may have needs quite distinct from those solely with visual impairment or hearing impairment.

Mobility Impaired People

Issues relating to this group of people may also be relevant to people who have heart disease, asthma or heart conditions. The preferred options for evacuation by people with mobility impairment are horizontal evacuation to outside the building; horizontal evacuation into another fire compartment; or vertically by evacuation lifts, eventually arriving at a place of safety outside the building.

The ability to evacuate within a short timescale may not be possible. Many people will be able to manage stairs and be able to walk longer distances especially if short rest periods are built into the evacuation procedure. Reasonable adjustments such as suitable handrails to support them may be of great benefit though some people will only be able to use a handrail if it is on the side appropriate to them.

Evacuation chairs may be used to move people up or down stairs; however, timing and obstruction of escape routes for others are prime considerations if considering using this type of equipment for evacuation.

When writing a plan with someone who has a mobility impairment, or uses a wheelchair, the provision of reasonable adjustments and the following information should be considered:

- The provision of handrails on escape routes;
- Whether handrails are on one or both sides;
- The travel distance on particular routes;
- The provision and extent of fire compartments;
- The provision of evacuation chairs;
- The location of any lift that can be used in the event of a fire;
- Availability of staff assistance.

Questions to ask during an interview with a mobility impaired person may include:

- Can you walk aided or unaided down the stairs?
- How far can you walk unaided?
- Can you shuffle or slide down stairs?
- If so, how many flights can you manage, and would this be increased where assistance was made available?
- How many people would you need to assist you?
- How many times might you need to stop to rest?
- Would handrails be of use in assisting your evacuation?
- Are there positions along the escape route where aids might assist you?
- How might your mobility be worsened, such as by smoke, etc.?

Hearing Impaired People

It should not be assumed that a hearing-impaired person cannot discern the operation of the fire alarm sounders. However, some hearing impaired and deaf people will need to be alerted to the fact that an evacuation is in progress. Where the fire alarm has audible sounders, or a voice alarm system present they may not be able to discern the alarm, or any information being broadcast. If sound enhancement systems are provided within a building it may be possible to transmit the message through that system, such as a hearing loop or radio paging receiver.

Where other staff are appointed to alert hearing impaired or deaf people to the need to leave a building, they should be trained in deaf awareness. When checking building areas, responsible persons in each Board location should not rely on a vocal call and should be trained to physically check all areas for which they have responsibility.

Visually Impaired and Blind People

Good signage and other orientation aids will assist the evacuation of people who are visually impaired. Most visually impaired people have some sight and they may be able to use this during the evacuation in order to make their own way out of the building as part of the general exodus. Where the physical circumstances are appropriate they may have no problems leaving a building.

Using existing elements within the building may help a visually impaired person to facilitate their own evacuation: features of good building design with reasonable adjustments such as good colour contrasting; handrails on escape stairs; contrast to the nosings on the stair treads; markings on escape stairs; colour contrasted or different texture floor coverings on escape routes; or way finding information. Orientation aids, tactile information and audible signs may further reduce the need for assistance. Where audible signals are used, any potential interference by the fire alarm operation needs to be considered. Good colour definition and accessible signage will help visually impaired people to use a building. Extending these systems to include the escape routes can reduce the need for an assisted evacuation.

A person with dual sensory impairment may require a very different approach to that from someone who is blind because of the need to consider additional communication.

Where a person is assisted by a guide dog they may prefer for the dog to assist them out of the building. Others will prefer to take the responsibility away from the dog and request 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.

A visually impaired person may not easily locate exit signs or be aware of the travel direction to get out of the building, but they may remember their way out along the route that they entered the building. Using the escape routes as part of the general circulation space within the building will mean that visually impaired people will become more familiar with these routes and this may assist in the event of evacuation.

Visually impaired people may not be able to read the fire action notices provided in most buildings, as these are often in small typefaces. Instructions could be made available in Braille, large print or on audio-tape. It can be useful to provide a tactile map of the escape routes and to provide orientation training to visually impaired staff so that they are more aware of the options for evacuation.

Visually impaired people in particular may have difficulty on stairs with open risers and these should be avoided on escape routes. Where these are present then there may be a need for assistance or adaptations to the stairs to make them safer. Alternatively, a different stair may be available.

When any internal physical changes are made in a building, such as the construction of partitions or the rearrangement of office furniture, it is important that these changes are made known to visually impaired people in the building.

When writing a plan with someone who has a visual impairment, the following information should be considered:

- The type of fire alarm system available;
- Marking of escape routes;
- Orientation information;
- If fire instructions are in accessible formats;
- Whether escape routes and stairs have step edge markings;
- Provision of handrails on the escape routes and stairs;
- Whether stairs have open risers;
- Whether there are external open escape routes.

People with Cognitive Impairment

People with cognitive impairment often have problems comprehending what is happening in an evacuation or may not have the same perception of risk as non-disabled people.

It may not be possible to tell that a person has an impairment that affects their ability to orientate themselves around the building and staff should be aware of this and be tactful when assisting a person who may seem lost or unsure of what to do during an evacuation.

The key elements are staff awareness, having someone to help, familiarity with routes of travel and providing a simple to use built environment.

The most effective assistance is to have someone to help, but not every person with a cognitive impairment will have a support worker or assistant with them, so efforts should always be made to enable the disabled person to understand how to leave the building rather than assuming that a helper will take this role.

Practice of the route options can dramatically reduce the requirement for staff assistance. People with a learning difficulty may need to practice their routes for escape frequently, perhaps on a monthly basis. If so this should be written into their PEEP.

When writing a plan with someone who has a cognitive impairment, it may be as relevant to determine what they understand and to develop the plan based on how they will find the escape routes and what reasonable adjustments they may require. The following information should be considered:

- The type of fire alarm system available;
- Marking of the escape routes;
- Orientation information;
- Fire instructions provided in accessible formats;
- Step edge markings on the escape stairs;
- Handrails on the escape stairs;
- The need for two speed traffic on the stair and whether the stairs are wide enough to allow this;
- If stair risers are open;
- Whether there are external open escape routes.

Training

Training and further advice on any of the issues raised in this guidance is available from the Highland Council's Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team.

Please note: any member of staff identified as being able to assist in the transfer of people to/from evacuation chairs or any other kind of people moving, and handling exercise MUST attend an appropriate training course before responsibilities are finalised.

Evacuation Options

- Option 1. Use of a lift
- Option 2. Meet assistance at temporary waiting space
- Option 3. Meet assistance at work location
- Option 4. Make own way down stairs slowly
- Option 5. Shuffle or slide down stairs after main flow of people
- Option 6. Use an evacuation chair or similar (e.g. ski pad)
- Option 7. Carry down – 2 persons
- Option 8. Carry down – 3 persons
- Option 9. Carry down – 4 persons
- Option 10. Travel down in own chair with support
- Option 11. Cannot transfer readily from wheelchair
- Option 12. Travel down stairs using handrails
- Option 13. Assistance from 1 person
- Option 14. Assistance from 2 people
- Option 15. Orientation information
- Option 16. Tactile map of the building
- Option 17. Colour coding or contrasting on escape routes
- Option 18. Step edge markings
- Option 19. Needs to be shown the escape routes
- Option 20. Needs assistance for the person and their dog
- Option 21. Needs doors to be opened
- Option 22. Large print information
- Option 23. Identification of escape routes by reception or security staff
- Option 24. Flashing beacons
- Option 25. Buddy system
- Option 26. Vibrating pagers
- Option 27. Alternative communication system
- Option 28. Additional checks by fire wardens

- Option 29. Horizontal evacuation into another fire compartment
- Option 30. Phased evacuation
- Option 31. Taped information

Emergency Evacuation Questionnaire for employees with mobility or sensory difficulties

1. Who should complete this form and why?

This form should be completed by any employee with a disability or recovering from a long term injury who may require assistance during an emergency evacuation.

As your employer, the Board has a legal responsibility to protect you from risks and ensure your health and safety at work. In the event of an emergency (e.g. fire) we need to know if you require any assistance during an evacuation from the premises.

2. What will happen when you have completed the form?

If you need assistance, we will work out a “Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan” for you. To do this we will discuss the best ways of getting you out of the building in an emergency quickly and comfortably. We will involve you and your line manager and other relevant people in setting up a plan for you.

Name:

Job Title

Location:

Brief Description of duties:

LOCATION

1. Where are you based for most of the time? Please name: the building, the floor and the area:

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2. Will your job take you to more than one location in the building in which you are based?

YES NO

3. Will your job take you to different buildings?

YES NO

AWARENESS OF EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURES

4. Are you aware of any emergency evacuation procedures which operate in the building(s) in which you work?

YES NO

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

YES NO

EMERGENCY ALARM

6. Can you identify the fire alarm(s) provided in your place(s) of work during test procedures?

YES NO DON'T KNOW

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

YES NO DON'T KNOW

ASSISTANCE

8. Do you need assistance to get out of your place of work in an emergency?

YES NO DON'T KNOW

9. In an emergency, could you contact the responsible person in charge of evacuating the work area in which you work and tell them where you were located?

YES NO DON'T KNOW

GETTING OUT

10. Can you move quickly in the event of an emergency?

YES NO DON'T KNOW

11. Do you find stairs difficult to use?

YES NO DON'T KNOW

12. Are you a wheelchair user?

YES

NO

13. Do you have a sensory impairment?

YES

NO

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. The information you have given us will help you and your line manager complete your PEEP.

Please pass this completed questionnaire to your line manager.

Visitor Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP)

Building: _____

Location: _____

Name: _____

Visiting: _____

Handling/ Evacuation Risks

(i.e. hearing/vision impairment, behavioural/cognitive/ physical issues)

Designated Assistance

Name:
Location:

Name:
Location:

Designated Route (including temporary waiting place)

List Equipment and Handling method used to transfer into evacuation equipment:

Following an Evacuation

Handling method used to transfer out of evacuation equipment

Completed by: _____

Date: _____

Date of visit:	Time in:	Time out:
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Guidance on Fire Drills

Introduction

Fire drills should be carried out to check that staff understand the emergency fire action plan (including all relevant personal emergency egress plans), to ensure that staff are familiar with operation of the emergency fire action plan, to evaluate effectiveness of the plan and to identify any weaknesses in the evacuation strategy.

Frequency

The frequency of drills for each premises will be different and should reflect the level of risk. Where there is more than one escape route, the drills should assume conditions in which one or more of these are obstructed by smoke.

In small, low risk office premises, fire drills should be conducted once a year.

In larger office premises, or where premises are shared with other agencies, fire drills should be scheduled every 6 months.

Management of fire drills

Where there is the possibility that someone may misinterpret the fire drill and call the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, it may be appropriate to inform the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service prior to the commencement and on conclusion of a drill in order to alert it to the exercise and so prevent unnecessary attendance.

If the fire alarm system is connected to a remote alarm receiving centre, the responsible person in each of the Board's locations should inform the receiving centre, to ensure that the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service is not inadvertently called out to the premises, and inform the receiving centre when the fire drill has been completed.

Within each premises the fire drill evacuation should involve all occupants except those having a designated role such as the need to ensure the security of the premises, the safety of the occupants or where equipment or processes cannot be closed down for safety reasons.

The pre-planned procedure for checking that all persons have evacuated, should be carried out. In some cases, this will involve a roll call being carried out as soon as possible at the designated assembly point(s), noting any persons who are unaccounted for. In a fire evacuation this information would need to be passed to the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service on their arrival.

Throughout the fire drill, the person in charge and any nominated observers should pay particular attention to:

- Inappropriate actions such as stopping to collect personal items etc.;
- Difficulties experienced by people with disabilities;
- Communication difficulties with regard to the roll-call and establishing that everyone is accounted for;
- The use of frequently used routes instead of the nearest available escape routes;
- Difficulties with the opening of doors;
- Doors not being closed as people leave rooms.

Following the fire drill, a de-brief session should be held for those with specific fire duties in order to discuss positive actions and, if necessary, lessons learnt.

Record keeping

A record of each fire drill should be entered into the Fire Safety Log book along with any action points identified from the drill or de-brief session.

Monitoring and Review

The Assessor should monitor progress of Fire Drills at regular Management meetings.