

8. Golden Rules of Fire Safety

Ignition sources and combustible materials must be kept segregated as far as is practicable.

Combustible rubbish and waste must be well managed: not allowed to build up, and carefully stored until it is disposed of.

Internal storage - Waste bins should be emptied on a daily basis. Waste bins should not be located in stairwells or along escape routes.

External storage - Large capacity bins should be kept locked and secured in a designated space away from the buildings. Regular collections should be arranged. Skips should not be placed immediately adjacent to buildings. Ideally, they should be at least 6m away.

Combustible materials such as fabrics, paper/card artwork or mobiles, etc must never be hung from, or within 50cm, of light fittings or electrical equipment, e.g. white board projectors, or other sources of ignition, nor should they be allowed to hang/accumulate next to heating appliances.

Dangerous substances such as highly flammable liquids (e.g. petrol, turpentine, industrial alcohol and acetone), highly flammable gases (e.g. propane and butane, also known as LPG), oxidising chemicals (e.g. chlorine, sodium hypochlorite and calcium hypochlorite - used in swimming pools) and potentially explosive substances (e.g. some fertilisers) should be avoided where possible. Where a safer alternative is not available, the smallest amount necessary for the task should be used/stored on the premises.

Dangerous substances must be:

- Stored in locked fire-proof cabinets/stores displaying warning signs
- Stored away from sources of ignition and combustible materials
- Used in strict accordance with the manufacturer's instructions / information on the COSHH Data Sheet and COSHH Assessment or CLEAPSS Hazard.

LPG cylinders, both full and empty, must be stored in secure, well-ventilated enclosures outside the building. They must never be stored below ground level.

The emergency services must be informed where dangerous substances are stored on the premises.

More information on the storage of flammable liquids can be found [here](#).

Emergency routes and exits must be properly maintained to facilitate a quick and safe escape.

- They must be freely accessible and kept clear of obstructions at all times.
- Coats and bags should not be stored on fire exit routes, unless two-direction escape is available.
- Staircase enclosures should be maintained free of displays made of combustible materials, notice boards, furniture and storage of any combustible items at all times.
- Wall, ceiling-hung or free-standing **art work, displays** and **noticeboards** on escape routes should be inherently non-combustible (e.g. ceramics), treated to be non-combustible (indicate this by putting a discreet sign, e.g. red dot in bottom left hand

corner or art work) or encased in a Perspex or polycarbonate frame fixed to the walls at all four corners. There should be regular breaks in a long run of display to prevent fire flashing along the length of the escape route and preventing egress of the occupants. (The flame retardancy characteristics of materials used in displays can be checked by cutting off a small piece and trying to ignite it (in a safe place). If the fabric is safe to use then it will not ignite.)

Ideally, **photocopiers** and **laptops** (laptop storage and charging trolleys) should **not** be positioned on emergency exit routes. However if this is the only practical location for them, the following conditions must be met:

- There must be smoke detection within the corridor close to the photocopier / laptop;
- There should be no open displays boards, coats or any other combustibles in the vicinity of the cabinet;
- There should be a carbon dioxide fire extinguisher nearby;
- There should be an alternative route of escape from the area. If not the cabinet should not reduce the available width of the corridor by more than 1 metre (so that if there is smoke escaping from a fire within the photocopier/laptop, people can safely pass without being overcome by smoke) and the corridor width should still be sufficient for the number of people that might need to use it (see the Educational Premises Guide, page 68 for guidance on minimum widths).

Fire doors must not be propped, wedged or hooked open except with a 'hold open' device that allows the door to close fully into the frame when the fire alarm is activated. Doors in high fire risk areas, and leading directly onto and on 'primary escape routes' (e.g. staircases, dead end corridors etc.) must be fitted with a 'mag-log' or 'free-swing' type device connected to the fire alarm system. For doors not on 'primary escape routes', then 'Dorgard' or similar type devices may be used.

All **emergency exit doors** must be readily operable during times when the premises are occupied by the occupants' own unaided efforts. Final exit doors should be fitted with emergency exit type door furniture, easily operable from the inside without the aid of a key, but properly secure from the outside.

Staff and pupils must be informed of the importance of fire doors and fire door notices and to comply with the instructions given on the fire action notices.

Unless you are certain that the alarm is being tested, ALL instances of the fire alarm activating must be treated as if it were a real fire. **NEVER** presume it is a 'false' alarm.

Fire extinguishers and emergency **fire signage** must be clearly visible and not obstructed at all times.

Key employees, e.g. premises staff, catering staff and staff in science, DT and food technology, should be **trained to use fire extinguishers** and **fire blankets**. This training should be refreshed at regular intervals - at least every 5 years.