Fire Safety

Guidance

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Fire Safety

Contents

RobocodeUK Limited adheres to the same fire safety guidelines set out by the National Youth Agency below.

Fire safety should always be of paramount concern. Youth work organisations should ensure that all workers, volunteers and young people are aware of fire safety and evacuation procedures relevant and specific to the venue, setting and activity.

Fire risk assessment

Where a youth work organisation is responsible for a venue, a specific fire risk assessment must be carried out by a competent person and additional fire regulations must be followed. Where external venues or settings are used, youth work organisations should seek a copy of the venue's fire risk assessment and should familiarise themselves with any of the fire safety procedures in place. Fire risk assessments are often quite technical documents and venues may not share these in full, so it is acceptable that they communicate key findings of their fire risk assessment as a verbal, or better written, summary.

Fire risk assessments (FRA) follow the same five stage process as other risk assessments (see *Risk Assessment Process* for further information) and in some low risk environments, it might not be necessary to seek an expert to conduct the FRA. However, youth work organisations responsible for larger or more complex venues are likely to need additional expertise to conduct a FRA and this is often sought from external consultants.

Additional advice on fire risk assessments may be gained from your local fire service and on the Gov.uk website where examples and sector specific guidance is available for educational premises, accommodation, residential care, small to medium places of assembly and outdoor events and venues.
https://www.gov.uk/workplace-fire-safety-your-responsibilities/fire-risk-assessments

It is good fire safety practice to:

- Ensure that the risk of fire is considered prior to any youth work!
- Recognise that higher fire risk occurs during residential programmes because early signs of small fires may go unnoticed until they develop into something far more dangerous and significant.
- Fire risk may also increase during youth work activity such as cooking or manual work that produces sparks.
- Brief young people on the use of electrical items, including their own devices e.g. hair appliances, mobile phones, chargers, and any items at the venue such as kettles, heaters and fans and the potential fire risk from overloaded or faulty sockets and extension cables.
- Prohibit smoking, cooking or using candles or burning incense sticks in rooms or tents.
- Ensure that a venue's fire safety standards have been checked in advance.
- Formally brief all workers and young people to ensure all are aware of evacuation routes, assembly points and emergency procedures.
- Check that fire escape routes are clearly signed and are free of any obstructions.
- Consider the needs of all individuals in the group and ensure there is a plan for anyone who may need assistance during an evacuation, including those with sensory impairments.
- Check that smoke and carbon monoxide alarms are present and working. Consider equipping staff with spare alarms and/or batteries during residential activity.
- During residentials, if staying in a tall multi-story building, youth groups should stay on the lowest floors possible and not above the fifth floor to aid evacuation.
- Continually monitor fire risks at venues, recognising potential sources of ignition and flammable substances.

Fire drills

Workers should ascertain whether any drills are planned at the venue during its use. Workers may decide a practice drill is appropriate if specific risks or concerns exist regarding the group's understanding of procedures and should be arranged in consultation with venue staff. A practice drill should be conducted for any residential event, whereas a briefing of procedures, evacuation routes and muster points may be sufficient for day activities. Drills should include familiarisation of the sound of the alarm. Organisations must consider the needs of young people who may require additional support during an emergency evacuation, for example those with sensory impairments.

Fire extinguishers

Workers should familiarise themselves with and check the quantity, type, locations and inspection/service frequency of fire extinguishers present at a youth activity setting.
No single fire extinguisher is suitable to fight all fires and using the wrong extinguisher could literally add fuel to the fire! Therefore, a fire risk assessment should take into account the possible types of fire and have appropriate types of extinguisher present (see tables below). If a third party venue or setting is being used, youth work organisations should seek a specific fire risk assessment from the venue provider.

UK fire regulations state that a minimum of two Class A extinguishers (either water or foam) are required on each floor of a building. However, this is a guide only and a risk assessment should inform requirements. In many cases other extinguishers will also be required and may include:

- CO2 extinguishers to fight electrical fires
- Wet chemical extinguishers for use in kitchens to fight cooking oil fires
- Dry powder extinguishers if there is a risk of gas fires (i.e. boiler rooms)

Types of fire extinguisher & their uses:

Fire extinguishers are available in different types, with each one having specific fire classes that they are suitable for use on. Fire extinguishers meeting the current British Standards (BS EN3) should have a red body and an agent specific colour band, relating to the contents of the extinguisher.

Water	Foam	CO2	Dry Powder	Specialist Powder	Wet Chemical
Red	Cream	Black	Blue	Blue	Yellow
For use on: Class A	For use on: Class A Class B	For use on: Class B Electrical	For use on: Class A Class B Class C	For use on: Class D	For use on: Class A Class F
Used on Class A, solid fuel fires only. Not suitable for flammable liquids or electrical fires	Can be used for Class A and B fires. The foam agent helps to prevent re-ignition.	Used on electrical apparatus and flammable liquids. CO2 is not a conductor and does not leave behind any harmful residue. User should take care not to asphyxiate themselves	Can be used on Class A, B, C fires. Not recommended for use inside because there is a risk of inhalation. Can obscure vision and cause damage to goods and machinery.	Suitable for use on metal fires including lithium metal fires. Note: Lithium-ion batteries do not contain lithium metal but instead liquid electrolytes, therefore these are rated as class B fires.	For fires involving cooking fats and oils. They are most suitable for use in restaurants and kitchens. They usually have an additional class A rating.

Fire Classifications:

The fire classification system categorises fires into groups based on the type of fuel involved.

CLASS A: Solids such as paper, wood, soft furnishings and plastic.

CLASS B: Flammable liquids such as paraffin, petrol and oil.

CLASS C: Flammable gases such as propane, butane and methane

CLASS D: Flammable metals such as aluminium, magnesium and titanium

ELECTRICAL: Former Class E. Fires involving electrical apparatus including appliances in kitchens as

CLASS F: Cooking oils and fats

	well as computers, servers etc. 	

Fire extinguishers need to be immediately available for use at all times and therefore should be conspicuously positioned in accessible locations. They should be easily seen and positioned on escape routes close to room exits, corridors, stairways and landings to encourage people to move towards the exit rather than need to venture further into a building to find an extinguisher.

Extinguishers are often positioned near fire alarm points so that one can be collected and used at the point of raising the alarm and should be in a fixed position mounted on brackets, in floor stands or specialist cabinets and should be easily released if required.

Fire extinguishers should be located near to potential fire hazards such as kitchens and cooking facilities, or electrical hazards such as server rooms. However, they should not be positioned so close as to become inaccessible in the event of a fire or to place the operator at undue risk.

Fire extinguishers need to work straight away when required and therefore must not be tampered with or misused, for example using to prop open doors! They should also be subject to a maintenance and inspection schedule since beyond not working when required, a damaged or corroded extinguisher could burst and cause serious injury.

The Regulatory Fire Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 states that fire fighting equipment *"must be subject to a suitable system of maintenance and be maintained in an efficient state, in efficient working order and in good repair."*

All extinguishers should be subject to a monthly visual inspection and an annual basic service. Further extensive servicing should be undertaken either every five years or 10 years depending on the type of extinguisher. Servicing schedules should be recorded and evidenced on the extinguisher itself.

If workers identify that extinguishers are not present at an external venue, or if any other fire safety concerns exist, they should voice concerns and ask to see the setting's fire risk assessment. Workers should seek to establish whether the assessment has been carried out by a competent person and explicitly identifies risk and mitigations. If concerns persist, alternatives should be sought and/or further mitigating controls to manage the risk and comply with regulations should be agreed with the venue/setting.

Finally, workers should recognise that some young people may misuse fire extinguishers: where behavioural risk assessments identify this possibility, brief young people that this will result in disciplinary procedures as it may be a criminal offence.

Kitchen fire safety

Cooking will be necessary to support many youth programmes and, in many situations, the fire safety associated with this is managed by catering staff. This guidance is designed for occasions when youth work organisations are self-catering or when cooking is part of the programme and being conducted by young people themselves. For most youth work activity settings, kitchens present higher risk since sources of ignition and flammable substances are close together. More than 50% of accidental fires in the home are caused by cooking, and these are often when cookers and grills are left unattended.

Young people and supervision

Although cooking is for many adults a day-to-day activity that is conducted at home with little direct thought applied to safety, on youth work programmes with young people in less familiar settings, this must be more carefully controlled and supervised. An assessment should be made of the capability and maturity of the group(s) to cook safely and briefings should be given prior to any cooking activity.

Workers should ensure young people are aware of and able to follow evacuation procedures and young people should be briefed not to attempt to tackle a fire.

Organisations may consider the use of posters or notices to highlight fire safety information. Equipment such as deep fat fryers and/or liquid oil should ideally be removed from the kitchen to prevent use.

The following guidance will help reduce the risk of fire in kitchens and young people should always be briefed and supervised during cooking activities. See *Food Safety* for further information.

Safer cooking

Location:

- Separate sleeping accommodation from areas used for cooking and prohibit cooking within bedrooms or tents
- Use dedicated cooking facilities where they exist
- Do not adapt or improvise cooking equipment, or use equipment designed for outdoor use indoors e.g. BBQs or camping stoves

Cooker:

- Keep electrical leads from trailing over or going near the cooker
- Don't hang tea towels or cloths on or over the cooker to dry or to be out of the way
- Keep the oven, hob and grill clean. A build-up of fat or food can start a fire
- Use cooker or BBQ lighters rather than matches to light gas hobs or BBQ

Microwave:

- Don't put anything metallic inside the microwave
- Don't dry clothes in the microwave

Electrical:

- Keep electrical leads away from water
- Don't put a plant pot or anything wet on top of or above an electrical appliance
- Check the toaster is clean and positioned well away from curtains or other flammable materials
- Don't overload sockets; one plug per socket is the rule, especially if the appliance takes a lot of power e.g. a kettle

- Don’t run extension cables across the floor as they can become worn
- Don’t use damaged electrical items, sockets or extension cables

Electrical appliances:

- Don’t leave appliances such as washing machines or dishwashers on at night
- Don’t use the kettle if it leaks
- Portable appliances should have electrical safety tests (PAT) where appropriate. Don’t use broken electrical appliances or ones with damaged/worn cables

Ventilation

- Make sure there is adequate ventilation during all cooking activity

Protection

- Ensure there is a working smoke alarm
- Fire extinguishers and a fire blanket(s) should be in place

Cooking Safely

An important safety point when cooking is to avoid being distracted since most kitchen fires occur when things are left unattended.

- Pans should be taken off the heat if the person cooking needs to leave the room
- Double check the cooker is off after use. Turn electrical cookers off at the wall
- Saucepan handles should be turned so they don’t stick out where they can be accidentally knocked, and aren’t over another hot ring
- Keep the oven door shut
- Oven gloves or tea towels should not be put down on the cooker after use
- Always clean the grill pan after use
- Tie long hair back and avoid wearing light loose fitting clothing that may easily catch fire
- Deep fat fryers should not be used by young people
- Avoid cooking with lots of oil. Consider use of oil sprays as an alternative to liquid oil

In the event of a kitchen fire

Caution is advised in the event of a kitchen fire not to take additional risks. If it is safe to do so, small fires might be prevented from growing with a dedicated fire blanket, by switching off gas / electricity and closing doors but the venue should be evacuated and the fire service called without delay.