

Fire safety in village halls

This information sheet aims to help village hall management committees understand their legal responsibilities under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.



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INTRODUCTION

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 applies to England and Wales and will take effect on 1st October 2006. It reforms current fire safety laws and covers general fire precautions and other fire safety duties in non-domestic property. The Order requires:

- the appointment of a ‘competent person (s)’
- a fire safety ‘risk assessment’ and
- requires fire precautions to be put in place where necessary and where it is reasonable and practical to do so.

The Fire and Rescue Authority will be responsible for enforcing the Order and will inspect premises and undertake audits of fire risk assessments. However they will target their resources at premises that are deemed to be high risk e.g. those that are considered to be a high risk to people and the community (such as night clubs) and not those that are well constructed, well managed and have adequate prevention measures in place and therefore considered low risk.

This information sheet aims to help village hall management committees to understand their responsibilities under the Order and to explain the basics of fire risk assessment. We hope that it will help many village hall committees appreciate that this is something which can be achieved “in house”, without having to bear unnecessary additional costs. However, **it is not an exhaustive guide to fire safety and ACRE recommends that expert advice from the local fire authority should be sought in the case of any uncertainty.** Full government guidance is available and details are listed under Sources of further information at advice at the end of this Information Sheet.



1. What are the responsibilities of the village hall management committee?

The main emphasis under the 2005 Order is towards reducing the risk of fire and preventing fire.

1.1 The responsible person

The village hall management committee will, as the body in control of the premises, be the 'responsible person'. The responsible person is responsible for complying with the Order and is required to either carry out a fire risk assessment and then take the necessary steps to reduce or remove the risk so that it is as low as possible, or delegate this task to somebody else. The responsible person must appoint one or more 'competent persons' (who can be committee members) to undertake the risk assessment and carry out any of the preventative and protective measures required. A competent person is someone with enough training and experience or knowledge and other qualities to be able to implement these measures properly. (A village hall committee member who knows the building and the use made of it could probably be judged to have enough 'knowledge and other qualities' if provided with information about companies servicing the hall's fire protection equipment, maintenance schedules, fire officer's contact details and previous advice and this information sheet.) There is no requirement to undertake a training course. However, some ACRE Network members may be able to arrange for the local fire authority to talk to a group of village hall management committees to provide an advice session.

A competent person is someone with enough training and experience or knowledge and other qualities to be able to implement these measures properly.

If the hall is large and particularly busy then two people could be appointed to take joint responsibility, which will lessen the burden on an individual.

Having carried out the risk assessment the appointed person needs to:

- communicate clearly with the rest of the committee (see below)
- ensure that the hall and necessary fire protection equipment is maintained in an efficient state and in good working order and repair by a competent person and in accordance with any manufacturers instructions.

The appointed person needs to make sure that the whole

committee are consulted and informed with regard to fire safety matters but in particular:

- provide appropriate instruction in the use of equipment
- ensure the committee are aware of any risks identified and the measures taken to reduce the risk
- ensure the committee are aware of any proposals for improving fire precautions
- the presence of dangerous substances and the risk to users of the premises
- the agreed system for contacting the emergency services and evacuating the building if necessary
- to ensure that the committee co-operate with each other to keep the hall safe from fire and its effects and do not do anything that places themselves, other people or the hall at risk .

The village hall management committee needs to co-operate with the appointed person to ensure that the hall and its users are safe from fire and its effects.

1.2 Risk Assessment

There is a recommended method of carrying out a fire risk assessment and putting in place fire safety management procedures and arrangements which are set out in the Government's guide 'Fire safety risk assessment for small and medium places of assembly'. There is no obligation to follow their recommendations but the hall must meet equivalent standards of fire safety. **See section 3.**

1.3 New halls

If the hall is new (or has been significantly altered) it will, under building regulations, have been designed, installed and constructed to take into account fire detection and warning arrangements, escape routes and facilities for the fire and rescue service. It will not, however, have been inspected by the local fire authority. ACRE suggests that in this situation the hall committee ensures that they have discussed with their Architect all aspects of fire safety including issues such as the operation of any installations and capacity of hall with regard to those attending events.

The committee and the responsible person can then carry out a risk assessment using the architect's advice and the government guidance. If the committee do not feel able to do this without expert advice then they should contact their local rural community council or the local fire authority who may be able to recommend a local company that would be willing to carry out a initial risk assessment. Future risk assessments can then be carried out by the committee using the initial one as a guide.

1.4 Can we ignore the Order?

It is not an option to do nothing in the belief that the hall is 'low risk' and won't be inspected anyway; it is an offence not to comply with the Order. If an inspection were to be carried out to check that the hall is complying with the Order written evidence of the risk assessment and the steps taken to deal with any findings will be required.

It is not enough to do nothing in the belief that the hall is low risk and won't be inspected anyway.

1.5 Responsibility to hirers

Village hall management committees have a responsibility to ensure that hirers are aware of the fire safety regulations and appoint a person to take responsibility at the event. Hirers be should fully instructed with regard to fire procedures and the use of equipment. Where there is an annex or a room in the building that is used under an occupational licence, or other similar agreement, clear guidelines need to be laid down so that both parties co-operate to reduce and control fire risks. If there is no phone at the premises, this should be pointed out to hirers and they should be encouraged to bring a mobile, in case of emergencies.

It is suggested that the village hall management committee could hold an open evening for regular hirers to explain the hall's fire safety procedures and use of equipment, with an annual review immediately after each AGM to explain them to new committee members and advise of any changes.

2. Carrying out a fire risk assessment in your hall

A risk assessment, as explained in detail in **ACRE's Village Hall Information Sheet 15, Health and safety legislation and village halls**, is “nothing more than a careful examination of what could cause harm to people, so that you can weigh up whether you have taken enough precautions or should do more to prevent harm”. The Government’s fire guidance confirms this: “a fire risk assessment is an organised and methodical look at your premises, the activities carried on there and the likelihood that a fire could start and cause harm to those in and around the premises”. The guidelines for risk assessment in this information sheet have been based on the government guidance.

Many halls may have already carried out a risk assessment either for health & safety and/or insurance purposes. This should be cross checked with the findings on your fire risk assessment to check whether any findings identified in those assessments could involve the risk or spread of fire.

The aims of the fire risk assessment are:

- to identify the fire hazards
- to reduce the risk of those hazards causing harm to as low as reasonably practicable
- to decide what physical fire precautions and management arrangements are necessary to ensure the safety of people in the premises if a fire does start.

The five steps of a fire risk assessment are:

- identify fire hazards
- identify people at risk
- evaluate, remove, reduce and protect from risk
- record, plan, inform, instruct and train
- review.

2.1 Identify fire hazards

For a fire to occur it needs three things: fuel, a source of ignition and oxygen. If these three potential hazards can be kept apart, removed or reduced then the risk of a fire is minimised.

All halls will contain ignition/heat sources, some are obvious such as cooking equipment and naked flames (candles or gas or liquid-fuelled open-flame equipment). Others will require more forethought, such as checking for faulty or misused electrical equipment, light fittings, central heating boilers or even portable room heaters.

It is also important to ensure that users of the hall are aware of any smoking policy and that youth groups using portable cooking appliances are doing so in a safe manner.

There are many sources of fuel but the most obvious in a hall may be:

- flammable liquids such as LPG, cleaning materials and alcohol (spirits) if there is a bar, central heating oil/gas
- upholstered seating, soft furnishings, foam filled furniture or foam exercise mats
- scenery, costumes, banners, Christmas or party decorations, displays and stands
- packaging for stationery and foodstuffs
- litter and waste.

It is also necessary to be aware of any materials used in the construction of the building that might contribute to the spread of fire. This is most relevant in older buildings.

In most buildings there will be a combination of ways in which oxygen is introduced or extracted to and from the building. This will be by mechanical means such as air conditioning units or naturally through doors, windows and other openings. Some chemicals can provide extra oxygen for fires and should be marked accordingly. Oxygen cylinders and fireworks are another source but these are unlikely to be found in halls.

It is necessary to be aware of any materials used in the construction of the building that might contribute to the spread of fire.

2.2 Identify people at risk

As part of your risk assessment you need to identify any people who may be on the premises either attending activities and events or organising them. In particular:

- hirers of the hall who will not be as familiar with the premises as the committee
- the caretaker or cleaner who may be alone in the premises
- children
- people with disabilities, or frail elderly people
- people who may have been attending a party and consumed alcohol which impairs senses
- people/neighbours in the immediate vicinity of the hall.

2.3 Evaluate, remove, reduce and protect from risk

Evaluate

Firstly, it is necessary to evaluate the chance of a fire occurring, which will be low if you take care to ensure that the ignition sources and fuel are kept apart. Look critically at the building and try to identify accidents waiting to happen such as mobile heaters being knocked over or omissions such as an incorrectly maintained electrical appliance, which might allow a fire to start. Also don't forget to look out for anything that may present an opportunity for an arsonist.

Secondly, evaluate the risk to people in or near the premises so that they would be able to make a safe escape in the event of fire. Some situations to consider:

- the fire starting in the main hall which could affect many people
- if the fire starts on the lower floor are there adequate escape routes for those on the upper floor and disabled people in particular?
- fire developing in a space that people have to pass through to escape
- fire spreading through ventilation systems, damaged partition walls or even incorrectly installed fire doors or fire doors that are wedged open
- fire starting in a small storage or service room where there may be combustible goods or hazardous materials.

Remove, reduce and protect

Having identified the hazards and evaluated the chance of a fire occurring it is necessary to take all the necessary actions to remove or reduce the risks and protect the hall and people as far as is practically and reasonably possible.

In order to do this you need to work through your list of identified hazards i.e. those sources of fuel and ignition that you have identified and decide how they can best be removed or minimised. For instance:

- ensure regular portable appliance tests (PAT) and 5-yearly inspections are carried out on all electrical systems
- operate a no smoking policy (see section 5)
- replace or repair damaged furniture where foam may be exposed
- ensure that storage space is kept tidy and rubbish thrown away after each hiring
- correct storage of cleaning fluids
- allow Christmas or party decorations only in specified locations which have been identified as low risk
- use of candles is not recommended

Next you need to ensure that you have adequate fire detection and warning systems in place and that escape routes enable people to exit the building as speedily as possible to a place of safety.

Detection Systems

The level of fire protection should be proportional to the risk and to the safety of people in the premises. The higher the risk of fire and risk to life the higher the standards of fire protection will need to be. If your hall holds a recent fire certificate, or has been inspected by the fire authority and no material changes to the building have been made or extensive work has recently been carried out then it can be assumed that adequate protection is in place. If your hall is a new building it will be necessary to ensure that the architect's advice has been sought in relation to the operation of fire installations and capacity of the building and that the government guidance is carefully followed. If in any doubt it is best practice to consult the local fire

authority.

An effective means of detecting fire and warning people quickly of a fire is a simple shout or a manually operated sounder such as a rotary gong, whistle or air horn. However this is only suitable in a small hall where it can be heard clearly by everybody when operated from a single point.

In larger halls where an alarm is unlikely to be heard throughout the building an electrical system incorporating sounders and manually operated call points is likely to be required. This type of system can be used where all parts of the building are occupied at the same time and it is unlikely that a fire could start without somebody noticing it quickly. However, where there are unoccupied (for instance backstage areas) or common corridors and circulation space (foyers) where a fire could develop and affect escape routes, an automatic fire detection system with a control panel may be necessary. This type of system can identify the zone or specific location where the alarm has been raised.

If you are not sure whether your system is adequate take expert advice.

Fire fighting equipment and facilities

Fire fighting equipment can reduce the risk of a small fire developing into a large one and should be provided in all halls. All equipment provided to safeguard the safety of people using the hall should be regularly checked and maintained by a competent person in accordance with any relevant standards and manufacturers recommendations. This commonly involves a combination of regular visual checks by a responsible person plus a cycle of less frequent inspections by a contractor.

Extinguishers can be supplied by a contractor who will be able to advise on what is appropriate for your hall.

Emergency escape lighting

There must be a method with adequate lighting for people in the hall to be able to find their way to a place of safety in the event of fire. Where an escape route is internal and without windows, or the hall is likely to be used in periods of darkness, including early winter darkness, then some form of back up to the normal escape route lighting is likely to be needed.

Extinguishers can be supplied by a contractor who will be able to advise on what is appropriate for your hall.

In some small halls where escape routes are straight forward, borrowed lighting, such as street lamps that illuminate escape routes can be used. In larger halls that have a number of rooms and therefore different exit points a more comprehensive system of electrical automatic emergency escape lighting will be needed to illuminate all the escape routes.

Note: Depending on the types of equipment various checks may be needed weekly, monthly or annually. Exact details of what is required can be obtained from the various manufacturers and installers.

Escape routes

Once a fire has started, been detected and a warning given, everyone should be able to escape to a place of total safety as quickly as possible along a recognisable escape route which has been protected wherever possible by the necessary equipment. In a village hall this is unlikely to involve corridors and staircases but an orderly progression to the front or rear of the building hall to the fire exits is necessary.

The hall management committee should take into account the following when considering the fastest and safest way of moving people out of the hall:

- the age and construction of the hall
- that adequate exit points (normally two that are independent of each other) is clearly marked and not obstructed in any way
- that the route to the exits is clearly marked
- the number, age and abilities of people likely to be using the hall
- corridors (and stairways) that form part of an escape route should be clear and free of hazards
- items that may be a source of fuel or an ignition risk should not be left in a corridor i.e. building materials or play equipment
- exit doors should normally open in the direction of travel and be easy and quick to open without a key
- the location of the assembly points away from the fire in relation to the fire exits.

Escape routes need managing to ensure that they are maintained in a usable state at all times when the hall is in use.

Signs and notices

Signs must be used where necessary to help people identify escape routes, find fire fighting equipment and emergency fire telephones. These signs are required under the Health & Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) regulations 1996 and must comply with the provisions of those Regulations. Signs have to be in pictogram form but can have text as well. Safety signs must not be text only.

In a very small, one room hall it may be acceptable to suggest that the person hiring the hall (and those attending the activity) are sufficiently aware of the hall and its layout. Also that escape routes or that escape routes and fire fighting equipment are readily apparent and visible so that they do not need signage. However the fire authorities are unlikely to look favourably on a risk assessment that determines no escape signs are required.

Notices must be positioned so that they can be easily seen and understood and where necessary provide the following information:

- instructions on how to use any fire safety equipment
- the actions to be taken in event of fire
- help for fire and rescue services e.g. location of sprinkler valves or electrical cut-off switches.

2.4 Record, plan, inform, instruct and train

Record

Village halls must record the findings of their fire risk assessment and the actions that have been or need to be taken to remove any risks. This will satisfy the fire authority, that a suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment has been carried out, if you are called upon to do so. Even where a hall does not have a premises licence or five or more employees it is good practice to keep records.

This need not be more than a few sheets of paper and could take the form of a simple list supported by a plan of the premises. The plan could show where fire extinguishers, emergency lighting, fire signs are located as well as indicating areas that should be regularly checked. There is not one correct way of doing this.

Village halls must record the findings of their fire risk assessment and the actions that have been or need to be taken to remove the risk.

Plan

An emergency plan is needed in case of a fire or suspected fire so that everyone on the premises is aware that there is a fire and the premises can be evacuated quickly and safely.

The plan should be available to the village hall management committee and all users of the hall. In halls with simple layouts a fire action notice setting out the steps to be taken is adequate. In complex halls the plan may need to be more detailed and involve co-operation with other users, particularly where they occupy part of the premises on a permanent basis. The responsible person should ensure the co-ordination of the plan i.e. ensure that everyone knows what it is!

Inform, instruct and train

This step is simply ensuring that everybody involved in the management and use of the hall is aware of how to prevent fires and what to do if there is a fire. Fire action notices should be on display in the hall for members of the public attending events and activities.

Your plan should be based on the findings from your risk assessment and should include:

- the measures that have been put in place to reduce the risk
- what users should do if there is a fire
- the identity of the person who has been nominated as the responsible person
- any special arrangements relating to the hall.

In reality this would mean drawing the attention of hirers to the fire procedures and in particular how to escape safely from the building. This can be done through use of the hall's hire agreement. Hirers will also need to be aware of a number of issues in relation to fire, which are listed below. It is not necessary to hold formal training sessions or to undertake accredited courses. Information can be passed on either individually or on a group basis, perhaps by holding an open evening and inviting the local fire officer along to explain and demonstrate the use of the extinguishers.

Important information for hirers:

- what to do if you discover a fire

- how to raise an alarm and what happens after that
- procedures for alerting members of the public and visitors and where appropriate diverting them to exits
- the arrangements for calling the fire and rescue service
- the evacuation procedures to reach the assembly point
- the location and use of fire fighting equipment
- location of the escape routes
- how to open emergency exit doors
- the importance of keeping doors closed to prevent the spread of fire, heat and smoke
- if necessary, how to isolate power supplies in the event of fire
- the safe use of any highly flammable and explosive substances
- the reasons for not using lifts in a fire
- the importance of general fire safety.

For the average village hall following the steps in this information sheet for fire risk assessment is sufficient

The most important thing that all village hall management committees need to ensure is that all those attending an event in the hall reach a safe assembly point as quickly as possible. This can be achieved by ensuring that the person running the activity or event knows exactly what to do in the event of a fire.

2.5 Review

The village hall management committee needs to monitor what is going on in the hall so that any alterations to the fire process and procedures can be taken into account and fire risk assessments kept up to date. A review may be necessary if there are:

- substantial changes to the building including the structure, internal layout, fixtures and fittings
- changes to storage arrangements i.e. what is being stored and the level of risk in storing it – is it hazardous?
- a significant increase in the number of people attending an activity and the presence of people with some form of disability.

Another good reason to review the fire arrangements would be due to failures of the fire detection systems such as any alarms that may be in the building.

Remember that any changes to the risk assessment will have consequences for the users and hirers of the hall. They will need to be notified of all changes so don't make changes for trivial items that do not introduce a hazard.

Appendix A is a periodic fire safety checklist. It might be useful to run through this list at village hall management committee meetings to ensure that everything is in order. The list is not intended to be used as your full fire risk assessment.

2.6 Fire Safety Policy

For the average village hall following the steps in this information sheet for fire risk assessment is sufficient. Regular checks to ensure that safety standards identified in the fire risk assessment can be carried out alongside the hall's health and safety policy. However large, busy halls may decide to have a separate fire safety policy. The policy will demonstrate clearly and concisely the fire safety arrangements that the village hall management committee has in place. It should contain a statement of intent, a section outlining the organisation of fire safety and it should detail the specific measures that will be used to carry out the objectives of the policy and site specific practices. Fire authorities will often provide model fire safety policies.

3. Useful tips for village hall committees

ACRE and the RCC network works closely with halls and the following suggestions have been received from advisers across the country. They may be of use to your hall when looking at fire safety issues:

- It has been suggested that village hall management committees include an A4 precis of their fire risk assessment and a copy of the plan along with the conditions of hire for the hall. Hirers would then be asked to sign to confirm they had read the précis and understand the fire procedures in the hall. This would fulfil the requirement of the village hall management committee to inform hirers of the risk from fire.
- Ensure that someone has a fully charged mobile at the hall in order to call fire services if necessary.
- Have a checklist for hirers before they admit the public

and at the end of the function. See example at Appendix B.

Fire Officers warn that over time, bad management practices can create hazards and advise committees to look out for the following:

- Fire doors propped or held open with door wedges and cabin hooks. 95% of people killed in fires are killed by smoke, so closing fire doors is vitally important. If a fire door is a nuisance consult the fire authority about whether an automatic closure system can be installed.
- Rubbish accumulation and storage of flammables, especially in boiler rooms where there is an ignition source. Get rid of rubbish!
- Stage curtains are a significant risk and should be fire retardant. This can be done by volunteers or when curtains are cleaned. Smaller, window curtains are less of a risk.
- The impact of any changes to the hall need to be considered with regard to fire safety. For example, do not put a wooden shed containing paint next to a fire escape route; will a new gate affect an escape route? Holes in walls will allow smoke transfer.
- The committee needs to make sure that:
a routine is in place for unlocking any locked doors or external gates which form fire escape routes every time the hall is used booking secretaries do give hirers fire safety instructions maintenance checks are regular i.e. that equipment works and electrical, gas and boiler inspections are kept up to date.
- Capacity figures are worked out on the basis of number and size of exits i.e. how quickly people can escape from a building, but for comfort allow 0.5m² per person dancing and 1m² per person sitting.

Fire Officers warn that over time, bad management practices can create hazards.

4. Smoking Regulations

All enclosed public places and work places in England became smoke free on 01 July 2007. The legislation applies to 'enclosed' or 'substantially enclosed' premises that are open to the public or that are used as a place of work by more than one person, and/or where members of the public may attend and/or receive or provide goods or services.

No- smoking signs must be displayed that meet the requirements of the law. The draft regulations require all non-smoking premises to display signs:

- equivalent to A5 size in area, carrying the international no-smoking symbol and words such as, 'No smoking: It is against the law to smoke in these premises'. Alternative phrasing such as 'this village hall' instead of 'these premises' is permitted.
- a no-smoking sign that, as a minimum, displays the international no-smoking symbol at a minimum of 70mm diameter, at entrances to smoke-free premises that:
are for staff only, or are located within other smoke-free premises

Further guidance is available from www.smokefreeengland.co.uk. Signs can be downloaded and printed or ordered from this website or from the Smokefree England information line on 0800 169 1697.

Village hall committees need to consider solutions to the cigarette litter caused by smoking outside. Purpose made wall mounted cigarette bins are available for sale. These reduce the risk of on site fire associated with smoking outside and avoid unsightly cigarette ends in the car park. As a minimum, a bucket with sand should be provided.

5. Previous legislation

5.1 Fire Precautions Act 1971 – Fire Certificates

This Act did not apply to most village or community halls. Where a fire certificate was issued under this Act it is no longer applicable although the conditions contained in it may have provided a baseline on which the village hall management committee based their own risk assessment.

5.2 Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations 1997 as amended 1999

A number of halls may have undertaken fire risk assessments under the above regulations which should have been regularly reviewed. A review may have been carried out under the Order and will have covered the basic requirements of fire risk assessment.

5.3 Disability Discrimination Act 1995

Village hall management committees have a duty to make all reasonable arrangements for people with disabilities who are using the hall. This includes ensuring that ramps and doors are the correct width for wheelchair users and are not marked as fully accessible if they are not.

5.4 Licensing Act 2003 and earlier licensing legislation

Halls which held Public Entertainment Licences (PEL) and/or Theatre Licences will have had conditions relating to fire safety attached to their Licence(s) which would have resulted in regular inspections and the installation of fire safety equipment. PELs were replaced by Premises Licences under the Licensing Act 2003. Fire and Rescue Authorities are classed as one of the responsible authorities under the Licensing Act and receive copies of applications for Premises Licences. They may inspect premises that are considered to be a risk to people and the community.

Appendix A

Periodic fire safety checklist

This is not intended to take the place of a fire risk assessment, but should be used as a means of ensuring that safety standards, established after the fire risk assessment, are being maintained. It might be appropriate to run over the list at the time of committee meetings, provided they are held at least once a quarter.

- Has the structural fire resistance been impaired by alterations and repairs?
- Have any alterations or repairs been planned, or carried out, which might affect the fire resistance?
- Have any improvements or decorating been planned, or carried out, that might affect flame spread characteristics of surface linings?
- Have any furniture, curtains or drapes been brought in, or are going to be delivered, that need consideration of their flammability properties?
- Are curtains clear of the ground?
- Are the self-closing mechanisms of fire doors operating and closing the doors properly?
- Are emergency exit push-bar devices functioning correctly?
- Are fire exits and escape routes clearly marked and illuminated?
- Are the lighting, and emergency lighting, systems adequate and functioning correctly?
- Is an approved seating plan on display?
- Is the means of ensuring that the maximum permitted number of people entering the hall is not exceeded, operating?
- Are the gangway limits being adhered to?
- Are floor coverings and stair nosings in good condition?

- Has the electrical equipment and supply been professionally checked?
- Has the chimney been swept?
- Has the fire fighting equipment been serviced?
- Has the detection system and battery been checked?
- Has the sprinkler system been checked?
- Are the smoking rules being adhered to?
- Is stage scenery being checked for flammability?
- Are the areas open to the public, free of combustible stores?
- Is rubbish being kept safely and removed frequently?
- Are the security measures functioning?
- Do all committee members know how to use the fire fighting equipment?
- Are there any hazards anticipated or overlooked?

Appendix B

Checklist for hirers

Before admission of the public

1. All exit doors are unlocked, any fastenings removed, and the push-bar mechanism tested and in good working order.
2. Any door on an escape route not opening in the direction of travel and any sliding door, are locked in the open position.
3. Escape routes are free from obstruction and available for use.
4. Any fire doors are closed and not wedged or propped open.
5. Fire fighting equipment is in place and unobstructed.
6. Guards are fixed in front of open fires.
7. Any freestanding stoves or heaters are fixed in position.
8. There is no combustible storage in areas open to the public.
9. Manual fire alarm is operable or power is on to electrical alarm.
10. Exit signs are illuminated.
11. There is no obvious fire hazard in, or near, the building.

End of function

12. Search for smouldering fires or cigarettes left burning.
13. Check that heaters and cookers are turned off.
14. Check that all electrical appliances are turned off and unplugged.
15. Turn out all lights.
16. Close all internal doors.
17. Secure all outside doors and windows.

Sources of further information and advice

ACRE and its Network provides an information and advice service for village hall management committees through its network of village hall advisers. A link to the village hall advisers is available on the ACRE website www.acre.org.uk

ACRE produces a range of village hall publications and information sheets to support this service which are available from your local ACRE member.

ACRE publications that may be of interest to readers of this information sheet are listed below:

- Information Sheet 15:
Health & Safety legislation and village halls
- Information Sheet 38:
Short guide to security in your hall
- Information Sheet 35:
Trustee liability and trustee indemnity insurance
- Maintaining your hall

Guide No. 6 'Fire safety risk assessment in small and medium places of assembly', ISBN 13 978 1 85112 820 4, is available from your local Health & Safety Office or to order online from www.hse.gov.uk. Publication can also be downloaded from the internet at www.firesafetyguides.communities.gov.uk

Useful contacts

The Chief Fire Officers Association

9-11 Pebble Close Amington
Tamworth Staffordshire
B77 4RD

www.cfoa.org.uk

01827 302300

The Fire Protection Association

London Road Moreton in Marsh
Gloucestershire GL56 ORH

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