Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS
NHS Foundation Trust

Fire Policy Practice Guidance Note			
Active Fire Precautions within Trust Premises – V02			
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1   Introduction

1.1   The fire protection measures in a building are vitally important in the continuing pursuit of safety from fire within Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust (the Trust) premises. Even though smoking is now forbidden in most public areas and places of work, the risk of fire is still very real.

1.2   The purpose of this Practice Guidance Note (PGN) is to set out specific guidelines to enable the Trust to be assured that the fire prevention measures in buildings is clearly understood by Trust employees.

2   Scope

2.1   This PGN together with any associated procedures and guidance notes, shall be observed by all employees of the Trust and is applicable to responsible persons and their nominated deputies

3   Statement

3.1   The Trust are committed to effective management and control of fire safety in order to reduce the risks to patients, staff, visitors and members of the public.

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Fire Practice Guidance Notes form part of the Estates Departments approach to managing health and safety and it is expected that staff will follow the guidance contained within them unless there is a compelling reason to deviate from it. Such reasons should be documented whenever the circumstance occurs and notified to the Head of Estates so that modifications to future editions can be made if necessary

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3.2   The Fire Safety Advisors will actively assist all responsible persons in ensuring the fire risk assessment is carried out satisfactory manner.

4   Types of Active fire protection

4.1   Active or Passive

4.1.1   Passive fire protection is built into the fabric of the building and helps to make up the framework of the building. Active fire measures can include fire extinguishers and fire alarm systems. They are additions to a building to add extra protection and to help prevent a small fire escalating into a larger uncontrollable fire.

4.2   Active fire precautions:

4.2.1   Active fire precautions are the supply and provision of appropriate and cost-effective equipment installed either permanently or in a portable capacity to provide a measure of protection in the event of fire. Active fire precautions are designed to detect fires and to counteract them. They include:

- Fire alarm systems
- Emergency lighting
- Fire fighting equipment
- Water delivery systems
- Suppression systems
- Fire dampers
- Smoke containment and dispersal systems

4.2.2   The overall aim of active fire precautions is to:

- Detect the fire at an early stage
- Assist in implementing evacuation
- Alert the emergency services
- Control the movement of smoke and fire
- Suppress or starve the fire of oxygen and fuel

4.2.3   There are many active fire measures available but the measures likely to be found in Trust premises are fire alarm systems, emergency lighting, fire fighting equipment and suppression systems in more modern buildings.

4.2.4   Good fire safety management procedures should allow for the required reaction from staff if alerted by the fire alarm system. All staff should familiarise themselves with the various types of active fire precautions in their workplace and know what to do if such fire precautions are activated.

4.3   Fire alarm systems

4.3.1 There are many types of fire alarm system in use today but all have the same purpose – to alert people to the possibility of fire.

4.3.2 In Trust premises the fire alarm system will normally consist of a continuous alarm sound (either siren or bell) in the area affected or where the alarm has been actuated and an intermittent alarm sound in other areas to warn staff that an incident is occurring elsewhere. The location of the activated alarm can be found by looking at the fire alarm panel.

4.3.3 In some areas of the Trust, a flashing amber beacon will also denote that the fire alarm is actuating in another area of the site or hospital and that any available staff should locate the incident and assemble at that area in case assistance is required.

4.4 Emergency and escape lighting

4.4.1 Again there are many different types of escape and emergency lighting systems but all have the same purpose – to assist in reaching a place of safety.

4.5 Emergency lighting

4.5.1 Situated in areas of a building to provide adequate lighting should the normal power supply fail.

4.6 Escape lighting

4.6.1 Situated in areas of a building to provide adequate lighting on escape routes and final exits to lead from the building to a place of ultimate safety.

4.6.2 Emergency lighting is either maintained or non-maintained:

- **Maintained** - illuminated constantly in circulation areas
- **Non-maintained** - will remain dormant in circulation areas until there is a power failure at which point it will illuminate

4.6.3 These lights can be decorative to blend in with the ambience of the area or a standard design. They are subject to testing on a regular basis to ensure their operative status.

4.6.4 Escape lighting will normally be maintained on escape routes and final exits to provide constant lighting cover and may incorporate fire signage as part of the light or have directional signage nearby. They are also situated externally outside final exits.

Internal emergency light   Decorative light   External exit light

Variations of escape lighting units

Variations of escape lighting units

4.7 Fire fighting equipment

4.7.1 Fire fighting equipment is covered in a separate guidance note and also in the fire safety guidance document. Practical use of fire extinguishers and fire blankets is covered in mandatory training sessions and on induction.

4.8 Water delivery systems

4.8.1 Briefly, these are examples of water based active fire protection:

- Sprinkler systems
- Automatic extinguisher systems

4.8.2 Sprinkler systems are an active fire deterrent incorporated in buildings classes as high risk. This can mean they have a high population density, contain highly flammable materials or are a building of high value.

4.8.3 Healthcare premises do not normally have water delivery systems fitted.

4.9 Suppression systems

4.9.1 These systems can be found in kitchens giving fire protection to cooking areas or in fuel storage areas. They are suspended above deep-fat fryers, grills etc. in kitchens and are designed to operate either manually or automatically when excessive heat or fire is detected. They disperse foam or other medium capable of suppressing fire involving cooking materials or liquid fuel and they reduce the need for persons to have to get close to the fire with fire extinguishers.

4.10 Smoke containment and dispersal systems

4.10.1 There are many devices used in open areas and high-rise buildings to manage the direction and severity of smoke. Smoke is responsible for almost 99% of deaths in fire situations and the management and movement of smoke is essential in fire safety. These systems are used in areas of large footprint size and also high density of population. Examples are shopping malls, buildings with open atriums, high-rise office complexes and apartment blocks. Some larger healthcare premises are also fitted with such systems. Variations of these systems include:

- Fire dampers
- Smoke curtains
- Smoke ventilation
- Smoke shutters

4.11 Examples of other active fire precautions

Fire dampers to prevent smoke travel In ducting and pipe work

Smoke curtains

Smoke curtain in large open area

Roof smoke vents (automatic or manual)

Horizontal smoke curtain

4.12 Cigarette smoking detection

4.12.1 Cigarette smoking detection is becoming increasingly used in all areas to alert staff when a person is smoking in a particular area. The alarm senses the smoke from a cigarette, cigar etc. and transmits a remote signal to an alerter normally located in a staff area. These detectors are not connected to the main fire alarm system therefore do not alert the switchboard or fire service but they alert staff to the fact smoking is taking place and allows the situation to be quickly dealt with.

5   Summary

5.1   All active fire precautions measures are provided to enhance personal safety. Contact the Fire Safety Advisor for any further information.