



FIRE EVACUATION PROCEDURES FOR SCHOOLS

The following notes have been produced for guidance of Principals in the setting up of a simple and efficient Fire Procedure Plan easily adaptable to suit most school premises.

1. Fire Evacuation Procedure Plan - objective

The objective of a **Fire Evacuation Procedure Plan** is to prevent panic and ensure the safe, orderly and efficient egress (escape) of all occupants of the school using all the Exit facilities available and to get the mind attuned to reacting rationally when confronted with a fire or other emergency.

The orderly clearance of classrooms must depend far more upon the way the classes are handled by staff than on any action by the students.

In fact, in any school a Fire Drill is really an exercise in school management by Principals and Teachers.

2. Fire Alarm System

The function of the Fire Alarm System is to warn every person in the building that a state of emergency has arisen and that Fire Drill Procedures should be put into operation at once.

The alarm signal should be different from any other calling signal and should not be used for any other than giving warning of emergency or for Evacuation Drill.

If the Fire Warning System is not of the type which, when operated, is audible throughout the building, then arrangements should be made for the warning to be passed on by responsible staff from alarm point to alarm point. **e.g. If hand operated bells are provided, the person discovering the fire will operate the nearest bell and any responsible member of the staff hearing this will operate the bell in their section of the building.**

The sounding of a Fire Alarm in any part of the building should be the signal for the complete evacuation of the entire school and not just part thereof.

3. Evacuation

On hearing the alarm, pupils should stand to attention by their desks, and when instructed by the Teacher in Charge of the class of the exit route to be followed, should leave the classroom in a single file.

Classes should then proceed at a steady uniform pace to the place of assembly, the Teacher following at the rear with the attendance register, closing the door of the classroom and all other doors on the escape route which will not be used again.

The Principal, on hearing the alarm, should go at once to a predetermined and conspicuous position in the Assembly Point and remain there until a report has been received from all sections.

If, at the time of the alarm, the Attendance Registers are not held by the Teachers, it is essential that they should be taken to the Assembly Point, as quickly as possible so that an accurate roll call can be taken. No talking or laughing should be permitted during the evacuation so that any instructions given can be heard.

On reaching a stairway, the class should descend in a single file using one side of the stairway, the other side of the stairway being left for the use of other classes. Overtaking by classes or individuals should not be permitted.

Anyone not actually in the class when the alarm sounds, **e.g. in the toilets, staff rooms, passages, etc.**, should go immediately to the Assembly Point and join their appropriate class or group.

Any cooks, cleaners, administrative or other staff on hearing the alarm should go immediately to the Assembly Point.

With the exception of a search for missing persons, no one must be allowed to re-enter the building to retrieve their clothing, books, etc., until permission is given by the Fire Service or, in the case of drill, by the Principal.

4. Assembly Point

The Assembly Point should be pre-determined. At the **Assembly Point**, each individual class and body of people should take up pre-determined positions and stand in a compact group.

The Assembly Point should, if possible, be under cover preferably in another building., if not the School playing field.

5. Roll Call

Immediately the classes have mustered at the **Assembly Point**, a roll call or count should be taken, if possible from the registers, and each responsible person should report immediately to the Principal "ALL PRESENT".

If anyone is missing, an immediate search by staff should be made and no place to which pupils have access should be overlooked.

The Officer-in-Charge of the first arriving Fire Service appliance should be met on arrival and immediately informed whether or not all persons have been safely evacuated.

6. Calling the Fire Service

All outbreaks of fire, however small or any suspected fire, should be reported **immediately** to the Fire Service, by the quickest means.

It will be the duty of senior members of staff present to ensure that the Fire Service is called - 911.

7. New Staff and Pupils

As soon as practicable after the commencement of a school term all new staff and pupils should be conducted over all primary and middle school escape routes, shown the Fire Alarm or bell operating points and be instructed in the Fire Procedure Plan.

As soon as is practicable after the beginning of a term, a test Fire Drill should be held.

8. Notices

Each Fire Alarm point should be indicated conspicuously by a notice worded "Fire Alarm" followed by the appropriate operating instructions. In the large school premises, it may be desirable to post "Fire Notices" and the suggested wording for such notices is shown at the end of the note.

9. Test Fire Drills

Fire Drill should be held at least once each month, although they should not be allowed to become routine, as the situation under actual Fire Conditions may vary widely. For instance, a stairway may be unusable due to smoke or other causes.

Before arranging a drill where the stairway, or exitways, is presumed to be blocked, it is essential that an alternative safe route is available which would lead to open air and safety.

Drills should be executed at different hours of the day, during changing of classes, during recess or Physical Education (P.E.) periods, or during other times to avoid distinction between drills and actual fires.

If a drill is called while pupils are going up and down the stairways, pupils should be instructed to form in file and immediately proceed to the nearest available exit in a orderly manner.

Monitors should be appointed from among the more mature pupils to assist in the proper execution of all drills. They should be instructed to hold doors open or close doors where necessary to prevent the spread of fire or smoke.

A record of all fire drills should be maintained.

10. Extinguishment of the Fire

Circumstances will dictate as to whether extinguishment of the fire should be attempted, the important thing to be remembered is that "Extinguishment must always be secondary to life safety" and whilst small fires can be dealt with easily, safe evacuation should be the primary concern.

11. Fire Instructions or Notices

Concise and explicit fire instructions should be drawn up and hung in conspicuous positions throughout the premises so that staff may be aware of action to be taken in the event of a fire occurring.

The terms of fire instructions should be:

A. Fire Instructions to Staff

A Person discovering a Fire well:

- (i) Operate the nearest Fire Alarm point.
- (ii) Make sure no persons are in immediate danger.
- (iii) Attempt to extinguish the fire with available fire extinguishers, unless the fire is obviously beyond control, in which case evacuate the rooms closing as many doors as possible.

On Sound of the Fire Alarm:

- (iv) A responsible person shall be detailed to call the Fire Service -"911".

Note: The Fire Service should always be called to any fire, however small.

- (v) Members of the staff should, if necessary, see that persons are evacuated from the building and a roll call taken.

B. How to Call the Fire Service:

On an alarm of fire being given (except for the drill purposes), the Fire Service should be called immediately by the following method.

Exchange Telephone:

Lift the receive dial - "**911**" and when operator answers, ask for "**FIRE**".

When the Fire Service operator replies, give the following information clearly and distinctly: "Fire at....."

Give the following:

- **Name of School**
- **Address of school**
- **Your name and telephone number**
- **What is involved, if known**
- **The Assembly Point is (location of the Assembly Point to be completed)**

C. General:

- (i) Teachers should ensure that any pupil who may be physically incapable of walking out with the class is evacuated with the assistance of the Teacher.
- (ii) After the class has left the room, the Teacher should check to make sure that no pupils remain. He or she should then close the door and rejoin the class as quickly as possible with the register; if available.
- (iii) Hand signals to march or stop should be used, as verbal orders may not be easily heard over the alarm signal.
- (iv) All Teachers should be familiar with the use of Fire Extinguishers.
- (v) Teachers should ensure that Locker Rooms and Washrooms are cleared of all pupils.