**Fires safety “responsibilities” for events at the University of Bristol**

**Richard Norris, Safety and Health Officer, 2018**

Copied on pages 3 & 4 are extracts from the RRO in “legalese” but the paragraphs on pages 1 & 2 cover the same topics in normal language.

Under the RRO the Responsible Person is anyone who has control of premises or anyone who has a degree of control over certain areas or systems. The responsible person, through his/her delegates, must ensure all relevant Articles are complied with as necessary. Articles are the legal paragraphs relating to elements of fire safety within the RRO.

In the case of this university, the Responsible Person is the Board of Trustees represented by the Vice Chancellor. He can delegate day-to-day operation of fire safety to managers, Deans etc through the university but cannot delegate final responsibility. I’ve highlighted in **bold** text those specific sections of relevant articles pertaining to event activities.

The numbers/letters in brackets below refer to the respective RRO Articles and sub-sections.

General fire precautions:

For each building, these are the responsibility of Campus Division (previously Estates) with regard the structure and its fire integrity and fire services. However, people managing activities also have a responsibility to ensure those general precautions are not compromised or defeated by their activities. This includes means of escape (4(b), (14(I)), 14(2.b, f)) which should remain freely available at all times the building/event location is taking place. E.G: Don’t allow escape routes or fire exits to be obstructed or blocked by seating, stalls, stands, storage etc.

Other general fire precautions provided by Campus Division include the fire alarm system, emergency escape lighting, escape signs and notices, fire-resisting construction, fire alarm testing, fire drills, portable fire-fighting equipment.

Arrangements for action in event of fire (4(f) include means of alerting people to a fire and ensuring there are suitable means of escape for everyone there, including those unable to use stairs. For the building as a whole, this is a Campus Division responsibility, who currently provide refuge points, evacuation lifts (a program of upgrades does not exist but lifts are upgraded where projects involving lift areas occur, and refuges will be included where there aren’t any).

Every relevant building has an Access Statement saying what means of escape are available in the building and these statements are available via the fire safety section of the Safety and Health Services website. Evacuation chairs are not normally provided until there is a known need for one (known individual). There is also information on our buildings on an external website AccessAble (<https://www.accessable.co.uk/university-of-bristol>

Disabled visitors to a university building should be made aware of the means of escape available to them so they can decide whether or not to enter the building. Choosing to enter means they either accept the means of escape offered or accept responsibility for their own safety. At this time Campus Division have no plans to install all possible escape aids in its buildings.

Where events involving members of the public are held, additional measures may be necessary to assist with the safe evacuation of the people likely to be strangers to the building. This would include ensuring sufficient numbers of “staff” to steward the event/act as fire wardens/assist with an evacuation if needed, provide suitable information regarding fire safety to the visitors and notify them of the fire safety arrangements. These “staff” need to be trained sufficiently to enable them to carry out their function (4(fi) and (15(1b)).

Fire wardens, “staff” must encourage people to leave, telling them to go to the assembly point mentioned in any earlier briefing. Once they have swept their area to get people out, the fire warden should report to the officer in charge (porters or someone else from the building) to advise what the situation is in the area they swept: everyone has left/someone refuses to leave and were left at XXX/someone can’t leave and are left in the refuge located at XXX/there is no smoke or fire/there is smoke or fire coming from XXX.

**NOTE:** In the paragraphs below**, Relevant Persons** are those who have a genuine reason to be in the building and includes staff, students, contractors, visitors, fire-fighters.

So, in my view, if I am to organise an event with members of the public attending I would need to consider the steps below to ensure my event was compliant with the RRO and did not risk injury from fire to people:

1. Think of the possible event location and the fire safety arrangements in place (this could involve speaking to the FM and/order Estates Assistants)
2. Assume some of the visitors will have a disability that means they cannot use stairs without assistance in the event of an emergency.
3. Either ensure the venue has suitable means of escape (MoE) and people available to provide the assistance/operate the equipment when your event is scheduled to take place, or hold the event at a location where assistance in an emergency will not be required – e.g. a ground floor venue.
4. If there are suitable MoE but no staff to operate them, e.g. an out of hours event, factor-in the need to hire stewards/Estates Assistants etc. **DO NOT** think that Security officers will act as your emergency assistants when you plan your event. As I stated previously, Security will only step in to help when your plans fail. This is a standing agreement with Campus Division and Security. The only way you can change that is by negotiation with them and they agree to be your “first responders”. Security now have an evacuation chair in one of their response vehicles.
5. Hired stewards/helpers need to be trained as fire wardens. I feel they should also be trained to operate evacuation lifts and/or evacuation chairs or you can be trained to operate these devices and leave the stewards to the fire warden function.
6. Any communications to attendees should include reference to emergency escape options in the building so they know from the outset what to expect and know they need to agree to be evacuated from the building using one of those MoE options. Although you cannot put it in writing, or state it at the start of the event, all attendees implicitly agree to the MoE or assume responsibility for their own safety. I know at Wills Memorial Building the Estates Assistants “intercept” wheelchair-users on arrival and advise them what is available as MoE from the Great Hall/Reception etc.
7. Ensure there are sufficient notices advising visitors of the fire safety arrangements, posted prominently but appropriately so visitors can see them.
8. Ensure a safety “briefing” is either put on screen before the event starts or is spoken at the start of the event.
9. All of these points form part of your event risk assessment

**Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (Statutory Instrument 1541: 2005)**

Meaning of "responsible person"

3. In this Order "responsible person" means—

(a) in relation to a workplace, the employer, if the workplace is to any extent under his

control;

(b) in relation to any premises not falling within paragraph (a)—

(i) **the person who has control of the premises (as occupier or otherwise) in connection**

**with the carrying on by him of a trade, business or other undertaking (for profit or**

**not);** or

(ii) the owner, where the person in control of the premises does not have control in

connection with the carrying on by that person of a trade, business or other

undertaking.

Meaning of "general fire precautions"

4.(1) In this Order "general fire precautions" in relation to premises means, subject to

paragraph (2)— *Any workplace*

(a) measures to reduce the risk of fire on the premises and the risk of the spread of fire on the

premises;

(b) **measures in relation to the means of escape from the premises;**

(c) measures for securing that, at all material times, the means of escape can be safely and

effectively used;

(d) measures in relation to the means for fighting fires on the premises;

(e) measures in relation to the means for detecting fire on the premises and giving warning in

case of fire on the premises; and

(f) **measures in relation to the arrangements for action to be taken in the event of fire on the**

**premises, including—**

**(i) measures relating to the instruction and training of employees;** and

(ii) measures to mitigate the effects of the fire.

Duty to take general fire precautions

8.(l) The responsible person must—

(a) take such general fire precautions as will ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the

safety of any of his employees; and

(b) in relation to relevant persons who are not his employees, take such general fire

precautions as may reasonably be required in the circumstances of the case to ensure that

the premises are safe.

Risk assessment

Emergency routes and exits

14.(l) **Where necessary in order to safeguard the safety of relevant persons, the responsible**

**person must ensure that routes to emergency exits from premises and the exits themselves are kept**

**clear at all times.**

(2) **The following requirements must be complied with in respect of premises where necessary**

**(whether due to the features of the premises, the activity carried on there, any hazard present or**

**any other relevant circumstances) in order to safeguard the safety of relevant persons—**

(a) emergency routes and exits must lead as directly as possible to a place of safety;

(b) **in the event of danger, it must be possible for persons to evacuate the premises as quickly**

**and as safely as possible;**

(c) the number, distribution and dimensions of emergency routes and exits must be adequate

having regard to the use, equipment and dimensions of the premises and the maximum

number of persons who may be present there at any one time;

(d) emergency doors must open in the direction of escape;

(e) sliding or revolving doors must not be used for exits specifically intended as emergency

exits;

(f) **emergency doors must not be so locked or fastened that they cannot be easily and**

**immediately opened by any person who may require to use them in an emergency;**

(g) emergency routes and exits must be indicated by signs; and

11

(h) emergency routes and exits requiring illumination must be provided with emergency

lighting of adequate intensity in the case of failure of their normal lighting.

Procedures for serious and imminent danger and for danger areas

15.(l) The responsible person must—

(a) establish and, where necessary, give effect to appropriate procedures, including safety

drills, to be followed in the event of serious and imminent danger to relevant persons;

(b) **nominate a sufficient number of competent persons to implement those procedures in so**

**far as they relate to the evacuation of relevant persons from the premises;** and

(c) ensure that no relevant person has access to any area to which it is necessary to restrict

access on grounds of safety, unless the person concerned has received adequate safety

instruction.