



University of Essex



Fire Evacuation Policy

University of Essex

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Introduction

This policy is designed to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, fast and safe evacuation of university premises in the event of an emergency in compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order. This includes Colchester, Loughton and Southend campuses. All University of Essex staff, students, contractors and visitors are required to comply.

Fire escape routes, mainly comprising of corridors and staircases, are of fire-resistant construction to an appropriate standard for the building type and use. Travel distances and exit widths to a place of relative safety are set to the standard of the day of construction. All routes are fitted with exit signage and emergency lighting.

As far as is reasonably practicable, fire escape routes are maintained as sterile areas (i.e. free of obstructions, flammable/combustible material and ignition sources). Agreement must be obtained from the Fire Safety Manager before any item can be placed in a corridor. Contract works which may affect means of escape are subject to a 'Permit to Work' scheme which ensures that suitable alternative arrangements are in place.

All substantial buildings are fitted with comprehensive fire alarm systems. The requirement to evacuate is communicated by operation of the fire alarm sounders augmented with flashing beacons in some areas. Red flashing beacons above doors indicate that an alarm has sounded in the area beyond, hence no entry is permitted. Although sounders may be silenced whilst an incident is being dealt with, the red beacons may continue to function.

In the event of an alarm activation, all persons are required to leave the affected area immediately; failure to do so, could result in a disciplinary procedure. Managers, teaching staff and people organising events /meetings are responsible for ensuring people under their control evacuate immediately; staff and students are responsible for their visitors.

As most buildings are effectively open to the public with little entry control, a sweep system is employed. When safe to do so, sweeps are performed by the University of Essex Security team. Staff fire marshals can assist in evacuation, also, when safe to do so.

Standard evacuation

Non-accommodation

In most circumstances Campus Security will take charge in an emergency evacuation situation. If for any reason Campus Security are not available, the most senior person at the scene such as Heads of Departments / Sections or Managers may have to take charge and liaise with the Fire and Rescue Service.

The University of Essex operates a full simultaneous evacuation system in all areas. There is no stay put, or delayed evacuation. In some adjoined academic buildings, initial evacuation may only be required for a limited area. If an alarm is heard and occupants are unsure if it is for their area they are required to evacuate anyway.

All person's evacuating are to follow the green and white signage and leave via the nearest final exit to outside and a place of safety.

Anyone who suspects that there may be someone in an area affected by fire or smoke should report this directly to Security, the person in charge, and/or the Fire and Rescue Service without delay; this may be in person or by telephoning from a safe place.

If safe to do so and in line with their training, staff Fire Marshalls will sweep the area they are in and report to Security or the person in charge on their arrival to the assembly point.

Persons who have evacuated must not congregate in an area adjacent to a building. Everyone is required to maintain a reasonable distance from the building.

On evacuation, occupants are to proceed to the designated assembly points. These are usually identified by green and white signage. Staff will be informed of their appropriate assembly points on induction. If possible, Fire Marshals will sweep their areas and go to the assembly point. Once at the assembly point, Fire Marshals are to report to Security or the person in charge, giving an update on the situation in the area they have left.

Predominantly, Security will attend the area of the alarm activation to investigate the incident and, if safe and practical to do so, check the area is clear. Security will establish the cause of alarm activations prevent entry into affected areas, deal with the incident and assist the Fire and Rescue Service. Staff Fire Marshals may be required to assist in preventing premature re-entry into a building if necessary.

Re-entry into any effected building is not permitted until both and alarms and beacons have stopped and once notified by Security or the person in charge.

Accommodation

All accommodation at both Colchester and Southend campuses operates under a total simultaneous evacuation strategy, with no stay put, double knock or delayed alarm activations in place. This is advertised via fire action notices, UoE website and student/staff training.

On hearing an alarm, building users are required to evacuate immediately, following the escape route signage to directly outside into fresh air and a place of safety. Maps showing the escape routes are available in every bedroom.

Security attends all alarm evacuations and will call out the Fire and Rescue Service for confirmed fires.

On alarm activation, Security undertakes a sweep requiring any persons remaining in the building to evacuate. The sweep is from the level of the alarm activation to the ground floor. For safety reasons Security do not go above the floor level that the alarm was activated, although the Fire and Rescue Service will if needed. Security check the Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) list and if required and safe to do so, may go into a relevant student room in case evacuation assistance is needed. Disabled refuges are available on levels above the ground floor, with a communications system on the wall available to contact security and/or reception.

Persons that have evacuated are not to congregate near the building and security are trained to move people away from the buildings.

Except in exceptional circumstances, such as a worldwide pandemic, annual practice evacuation drills are undertaken for all accommodation. This will normally be completed at the beginning of the academic year, to ensure new residents are familiar with the procedures in place. Additional communications are sent out to all residents on an ongoing basis as a reminder of the evacuations process.

Arrangements for those who may have difficulty evacuating

Every effort is made to identify people who may have difficulty evacuating. This includes temporary impairment as well as long term/permanent issues. Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) and assistance are provided as necessary. The main impairment and arrangements are as below:

Mobility: Slow moving, difficulty descending stairs, limited by distance.

- All areas are accessible to mobility impaired people have suitable means of escape except the following areas at the Colchester campus- below Level 5 of Waterstones building; Level 3 of 2001 building; Psychology building mezzanine level. Those responsible are aware of the limitations and will assist in identifying alternative facilities.
- Bi-directional escape is available in most areas. Single direction travel distance to a place of relative safety is within Government advised limits in all new builds and most of the older property. All travel distances are of the standard of the day of construction.
- Level final exits are provided where practical.
- Some of the lifts at the Colchester campus apart from are adapted to be safe to use for evacuation in conjunction with a recorded PEEP. At Southend there are suitable lifts in The Gateway Building, University Square and the Forum. There is no access above the ground floor in Clifftown Studios or at Loughton.
- Evacuation chairs and trained operators are available where there are no suitable lifts or lifts are out of order. Security Officers are trained in their use and training is available to others as required.
- Disabled Refuges with communication systems to summon assistance are in place.
- Horizontal evacuation into unaffected parts of the building is available in the main academic buildings on the Colchester campus. This may be used if for any reason a person/s cannot evacuate to outside from the part of the building they currently occupy.

Note: Our arrangements may not be sufficient for more than two or more mobility impaired people in one length of corridor. Where larger numbers of mobility impaired people are expected for events etc, a specific risk assessment will be required, and venue choice will be crucial.

Sight: Difficulty identifying exit routes, obstructions or reading signage, and emergency action notices.

- Exit routes well lit, emergency lighting in place.
- Doors/frames in contrasting colours to walls; edge marking of stairs.
- Familiarised with routes, instructions, emergency action notices etc.
- May need to be accompanied until routes learned or when in unfamiliar areas.
- Information can be provided in braille on request.

Hearing: Difficulty hearing fire alarms or shouted instruction.

- Some areas have flashing beacons fitted in corridors, circulation spaces and large rooms. Beacons are fitted to rooms (and main exit route from them) known to be used by staff/ students needing them. Existing areas are retro fitted as standard when refurbished.
- Deaf alerters (units which vibrate under a pillow and have a beacon attached) issued in accommodation as required.
- May need to be accompanied when using areas without beacons fitted.

Dexterity/strength: (Arthritis is the most common form): Difficulty manipulating door handles/snibs; unable to open doors.

- Knobs/snibs can be changed on rooms/routes usually used.
- Door opening pressures tested to ensure within advisory limits.
- Automatic opening main exterior doors are fitted in most areas.
- May need to be accompanied in severe cases.

Cognitive issues: (Ranging from severe learning difficulties to occasional panic attacks):

May not understand/follow instructions; may not act as expected.

- Additional training delivered as necessary.
- May need to be accompanied.
- Staff may be referred to Occupational Health for advice and assistance.

Do not understand English or read signs: Awareness of evacuation arrangements. Unable to interpret signs/instructions/warnings.

- Pictograph signage fitted in accommodation and most academic areas.
- Many persons with a language issue are pre-sessional/language school students; efforts are made to supply information in their own language before arrival. Translated instructions, information and training delivered to pre-sessional students by the Department of Language and Linguistics.
- Emergency fire and first aid notices are available in the various languages:
- Supervision/Buddy systems can be used

Emergency action instructions

These are available on building fire action notices, the UoE website and via training and awareness sessions

Shout Out:

- Do not attempt to extinguish fires unless you have received training.
- Raise the alarm verbally, evacuate and break the glass on a red call point on your way out.

Get Out:

- Evacuate the area immediately on hearing the alarm. If you are unsure that the alarm applies to you, evacuate anyway 'If in doubt get out'. Do not significantly delay to finish tasks, collect items or lock doors. Your safety is paramount.
- Ensure any visitors and students you are responsible for all evacuate.
- Do not run, it can cause panic and injury.
- Close doors behind you as you leave. This will slow the spread of fire and smoke considerably and help to protect other people.
- Follow the green and white signs; they will direct you on the shortest exit route. Should the route be blocked, turn around and follow the signs in another direction. Proceed to outside and a place of safety and where available, the designated Assembly Points. Failure to evacuate may result in disciplinary procedures as it can put yourself and others at risk.
- If safe to do so, assist those that may have difficulty evacuating. They will generally have prepared escape plans which you can help them with.
- Report information to Security or the person in charge on areas or people affected by smoke or fire, or people who are missing or have failed to evacuate.

If you cannot escape the area do not panic. Get as far away from the fire as you can, preferably on a lower floor. Most rooms in the University will provide protection and staircase enclosures may have 60 minutes plus protection. Contact Security using the emergency numbers for your location. These will be displayed on emergency notices or can be found at:

<http://www.essex.ac.uk/students/campus/emergency.aspx>.

Stay Out:

- Never enter an area where an alarm is sounding, or red light is flashing. Some of the University's buildings have zones with flashing red lights to indicate that this is where the fire is.
- Keep away from buildings and exterior doors, The Fire Service may need access and you may block the exit for others.
- Wait at the assembly point. Do not re-enter a building when the alarm stops, it may have been silenced for the Fire Service. Wait to be told by Security or the person in charge.