

## Appendix 3

# Key Fire Hazards and Controls Checklist

### Electrical safety

Electrical problems are a major cause of fire. However, in most cases, a good standard of maintenance can significantly reduce this risk.

To comply with ETCI 'National Rules for Electrical Installations' the main electrical installation should be tested every five years by an approved contractor. In addition to the installation inspection, electrical safety can be managed by the school by avoidance of the following:

- No temporary wiring should be used as the cables can become damaged and create a fire risk.
- Where possible avoid the use of multi-point adapters as these can overload sockets.
- The main electrical switch room should not be used as a storage area. It is particularly important to ensure that this area is not used for the storage of combustible items.
- Key operated emergency power isolators should be installed in workshops, laboratories, home economics rooms and art rooms to allow for the isolation of the power in the event of an emergency or when workshop has been vacated.
- Surge protectors should be provided for computers and other electrical equipment that may be sensitive to electrical power surges

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### Gas

- Storage and marking of LPG and other gas cylinders should comply with the Highly Flammable Liquids and Petroleum Gas Regulations.
- Cylinders should be kept in a secure area, preferably in a separate building to the main school or wire cage, protected where necessary against direct sunlight, or in a ventilated secure fire resistant structure.
- Compressed gas cylinders must be stored in an upright position. Avoid dropping, rolling, or knocking them together.
- Key operated gas isolating valves and switches should be present in each laboratory and home economic rooms. Gas should be turned off at this switch when not in use.
- Gas storage areas must be clearly marked and visible to the fire brigade.
- Gas cylinders including spare cylinders must not be kept in ordinary storerooms.

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### Classrooms

- Keep combustible materials, clothing, and school bags, away from heaters.
- Avoid the use of portable heaters.
- Keep all doorways and corridors unobstructed, e.g. schoolbags tucked in under desks.
- Dispose of rubbish daily.
- Layout of furniture should not obstruct escape routes; in particular consider exit doors to rear of rooms.

## Kitchen & Home Economics

- If applicable, accessible remote gas shut-off valves should be provided. Gas supplies should be isolated at night. It is preferable for restarting of the supply to only be enabled by a key operation.
  - Appropriate fire extinguishers should be provided.
  - Fire blankets should be provided in all areas as there is a risk of fire involving clothing.
  - All electrical equipment (including cookers, washing machines, tumble dryers, irons etc) should be tested as part of the electrical inspection programme. Keep all cooking equipment, hoods, filters and ducts free of grease accumulations.
  - Regularly clean lint traps on dryers and filters on vents, fans and air conditioners.
  - If there is an extraction system above the cooking area, the filters and hood should be cleaned regularly (ideally weekly) and the main extraction ductwork including any associated internal fans should be cleaned annually.
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## Halls & Offices

- Avoid wedging open hallway doors, especially fire doors.
  - Test fire exit doors regularly to make certain that the doors do not jam and that the hardware is detached.
  - Restrict paper to bulletin boards.
  - During Christmas period, ensure fairy and decorative lighting is switched off each evening and that lighting is CE marked.
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## Art Room

- The immediate area around the kiln(s) should be kept clear of combustible storage.
- All electrical equipment (including the kiln, irons, cooking appliances) should be tested as part of the Portable Appliance Testing system.
- Highly flammable liquids should be stored safely.
- A good standard of housekeeping should be maintained. Materials should be neatly stacked and stored in closed cupboards if possible. Poorly stored, loose materials will allow a fire to develop and spread very quickly.
- Care must be taken where displays are suspended from ceilings, ensuring that they are not positioned near lighting fittings or placed close to heaters.
- Displays should not obstruct escape routes or obscure fire notices, fire alarm points, fire fighting equipment, emergency exit signs or lights.
- Display material should be kept away from curtains, doors and heat sources so that fire cannot easily spread to the building fabric.
- Try to keep total area used for displays to one area.
- Consideration should be given to storage of examination projects and displays in a steel storage container outside the building.

## Laboratories

- Chemicals should be stored in accordance with best safety practice and Department of Education and Science guidelines.
  - Store flammable liquids properly and dispense them from an approved safety container.
  - Avoid storing incompatible chemicals next to each other as interaction may occur (fire or explosion).
  - Survey chemicals annually and discard appropriately any that are obsolete or show signs of decomposition.
  - Order and store the minimum supply.
  - Clean up spills immediately.
  - Ensure storage areas are kept adequately ventilated.
  - Dispose of rubbish regularly.
  - Keep Safety Data Sheets readily available.
  - Fume cupboards should be tested on an annual basis.
  - Accessible, remote gas shut-off valves should be provided. Gas supplies should be isolated at night. It is preferable for restarting of the supply to only be enabled by a key operation.
  - Appropriate fire extinguishers should be provided.
  - Fire blankets should be provided in all areas, as there is a risk of fire involving clothing.
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## Gymnasiums & Assembly Halls

- Curtains including stage drapes should be labelled during manufacture to indicate that they are either made from inherently fire retardant fabrics or that they have been chemically treated to achieve fire retardant.
  - Upholstered furniture used in schools should comply with relevant fire safety regulations.
  - Lighting and sound equipment should be regularly checked and tested to ETCI Standards.
  - During performances, ensure exit doors are not obstructed by seating or drapes.
  - Stewards should be put in place during performances to ensure escape routes are unobstructed.
  - Torches should be provided to stewards during performances to assist them in the event of need to evacuate the premises.
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## Woodwork, Metalwork & Technology Rooms

- A programme of preventative maintenance for all machines should be put in place (carried out by trained individuals to manufacturer's guidelines).
- Ensure that all machinery is CE marked.
- Local Extraction Ventilation Systems should be installed to meet all appropriate technical standards. The extraction system should remove wood dust to a remote secure storage container outside of the building and wood dust regularly disposed of.
- Where welding takes place, ensure welding curtain is in use and immediate area kept clear of combustibles.
- Provide suitable waste bins with metal lids for disposal of oil soaked and paint rags.

## Heating, Boiler rooms

- If the heating systems are old or if they have not been inspected recently a qualified heating contractor carrying their own separate insurance should inspect the equipment and systems to verify the following – (A) Boilers are properly installed and that rooms containing them are of appropriate construction and (B) There are sufficient clearances from heating equipment and vents to combustible materials.
- Repairs to heating systems should only be performed by a qualified heating contractor
- The boilers should be subject to an annual maintenance contract
- Automatic fuel cut-off devices should be installed.
- The boiler room should not be used for combustible storage
- Ideally a fire detector linked into the fire alarm system should protect the boiler room.
- The room should be provided with a suitable fire extinguisher. In the case of an oil fired burner a fixed extinguisher should be installed over the burner unit ideally with angle iron or equivalent rather than a chain to ensure extinguisher contents are discharged correctly.
- If the heating system is a fuel oil system, the external oil tank should be fitted with a bund wall, to catch any leakage of oil. It is also important to ensure that this banded area is kept clear of any storage and any water accumulation is drained regularly.
- In no circumstances should electric fires or portable gas heaters be used in schools. Where it is necessary to use portable heaters only thermostatically controlled electric oil filled radiators should be used. They should not be used in public areas and should be kept clear of combustible material.

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## Chapels & Prayer Rooms

- Place candles away from absolutely anything that could catch fire and out of the reach of drafts and curtains.
- Candles when lit must be under the supervision of a responsible adult at all times.
- Always put candles on a stable surface away from anything that might make them fall or that could burn.
- The candle holder should be non-combustible, big enough to contain any dripping wax and sturdy enough not to tip.
- Extra caution should be taken of candles with multiple wicks, as they can produce high flames and intense heat and candles that have flammable decorations embedded in them or as part of a decorative arrangement. Paper and tree bark, for example, can easily catch fire.

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## Temporary Buildings

Because of their combustible nature, these buildings could pose a risk to the school if they are deliberately set on fire. Where possible, all mobile classrooms or temporary buildings should be located a minimum of 10 metres from the main school buildings.

In addition, the following points should be considered:

- Particular attention should be given to protecting the underside of the mobile classrooms, to prevent this area being used for storage and to reduce the potential for rubbish to accumulate.
- If the school uses timber sheds, then these should not be located close to buildings. Again a minimum distance of 10m is recommended.
- It is important to ensure all mobile classrooms are maintained in good condition.

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