Introduction

The Building Manager is a member of staff appointed by the Head of School(s) or Directorate(s) to co-ordinate fire safety management and general building safety, security, maintenance and infrastructure issues within a building. This Safety Note outlines the generic duties.¹

Fire safety

There must be effective management of fire safety arrangements in all University premises. In its widest sense the ‘responsible person’ in accordance with legislation is the University, with ‘competent persons’ appointed to implement different aspects of the fire safety arrangements. Safety Guide 34A provides further details on the allocation of responsibilities. Within each building, the University appoints a competent person (i.e. the Building Manager) to co-ordinate the fire safety arrangements.

Co-ordination and communication with Facilities Management Directorate (FMD)

There must be good communication between building occupants and FMD to ensure that disruption and impact on building occupants from maintenance work is minimised, and that information on risks to FMD staff or contractors from the activities of building occupants, and vice versa, is shared. This requires a single point of contact within each building to liaise with FMD i.e. the Building Manager.

Overview of the Building Manager’s responsibilities and duties

The Building Manager should:

- Be aware of the safety features of the building, and any particular risks on the premises e.g. high risk materials/substances/processes/equipment, or other issues identified in the building fire risk assessment (available through the FMD Wren database and web portal);
- Co-ordinate the building emergency procedures;
- Liaise with the University Fire Safety Adviser, Health and Safety Services, and with other occupants in a multi-occupancy building, to ensure a safe working environment;
- Be aware of the activities of building occupants, and of any proposals to make changes to the building (e.g. extensions, alterations, refurbishment, change of use).

The duties below are generic to all buildings. They may be adapted to suit individual buildings, but the fundamental principles of fire safety co-ordination and having a single point of contact for liaison with FMD must be maintained. Some duties may be undertaken by an Area Health and Safety Co-ordinator e.g. identification of staff for fire safety training, workplace inspections. The division of responsibilities between the Building Manager and AHSCs must be documented locally to avoid misunderstanding or duplication of responsibilities.

The Building Manager should:

- Ensure that there are arrangements for the control and regular safety inspection of all areas of the building;

¹ NB The role of Building Manager may be subsumed within another appointment e.g. Halls Group Residence Manager, School Administrator, Sub-Dean, Building Superintendent, Chief Technician.
- Ensure that adequate numbers of staff within the building are trained in fire prevention/awareness and fire fighting techniques, that sufficient numbers of fire evacuation officers and fire wardens are appointed, and that emergency drills are undertaken e.g. fire drills;

- Ensure that the fire safety checklists sent out by Health and Safety Services (H&SS) are completed by a competent person, and that actions arising from the checklists and from fire risk assessments undertaken by the University Fire Safety Adviser are closed out;

- Provide support to FMD by undertaking routine testing of fire alarms, emergency lighting, and other safety equipment. NB This will vary from building to building, depending on the type of systems installed and the amount of remote monitoring that can be undertaken by FMD through the Building Management system (BMS);

- Maintain the building emergency folder;

- Ensure that adequate numbers of First Aiders and Appointed Persons are appointed within the building and that there is contact information readily available to staff and students;

- Monitor and instruct maintenance staff and contractors on the premises (insofar as their activities might impact upon staff and students), including checking that they have authorisation to start work, and advising them of any special risks within the premises;

- Ensure that changes to the building or changes of use are notified to, and agreed with, the appropriate competent or professional staff e.g. University Fire Safety Adviser, Estates and Construction Health & Safety Adviser, FMD);

- Ensure that any security systems (building locking/unlocking procedures, swipe card systems etc) are effective in maintaining an appropriate level of security;

- Report any breaches of the fire safety arrangements by tenants (where relevant) to the FMD Head of Estates (who has primary responsibility for tenants in University property and who should take the lead in communicating with tenants);

- Investigate incidents, accidents & work related ill health (where related to the building, and in conjunction with the AHSC);

- Co-ordinate the preparation of risk assessments for building related issues and common areas;

- Ensure that PAT testing is undertaken within the building;

- Maintain H&S records (for building-related records);

- Undertake temperature monitoring of water for legionella control (only where agreed with FMD);

- Co-ordinate the provision of information to FMD Projects on residual risks from processes carried out in any areas to be refurbished;

- Notify FMD or the H&SS Asbestos Co-ordinator where damage to asbestos-containing materials (ACMs) is identified;

- Ensure that engineering insurance inspections of departmental plant are undertaken.

Authority

The Building Manager has sufficient stated authority, powers of sanction and resources to take responsibility for the day-to-day management of the building, and to identify the need for essential repairs or maintenance to be carried out. Where the resources for undertaking essential work are managed by FMD, the Building Manager must draw FMD’s attention to deficiencies so that FMD can authorise and undertake the work. The powers of sanction might include closing the building to staff or students, restricting its use, or shutting down normal operations. Where practical such actions must be taken in consultation with the relevant Head(s) of School/Directorate and/or Health and Safety Services.

Further information

Building Managers can access the Safety Portal on FMD’s web site to obtain more information about their building (primarily the results of fire risk assessments undertaken by the Fire Safety Adviser, and the Asbestos Register). Building Managers should submit an application to FMD IT
to be authorised to access the portal. The on-line application form is on FMD’s web site at: http://www.fmd.reading.ac.uk/For_University_staff/Portal_Access/Request_Portal_Access.asp

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References

1 The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

2 Fire safety risk assessment; offices and shops. Department for Communities and Local Government. ISBN 978 1 85112 815 0

3 Fire safety risk assessment; factories and warehouses. Department for Communities and Local Government. ISBN 978 1 85112 816 7

4 Fire safety risk assessment; sleeping accommodation. Department for Communities and Local Government. ISBN 978 1 85112 817 4

5 Fire safety risk assessment; educational premises. Department for Communities and Local Government. ISBN 978 1 85112 819 8

6 Fire safety risk assessment; Small and medium placed of assembly. Department for Communities and Local Government. ISBN 978 1 85112 820 4

7 BS 9999:2008 Code of practice for fire safety in the design, management and use of buildings

8 Safety Guide 8 First Aid

9 Safety Guide 34A Fire Safety Management and Guidance for Building Occupants