ART ACADEMY
LONDON

Fire Policy & Procedures

1. Introduction

Art Academy London is committed to providing a safe environment for its staff, students and visitors; in the event of fire, they should be able to safely and comfortably leave the building. As part of this commitment, the Academy aims to ensure that the risks from fire are minimised and that the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety Order) 2005 are implemented fully.

Although fire safety within the Academy is primarily the legal responsibility of the Academy itself, a legal obligation also rests on all staff, students, visitors, contractors and anyone else whose actions may influence the risk from fire on Academy premises. The Academy will support the above persons to meet their duties and in turn requires their full commitment and cooperation.

The purpose of this document is to both underline the Academy's ongoing determination to successfully manage the risk from fire and to provide a framework that supports this key organisational objective.

2. General Fire Prevention

Plainly, it is extremely important that the risk of fires starting is minimized as far as possible. If fires are eliminated or, where they do occur, restricted in size, the risk to individuals is kept low, the threat of damage to Academy property is reduced and the work of the Academy is unlikely to be disrupted.

The fundamentals of reducing the risk from fire involve the elimination, as far as possible, of things that can burn and things that can cause heat. Where these cannot be eliminated, they should be reduced to a minimum and kept apart from each other.

Appendix A provides further information on this subject.

2.1 Arson

Arson is a common cause of fire. To combat it, all staff and students should be mindful of security and report any suspicious activity or perceived security weaknesses to security staff. Material external to buildings is often a target for arson and consequently waste and similarly combustible material should be securely stored at least 8m from any building.

2.2 Furnishings

Furnishings used within the Academy should be procured through reputable suppliers, maintained in good condition and kept separate from ignition sources.

Upholstered furniture, mattresses and soft furnishings such as curtains and drapes can be assessed as to their suitability by reference to relevant British Standards (BS7176, BS7177 & BS5867).

These standards categorize premises according to their use, a categorisation that then forms the basis for the selection of suitable furniture.

2.3 Storage of furniture, etc. in corridors and staircases

Furniture and other items in corridors and staircases places the occupants of buildings at risk as it:

1. May become involved in a fire (accidentally or deliberately) which may fill the escape route with smoke and render it impassable
2. Obstruct the escape of persons in the event of an emergency

In respect of 2) above it should be noted that escape routes will be subject to much greater flows of people in an emergency and items of unfixed furniture can easily end up in the path of escaping individuals.

Of particular concern are routes that specifically designed to be fire-resisting. Typically, these are:

- Staircases
- Sections of corridors where only one direction of escape is possible

These areas must be kept completely free of obstructions and combustible material.

In other escape routes, a limited amount of items may be acceptable subject to the following conditions:

1. There is a pressing reason why the escape route is being used and other options have been explored and deemed unviable
2. Escape width remains adequate and will not be affected by dislodged items (furniture should be secured)
3. Any furniture/other items should be non-combustible or have low combustibility (for example, suitable solid plastic or hardwood chairs).
4. Fire detection should be present in the corridor

2.4 Dangerous substances

A standard fire risk assessments will cover the risks that arise from regular work activities. However, where there are substances or items that may create an explosion risk then a risk assessment that complies with the Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmosphere Regulations 2002, (DSEAR), needs to be carried out.

The responsibility for ensuring that the risk assessment is carried out lies with the Operations Manager. The substances should be:

- Stored and used in a manner consistent with the relevant legislation
- Indicated by signage as necessary
- Listed on an inventory readily accessible at all times by the Operations team

2.5 Contractors

The Operations Manager is responsible for briefing contractors under their control in respect of fire safety procedures and controlling their activities so that they do not present a risk to themselves or others. Particular attention should be paid to any work that involves physical alteration of any fire resisting structures. Where this does happen, the Operations Manager should ensure that the fire resistance of the structure is restored as necessary prior to completion of the works.

2.6 Maintenance of equipment (that might cause fire)

Any equipment that might cause a fire, a category that will naturally include virtually every item that has an electrical supply, should be subject to a maintenance regime. Such a regime might range from frequent and extensive servicing to occasional visual inspection. Art Academy London's Code of Practice for Testing of Electrical Equipment sets out what is required in detail.

3. Fire Detection/ Alarm Equipment

3.1 General

All buildings are provided with a suitable means for alerting the occupants in the event of fire. Generally, and as a minimum, this will be an electronic fire alarm and detection system designed, installed and maintained in accordance with the relevant provisions of BS5839-1:2013.

Unauthorised interference with a fire alarm system places individuals within Art Academy London buildings at risk. Any such interference may ultimately result in criminal charges being brought against the person or person responsible. Additionally, the Academy will not tolerate any such behaviour and will take disciplinary action against anyone found to be involved.

False alarms can cause people to become complacent about fire alarm activations and consequently may delay their response during a real fire. Additionally, the fire service may charge the Academy where they attend what is subsequently established to be a false alarm. Staff, tutors and students should consequently be aware of the need to prevent accidental activations. Typical causes of false alarms are:

- Smoke from cooking
- Smoke from other activities (e.g. hot cutting/welding)
- Aerosols
- Steam
- Hair dryers
- Smoking/vaping
- Water ingress
- Dust (such as plaster in sculpture studios)

Covers may be used to protect fire alarm manual call points in areas where there is a high potential for accidental damage or malicious activation.

3.2 Isolation (procedure)

Where it is deemed necessary to isolate all or part of any fire alarm system, permission to do so should first be sought from the Operations Manager.

3.3 Testing and maintenance (who does what)

The Operations Manager is responsible for the testing and maintenance of all the Academy's fire alarms. The regime should align with the relevant provisions of BS5839.

3.4 Fire alarm system failure

In the event of a failure of a fire alarm every effort should be made to restore its full operation as soon as possible. During any period where the alarm is defective, activities within the affected area should be reviewed and, if it is felt appropriate, suspended temporarily. Regular fire patrols may need to be established so that any fire that may arise is identified relatively quickly.

3.5 Alarm activations and incident reporting

Details of all alarm activations and fire incidents should be investigated, recorded and reported using the appropriate system. The relevant member of the Operations team on duty at the time should ensure that this happens.

All members of the Operations team are responsible for providing fire and fire alarm data reports at regular intervals to the Operations Manager.

4. Means of Escape from Fire

4.1 Escape Routes/Fire Doors

It is essential that fire escape routes from Art Academy London buildings are kept clear at all times. Whilst in normal use it may be possible to safely negotiate an obstruction, during a fire, when all the occupants of a building are required to leave simultaneously, any restriction along a route may significantly increase the time it takes for all of the occupants to escape which will, in turn, place them at risk of injury or worse. Combustible material within an escape route, were it to be ignited, would render the route unusable. It is particularly important that these provisions are observed for staircases protected by fire doors.

Fire doors are an essential safety feature of a building in that they are designed to hold back fire for a prescribed amount of time to allow for individuals within a building to escape. Consequently, they must not be held open unless this is done by a suitable equipment that will release the door during a fire. Door wedges must not be used.

On a six monthly basis all fire doors should be inspected by the Operations Coordinator to ensure that they are in a satisfactory condition. Appendix B provides details of what should be looked at.

4.2 Door Furniture and Locks

According to the relevant legislation, emergency doors must not be locked or fastened that they cannot be easily and immediately opened by any person who may require to use them in an emergency. In practice what is permissible will vary with, amongst other things, the number of persons who might use an exit in an emergency and their familiarity with the building. For this reason a thumb turn lock might be acceptable on an exit regularly used but by few people but would not be satisfactory where there were larger numbers of people and panic might occur.

Where electronic door locks are fitted to doors on escape routes they should normally be linked to the fire alarm, so that they release when it actuates, fail to safe mode and can be manually overridden from the direction of possible escape (which may be both sides).

4.3 Fire Safety Signage

Fire safety signage will be provided in accordance with the provisions of BS5499. Such signage will indicate, amongst other things:

- The means of escape
- Fire doors (and associated instructions)
- Firefighting equipment

Building occupiers should be careful to ensure that any changes they or their contractors make to their workspaces do not compromise any fire safety signage and, if necessary, seek the provision of new signage.

4.4 Room Occupancy

The maximum occupancy of a room should not be exceeded. This figure will vary with the size of the room and its exits (the maximum number of persons allowed in a room with a single exit is 60).

Overloading a room will increase the time it takes to evacuate it and place the room users at risk.

5. Fire Fighting Equipment and Other Systems

5.1 Portable Fire Fighting Equipment

Portable fire fighting equipment, i.e. fire extinguishers, are provided across the Academy's buildings. Water and CO2 extinguishers make up the bulk of the provision and can be used on solid fuel and electrical fires respectively.

A monthly visual check of extinguishers should be carried out by the Operations Coordinator (annual testing is the responsibility of the Operations Manager).

Interference with firefighting equipment is a serious offence and will be treated in the same way as interference with fire alarm systems (as described in 3.1 above).

6. Emergency Procedures

6.1 General

Emergency procedures are available for every Academy building and cover the following points:

- Action upon discovery of a fire
- Fire alarm signals
- Calling the fire service
- Firefighting
- Evacuation procedure
- Provisions for the evacuation of disabled persons and others who may need assistance
- Assembly point
- Safe re-admission

Fire action notices should be provided as follows:

- Adjacent to each fire alarm manual call point
- Within kitchens
- In public assembly areas (studios, common room etc)
- Anywhere else where they would prove useful

Anyone failing to comply with the provisions of any emergency procedure, for example by not evacuating in response to an alarm, will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the Academy's disciplinary procedure.

6.2 Disabled persons (PEEPs, etc.)

Art Academy London has made reasonable adjustments to ensure that the main building is accessible to disabled persons in line with its legal and moral obligations. New buildings will be designed and constructed to provide full access to disabled employees, students and visitors.

Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) should be drawn up where necessary and disseminated as appropriate. Particular issues that will need to be covered are alarm awareness (a particular issue for those with hearing impairments), the location of exits, how obstacles such as stairs are to be negotiated, how designated protected stairways are used if required and how the evacuation of disabled persons will be managed.

6.3 Evacuation chairs

Evacuation chairs are provided where required and are only to be operated by those trained to do so – generally members of the Operations team. The equipment should be checked regularly to ensure its availability and inspected and serviced as required. Users of the equipment should be retrained on an annual basis.

Where necessary, and as long as any delay would be such as to not endanger anyone, it may be acceptable to use evacuation chairs located in one part of a building to evacuate someone from a building somewhere else.

6.4 Fire Wardens

The Operation team and tutors are fire wardens. The Operations Manager acts as assembly point coordinator.

IT IS AN ABSOLUTE REQUIREMENT THAT FIRE WARDENS be familiar with the fire safety procedures and evacuation guidance located at all Health and Safety points in their areas of responsibility. It is the responsibility of the Operations Manager to ensure this.

Tutors are the designated fire wardens for the floor on which their class is taking place. Academy staff are responsible for checking all project spaces and public areas. Fire wardens aren't to place themselves at risk in the course of their duties. During an incident, their role is primarily to encourage people within their zone to evacuate and assist with, or direct as appropriate, the evacuation of those who need assistance. Once they have swept their area they should report to assembly point coordinator and brief them. This brief should be as detailed as possible and indicate areas that were seen to be clear and any potential issues – for example, rooms or areas within the zone that could not be checked for whatever reason, areas were people are known to be such as a refuge or where someone has refused to leave.

In the event of a fire or drill when there is an evacuation, tutors will be responsible for taking the register for their class outside in the fire assembly point. During office hours (Mon-Fri 9:00-17:00) the Operations Manager (Mermaid Court) and the Public Course Manager (Newington) are the fire wardens for the offices/ assembly point coordinators, they will take the register for tutors, staff and students using project spaces. If the above listed people are not in the buildings the Operations Coordinator (Mermaid Court) and Public Course Coordinator (Newington) are the fire wardens for the offices/ assembly point coordinators. After office hours (during evening classes or weekends) this responsibility falls to the duty technician or reception assistant on duty (depending on time/ rota).

6.5 Emergency procedures outside of normal working hours

It is Art Academy London Policy that students are not allowed access to the buildings when no classes are scheduled (ie after 10pm weekdays, 5pm Saturdays or all day Sundays). At all other times the above (5.5 applies).

6.6 Daily checks

On a daily basis the Operations Coordinator should tour the buildings to identify any fire safety matters that might require attention. Things that should be checked include:

- Escape routes – are they clear and in good general condition
- Fire doors – do they close properly and not held open by wedges
- Are final exits unobstructed/do they open easily
- Is the level of general fire safety housekeeping adequate
- Are extinguishers where they ought to be
- Is the fire alarm working normally as far as can be established by visual inspection.

6.7 Evacuation Drills

Evacuation drills are carried out periodically for the purpose of testing the effectiveness of the Art Academy London's emergency procedures. Frequency of drills will vary but there should be at least one per term and at least one unannounced drill per year.

During drills, the full range of exit options should be tested– something that can be achieved by 'blocking off' different means of escape in a non-hazardous manner.

The results of all drills are reported on, the focus being on details such as the time it took to evacuate and the sufficiency of fire warden coverage.

Poor performance during evacuation drills (or real evacuations) may necessitate additional drills in order to improve the response to an acceptable standard.

Anyone failing to cooperate during evacuation drills will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the Academy's disciplinary procedure.

6.8 Visitors

Visitors to Art Academy London premises should be made aware of the relevant emergency procedures. The person responsible for the visitor(s) presence on Academy property should ensure that this happens.

6.9 Fire Brigade Attendance

Relevant information should be readily available to the fire brigade should they attend an incident at an Academy building.

This information should include:

- The occupancy of the building
- Details of any fire safety systems and how they operate
- Summary details regarding the construction of the building

- Plans
- Hazards and related matters (for example chemicals, cylinders, electrical intake rooms, boiler rooms, dangerous processes and features)

7. Risk Assessment and Training

7.1 Fire Risk Assessment

A fire risk assessment of all buildings within Art Academy London will be carried out by an external qualified assessor. The risk assessments will be reviewed annually in the case of buildings where high risk issues are found. Other buildings will be reassessed on a biannual basis. Interim reviews will be carried out whenever something occurs that may undermine the validity of the risk assessment.

Action plans will be drawn up alongside the risk assessments and distributed amongst those responsible for the actions.

7.2 Fire Safety in New or Refurbished Buildings

Prior to occupation of a new building a fire risk assessment will need to be carried out and an emergency procedure formulated. The Operations Manager should therefore ensure that this work is factored in to their plans so that occupation is not delayed whilst any necessary fire safety work is carried out.

7.3 Training

Staff, tutors and students should receive fire safety training on induction and when they are exposed to increased risks. The training should be repeated periodically where appropriate. What is appropriate will vary but staff should be provided with fire safety training at least annually. This needn't be an onerous task – it may suffice to dedicate 15 minutes of a team meeting to go over the subjects covered on induction. Details of what should be covered can be found in Appendix C.

Where staff work in buildings other than their base location, the Operations Manager should ensure that they are properly inducted and are in particular aware of the risks within the building, the means of escape and emergency procedures.

Those designated fire wardens will require additional training which will be delivered by the Operations Manager when they are first appointed and at intervals thereafter at a frequency of no greater than 5 years. Evacuation chair training will be provided to relevant staff by the Operations Manager as necessary.

Induction training and the date of the most recent refresher training should be recorded

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Policies and documents that supplement and reference this document:

Staff handbook
Student Handbook
Tutor Handbook
Health and Safety Policy and Management Arrangements
Code of Practice - Emergency Evacuation of Persons with a Disability

Appendix A - General Fire Safety Precautions

To cause a fire three principal elements (collectively known as the triangle of fire) need to be present alongside each other, namely:

1. Combustible material
2. Oxygen
3. An ignition source

The triangle of fire

Many items around us are combustible, including paper, furniture, plastic goods, etc. Some material presents a greater danger due to its physical properties. Highly flammable material naturally presents a higher risk, as does material that can be easily ignited, such as shredded paper. It's still important to note, however, that once a fire develops objects that do not readily burn, such as tables and chairs, will be consumed as fuel.

Ignition sources also surround us at work. These include:

1. Heating appliances
2. Smoking
3. Heat from processes (e.g. welding or grinding);
4. Electrical apparatus - either in normal use and in cases of overload or failure;
5. Cooking appliances
6. The possibility of deliberate ignition

Oxygen is of course present all around us as a constituent of the air we breathe.

Preventing fires simply involves ensuring that these three elements do not come into close contact with each other simultaneously. Consequently, all staff should aim to:

- Eliminate fuel and ignition sources
- An example of this approach might be where the practice of using of a blowtorch to strip paint from woodwork is replaced by a mechanical or chemical method.
- Reduce fuel and ignition sources
- For example, ensure waste paper is regularly removed from areas where it might accumulate.

- Isolate fuel from ignition sources and oxygen
- This might be achieved by keeping stationery in a storeroom or locked cupboard as opposed to being left out in the open.
- Adopt control measures to reduce fire hazards
- An example of this might be a routine walk around by someone to identify and remedy any issues.

Appendix B - Fire Door Checks

Door and frame

- Is the door in generally good condition and free from major defects?
- Is it free from distortion and fit well in its frame?
- Is the gap around the top of the door and both sides consistently around 3mm?
- Is the frame fixed properly to the wall?
- Are door stops fixed securely?
- Does the door swing freely and not catch on the floor covering?

Hinges

- Is the door fitted with three hinges?
- Are they in good condition?
- Do the correct screws appear to be used?
- Do the hinges appear to be free of combustible packing?

Threshold

- Is the gap along the bottom edge no more than 10mm (3mm if smoke seals are fitted to the door)?
- If a threshold seal is present does it contact the floor covering when the door is closed?

Glazing

- Is the Intumescent seal continuous and attached to the glass and bead?
- Are the glazing beads well attached to the frame and free from damage?
- Is the glass free from damage and cracking?
- If the glass has been replaced, is it fire rated glass?
- If glazing panels are below 1500mm from the bottom of the door, is the glass safety glass?

Door closers

- Does the door closer naturally and properly close the door?
- Is the closer securely attached to the door and the frame?
- Is the closer free from damage and not leaking oil?
- If the door is unlatched is it held in line with the frame and intumescent seal (if fitted).
- Do pairs of doors close properly and in line?
- Do hold open devices properly release when activated?

Appendix C - Fire Safety Training

The three main areas to concentrate the instruction on are:

- The Fire Action Plan, which forms part of The Art Academy's fire risk assessment. This is the principle document and should be fully understood by all staff / tutors.
- The elements of combustion and a basic understanding on the theory of fire. The types of fires, types of extinguishing agents, identification of fire extinguishers, use of extinguishers, use of hose reels, and the appropriate extinguisher for each type of fire. Provide practical training in the use of fire extinguishers.

Information Staff should be aware of:

- Discovering a fire – Staff / Tutors should be made aware of the method of raising the alarm in a premises, this should include the position of manual fire alarm call points and their method of operation.
- Hearing the fire alarm – Staff / Tutors should be made aware of the evacuation procedures in their premises. They should be shown escape routes and final exits, they should also be made aware of fire doors and their purpose in protecting escape routes.
- Assembly points – Staff / Tutors should be shown their 'Fire Assembly Point' and made aware of the need to ensure everybody have been accounted for.
- Calling the Fire and Rescue Service – Staff / Tutors should be made aware of the method of calling the fire service and the location of telephones.
- A basic knowledge of the theory of fire – The fire triangle
- Use of fire extinguishers – Staff / Tutors should be trained in the safe use of fire extinguishers. It is not acceptable to say "employees are not expected to use an extinguisher and therefore they don't need to know".