

**UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER.****FIRE SAFETY ADVICE NOTE NO 8.****Dealing with “No Access” management issues following a Fire Risk Assessment****1. Introduction.**

The University of Manchester has a duty to comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety Order) 2005 and carry out Fire Risk Assessments (FRA's) for its buildings.

This involves assessing within the FRA, the chances of a fire occurring anywhere within the building. These FRA's are scheduled and conducted in line with a laid down strategy which completes assessments for building on either a 1,2 or 3 year planned schedule depending upon the buildings risk.

Fire Risk Assessor access to all rooms in a building is necessary for them to undertake a complete assessment. The function of Fire Risk Assessors is to ensure the safety of building occupants by identifying, removing and/or reducing any risk of a fire occurring. When the assessor cannot enter a room it is therefore logged as a “no access” management issue within the report.

This Fire Safety Advice Note (FSAN) is intended to provide guidance to safety practitioners on how to resolve such issues.

**2. What needs to occur?**

As a management issue, “No Access” mainly falls to the Faculty/School to resolve. This essentially requires the room in question to be accessed and assessed for both ignition sources and excessive combustibles. This can be done in a variety of ways but in the interest of simplicity and to keep work to a minimum, it would make sense to incorporate any remediation within existing systems wherever possible. Therefore, the simplest way of addressing “No Access” would be to incorporate some simple additional checks within the Annual Room Check process.

The Fire Risk Assessment schedule is risk based. For the academic estate the highest frequency is bi-annual. Therefore, if basic fire safety checks were incorporated into the annual room check, we have a “ready-made” assurance

system that allows us to effectively “ignore” any “No Access” issues reported by the assessor. Essentially, a revised annual room check that incorporates basic fire safety provision would safely enable “No Access” issues to be signed off immediately.

### **3. Fire Safety elements to include within annual room/space checks.**

Such checks are common sense and similar to the checks that you may make in your own home, such as: -

- Keeping the place tidy and having a good standard of housekeeping. Paper is readily combustible and excessive amounts can lead to rapid fire spread and growth.
- Electricity – neglect or misuse of wiring can lead to short circuits. Check there is no overloading of the electrical supply - no multi-socket adaptors or extension leads plugged into extension leads (daisy chaining). Appliances are unplugged when not in use.
- Electrical appliances – offices are offices and personal items (kettles, toasters, etc.) do not have a place. All electrical appliances should have evidence of PAT testing.
- Only oil-filled radiators are permissible and fan heaters should not be used.
- Heating appliances – portable heaters are a threat when placed beside combustible furniture or fittings, ensure such items are safely placed.
- Regularly removing combustible waste, including accumulations of dust.
- Keeping ignition sources away from combustible material or flammable liquids and gases, keeping use of flammable liquids to a minimum and closing containers when not in use.
- Date of tests for fire extinguishers, a sticker showing a test date should indicate that its date has not expired.
- Check that that any smoke detectors in the room are not capped or otherwise covered/obstructed.

The above is not a definitive list. Fires are easily prevented by keeping ignition sources away from combustible materials so where such risks are found that are not included above, appropriate action should be taken.

More thought and consultation with the Fire Team will need to occur if the room has a higher risk scenario, such as if it uses heat processes such as welding or cutting or similar higher risk processes or stocks combustible materials including flammable liquids or gases.

#### **4. How to sign off such areas after checking them and you are satisfied that it is safe.**

When a room has been checked the management issue can be signed off in the GRATiK system with the words;

*“The room has been checked, no fire issues were observed. With due notification of the next FRA inspection, occupants will be advised of the need to gain access in the future”.*

Where potential fire hazards are found in a room, the occupier should be advised to remove them and the issue signed off in the GRATiK system with the words;

*“The room has been checked. Some hazards were identified and were referred to the occupier to resolve”.*

#### **5. Conclusions.**

This FSAN is intended to clarify what needs to occur to ensure that our buildings and occupants remain safe. It shouldn't be unnecessarily burdensome and indeed is meant to simplify existing arrangements and reduce the associated workloads

Fire safety is everyone's responsibility but not everyone is aware of this fact. All staff need to be aware that they have a legal responsibility to:

*“take reasonable care for the safety of himself and of other relevant persons who may be affected by his acts or omissions at work”.* (Article 23, FSO 2005)

It is therefore wholly legitimate to inform staff of fire hazards that they have created.