



10. Fire - Risk Assessments & Planning - Safety Signage Audit

Category:	Fire
Subcategory:	Risk Assessments & Planning
Frequency:	Yearly
Status:	Best Practice
Type:	Competent Person
Priority:	Recommended
Commonality:	Common

Note: This document provides guidance to support compliance but is not a substitute for professional advice.

Why This Task Matters

Your thorough audit of safety signage ensures that clear, visible guidance is available to help everyone navigate safely during emergencies. By maintaining compliant and unobstructed signage in busy educational environments, you protect pupils and visitors who may be unfamiliar with the building layout. Your attention to this critical safety detail demonstrates your essential role in creating an environment where everyone can respond effectively in an emergency.

Task Summary

Best Practice: An annual safety signage audit checks that all fire exit, directional, and warning signs are present, visible, and compliant with standards. This comprehensive inspection involves systematically checking all areas of the building for the presence and condition of fire safety signs, assessing their visibility and compliance with current standards, and identifying any obscured or missing signage. In education settings, signage can be obscured by display boards, posters, or furniture, which may mislead pupils during an emergency. The audit includes measuring sign visibility, checking compliance with British Standards, and photographing any issues found. The process includes creating a detailed audit record, recommending replacements or improvements, and ensuring all findings are documented. Evidence produced includes the completed audit record detailing all

signage checked and any issues found, annotated photos showing sign locations and conditions, and any recommendations for improvements or replacements.

Relevant Legislation & Guidance

- **Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005:** Requires adequate fire safety signs for safe evacuation
- **Fire Safety: Approved Document B (Buildings other than dwellinghouses):** Provides guidance on fire safety signage requirements
- **British Standard BS 5499: Graphical symbols and signs - Safety signs:** Specifies requirements for fire safety signs
- **Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996:** Sets legal requirements for safety signs
- **British Standard BS 9999: Fire safety in the design, management and use of buildings - Code of practice:** Includes guidance on emergency signage

Typical Frequency

The safety signage audit should be conducted annually, or sooner if there are building modifications or changes to evacuation routes. In educational settings, annual audits typically occur during school holidays when signage issues are more apparent and replacements can be made without disruption. However, more frequent audits may be needed following building works, changes to room layouts, or after incidents where signage proved inadequate. Any significant building alterations should trigger an immediate signage review regardless of the annual schedule.

Applicability

This task is recommended for all educational establishments with fire safety signage requirements, which is common in virtually all schools and colleges. It is particularly important in schools with complex layouts, those undergoing frequent refurbishment, or institutions where signage may be obscured by educational displays. The task applies to all premises with fire safety systems requiring directional and warning signs. While not statutory for all premises, it is essential best practice for ensuring effective emergency evacuation.

Responsible Persons

- **Task Type:** Competent Person
- **In-House Requirements:** This task can be completed by facilities staff or fire safety officers who have received appropriate training in safety signage standards and audit procedures. Staff should be familiar with British Standards for fire safety signs.
- **Permit to Work:** No permit to work is typically required for this audit task.

- **Delivery Model:** Normally completed in-house by trained facilities staff, with support from signage specialists if needed.

Key Considerations

- **Timing considerations:** Schedule during school holidays to allow for replacements without disruption
- **Cost implications:** Minimal cost if completed in-house, though may involve signage replacement (£200-£500)
- **Resource requirements:** Access to all building areas and current signage standards
- **Potential disruption:** Minimal disruption as this is primarily an inspection task
- **Risk assessment requirements:** Audit findings should inform updates to the fire risk assessment

Task Instructions

Prerequisites & Safety

- Ensure access to current safety signage standards and guidelines
- Confirm availability of building plans showing sign locations
- Gather information about recent building modifications
- Ensure safe access to all areas for signage inspection

Tools & Materials

- Current building plans with designated sign locations
- British Standard BS 5499 signage specifications
- Measuring tools for sign size and positioning verification
- Photographic equipment for documentation
- Audit checklist and recording forms
- Ladder or step ladder for high-level signs

Method (Step-by-Step)

Phase A: Preparation and Planning

1. Review building plans to identify required sign locations
2. Gather current signage standards and requirements
3. Prepare systematic audit route covering all areas
4. Schedule audit during period of low occupancy

Phase B: Systematic Inspection

1. Check all fire exit signs for presence, condition, and visibility
2. Verify directional signs are correctly positioned and clear
3. Assess warning signs for compliance and legibility
4. Examine sign illumination and photoluminescence where required
5. Check for obstructions that could hide signage
6. Measure sign sizes and positioning against standards

Phase C: Documentation and Recommendations

1. Photograph all signage with location references
2. Record any missing, damaged, or non-compliant signs
3. Assess visibility issues and potential obstructions
4. Prepare recommendations for replacements or improvements
5. Create detailed audit report with prioritised actions

Measurements & Acceptance Criteria

- Fire exit signs must be visible from required distances (typically 2-3 metres)
- Directional signs must be positioned at decision points and junctions
- Signs must comply with BS 5499 size and colour requirements
- Photoluminescent signs must be certified for performance

If Results Fail

Follow instructions on the Compliance Pod task completion form to record remedial/follow up actions and generate Reactive Task Tickets as required. Immediately clear any obstructions affecting critical signage. Escalate significant deficiencies to facilities management. Arrange urgent replacement of missing or damaged signs.

Reinstatement & Housekeeping

No reinstatement required as this is an audit task. Ensure all documentation is securely filed.

Completion Checks

Verify that the audit covers all required sign locations throughout the building. Confirm that all findings are documented with photographic evidence. Ensure recommendations include priorities and cost estimates.

Record-Keeping & Evidence

- **Upload Process:** Upload any required statutory or supporting evidence to the corresponding task form in Compliance Pod.
- **Statutory Evidence:** No statutory evidence is required for this task.
- **Supporting/Good Practice Evidence:** Completed audit record, annotated photographs of signage, and improvement recommendations support audit readiness.

Common Pitfalls & Best Practice Tips

- **Common mistakes to avoid:** Missing signs in storage areas or basements, failing to check sign illumination, or not considering different user groups' needs
- **Best practices for efficient completion:** Create a signage schedule for systematic checking, conduct audits during holidays, and involve staff familiar with building layout
- **Pro tips for educational settings:** Coordinate with teaching staff to minimize display obstructions, include signage checks in classroom audits, and educate pupils about sign meanings
- **Warning signs that indicate problems:** Signs obscured by displays, missing exit signs, or directional signs pointing to blocked exits

Quick Reference Checklist

- Building plans reviewed for sign locations
- Systematic inspection of all areas completed
- Sign presence, condition, and visibility checked
- Compliance with standards verified
- Obstructions identified and documented
- Photographic evidence collected
- Detailed audit report prepared
- Evidence uploaded to Compliance Pod

Grouped Tasks

Grouping is feasible; align with related tasks of the same frequency and contractor visit.

Related Tasks

- Fire - Risk Assessments & Planning - Risk Assessment Review & Renew
- Fire - Risk Assessments & Planning - Compartmentation Survey

- Fire - Risk Assessments & Planning - Stopping & Service Penetration Inspection
- Fire - Risk Assessments & Planning - Fire Alarm Zone Plan Update & Verification
- Fire - Risk Assessments & Planning - Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) Review
- Fire - Risk Assessments & Planning - Generic Emergency Evacuation Plan (GEEP) Review
- Fire - Risk Assessments & Planning - Fire Logbook Review & Update
- Fire - Risk Assessments & Planning - Arson Risk Assessment & Perimeter Security Review
- Fire - Risk Assessments & Planning - Fire Safety Management Policy Review

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Users must ensure that all tasks are carried out in line with current legislation, manufacturer instructions, site-specific risk assessments, and organisational policies. Where necessary, professional advice should be sought from competent and accredited specialists — for example, fire risk assessors, water hygiene consultants, electrical engineers, gas safety contractors, or health and safety advisors.