



43. Fire - Evacuation & Drills - Building Evacuation Drill

Category:	Fire
Subcategory:	Evacuation & Drills
Frequency:	Every 4 Months
Status:	Statutory
Type:	Competent Person
Priority:	Core
Commonality:	Common

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

Why This Task Matters

Your regular building evacuation drills ensure that pupils, staff, and visitors are familiar with escape procedures and can evacuate safely during emergencies. By conducting these essential exercises every four months in educational settings, you build confidence in emergency preparedness and identify areas for improvement. Your systematic approach to these critical safety drills demonstrates your vital role in protecting lives through practical training.

Task Summary

Statutory: A whole-site evacuation drill must be conducted every four months during term time to ensure pupils, staff, and visitors are familiar with escape procedures. This comprehensive drill involves activating the fire alarm system, mobilizing all building occupants, testing staff response procedures, and verifying assembly procedures. Regular drills are vital for testing staff readiness and identifying blockages or behavioural issues, especially in younger year groups. In large schools or colleges, frequent drills ensure safe, calm evacuation across multiple blocks and assembly areas. The drill includes documenting participation, timing evacuation completion, checking headcounts at assembly points, and reviewing lessons learned. Evidence produced includes drill records documenting the exercise execution and outcomes, observer notes detailing observations and issues identified,

annotated site maps showing assembly point occupancy and evacuation routes, and any recommendations for procedure improvements.

Relevant Legislation & Guidance

- **Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005:** Requires regular evacuation drills in occupied premises
- **Fire Safety: Approved Document B (Buildings other than dwellinghouses):** Provides guidance on evacuation drill frequency and procedures
- **British Standard BS 9999: Fire safety in the design, management and use of buildings - Code of practice:** Includes guidance on evacuation drills and procedures
- **The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014** (for independent schools): Requires adequate emergency procedures
- **Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999:** Requires emergency procedure training and testing

Typical Frequency

Building evacuation drills must be conducted every four months during term time, with these comprehensive exercises continuing throughout the academic year. In educational settings, four-monthly drills are essential for maintaining emergency preparedness. The frequency cannot be reduced as it is a statutory requirement for ensuring occupant familiarity with evacuation procedures.

Applicability

This task applies to all educational establishments, which is common as all buildings require evacuation drills. It is a core statutory task essential for ensuring safe evacuation procedures. The task applies to all schools and colleges with occupied premises.

Responsible Persons

- **Task Type:** Competent Person
- **In-House Requirements:** This task can be completed by trained facilities staff, fire safety officers, or designated drill coordinators who have received appropriate training in emergency drill procedures. Staff should be familiar with building layout and evacuation procedures.
- **Permit to Work:** Coordination with teaching staff and minimal disruption to lessons required.
- **Delivery Model:** Normally completed in-house by trained staff to ensure familiarity with building procedures and minimal external involvement.

Key Considerations

- **Timing considerations:** Schedule during term time to test real occupancy conditions, but coordinate with lesson schedules
- **Cost implications:** Minimal cost if completed in-house, though may require staff time for coordination
- **Resource requirements:** Access to building communication systems and assembly areas
- **Potential disruption:** Will disrupt lessons but essential for safety training
- **Risk assessment requirements:** Drill findings should inform the fire risk assessment

Task Instructions

Prerequisites & Safety

- Ensure drill coordinator is familiar with building layout and procedures
- Confirm participation of teaching staff and emergency response teams
- Check that drill can be conducted safely without causing undue disruption
- Prepare communication plan for staff, pupils, and visitors

Tools & Materials

- Building floor plans and evacuation procedures
- Communication devices and public address systems
- Timing equipment and observation checklists
- Attendance recording sheets and headcount forms
- Safety equipment and first aid provisions

Method (Step-by-Step)

Phase A: Pre-Drill Planning

1. Review building layout and evacuation procedures
2. Identify drill objectives and success criteria
3. Prepare drill scenario and communication scripts
4. Coordinate with teaching staff and emergency teams
5. Inform staff and pupils about drill timing and procedures

Phase B: Drill Setup

1. Position observers at key locations throughout building
2. Prepare timing equipment and attendance recording

3. Ensure communication systems are operational
4. Confirm emergency response teams are in position

Phase C: Drill Execution

1. Activate fire alarm system to simulate emergency
2. Monitor evacuation from all building areas
3. Verify procedures for different user groups
4. Check staff coordination and crowd management
5. Monitor assembly point procedures and headcounts

Phase D: Drill Evaluation

1. Time evacuation completion from different areas
2. Verify attendance and participation of all occupants
3. Assess staff response and communication effectiveness
4. Check for any blockages or procedural issues
5. Gather feedback from participants and observers

Phase E: Documentation and Debrief

1. Document drill execution and outcomes
2. Prepare detailed drill records with findings
3. Record attendance and headcount data
4. Identify lessons learned and improvement recommendations
5. Conduct debrief session with staff and key participants

Measurements & Acceptance Criteria

- All occupants must evacuate within target time (typically 2-3 minutes for small buildings)
- Staff response must be coordinated and effective
- Communication systems must function correctly
- Assembly procedures must account for all occupants

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 review and update evacuation procedures. Escalate significant issues to facilities management and senior leadership. Schedule additional training or procedure revisions.

Reinstatement & Housekeeping

Reset alarm systems and restore normal building operations. Ensure all documentation is securely filed.

Completion Checks

Verify that drill records comprehensively document the exercise. Confirm that annotated site maps show evacuation routes and assembly points. Ensure observer notes detail all observations.

Record-Keeping & Evidence

- **Upload Process:** Upload any required statutory or supporting evidence to the corresponding task form in Compliance Pod.
- **Statutory Evidence:** Drill records and annotated site maps must be retained for at least 3 years.
- **Supporting/Good Practice Evidence:** Detailed observations and headcount records support audit readiness.

Common Pitfalls & Best Practice Tips

- **Common mistakes to avoid:** Poor timing causing excessive disruption, inadequate communication, or failing to evaluate all aspects of the drill
- **Best practices for efficient completion:** Plan drills carefully with staff input, conduct thorough debrief sessions, and maintain detailed records of previous drills
- **Pro tips for educational settings:** Coordinate with curriculum leaders for optimal timing, use drills as teaching opportunities about fire safety, and maintain clear records of procedure updates
- **Warning signs that indicate problems:** Slow evacuation times, poor staff coordination, or communication failures

Quick Reference Checklist

- Building layout and procedures reviewed
- Drill objectives and success criteria established
- Staff and pupil communication completed
- Drill execution monitored and timed
- Evacuation procedures and coordination verified
- Attendance recorded and headcounts confirmed
- Detailed drill records prepared

- Evidence uploaded to Compliance Pod

Grouped Tasks

This task is not normally grouped with other tasks.

Related Tasks

- Fire - Evacuation & Drills - Emergency Evacuation Chairs Full Service & Inspection
- Fire - Evacuation & Drills - Emergency Evacuation Chairs Quarterly Inspection
- Fire - Evacuation & Drills - Sleeping Accommodation Evacuation Drill

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