

Health and Safety Standard: Use of Protected Corridors

Document Control Information	
Version control	1.1
Owned by:	Health and Safety Team
Latest amendment on:	22-06-2020
Approved by:	Health and Safety Committee
Approved on:	07-03-2019
Coming into effect on:	07-03-2019
Review date:	November 2022

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Summary of standard

This Safety Operational Standard gives information on how to ensure compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 with respect to fire escape routes and specifically the use of corridors.

The legislation requires the University to ensure that corridors and stairwells that form part of the escape routes are always kept clear and 'hazard free'. Items that may be a source of fuel or pose an ignition threat should not be located on any corridor or stairwell that will be used as an escape route so that safe means of escape can be assured for all occupants.

1. Scope

This standard will apply to all University buildings and University occupied space.

2. Protected stairwells

A protected stairwell ([Appendix 1a](#)), example diagram is a stair that is enclosed from the rest of the building on every floor. The purpose of this is to provide fire resisting smoke stop doors between the stairwell and any potential fire in order that people in the stairwell are protected from the fire and smoke whilst evacuating the building and to ensure that smoke is prevented from spreading through the building.

It is important that these areas are especially free of anything that can burn as it is part of the function of a protected route to be as safe as possible in all fire cases. Therefore, no posters, notices, furniture, or storage of materials can be accepted in these areas. They always need to be kept unobstructed to avoid tripping and collision risks so as not to hinder passage in the event of an emergency evacuation. Further guidance on this is available from the University Fire Safety Adviser.

Lift and staircase lobbies (where adjacent to a protected stairwell) should be considered as part of the protected means of escape and must follow the same rules as in 2.1. Staircase lobbies are an essential part of providing safe means of escape and firefighting and therefore must always remain free of any potential risk.

3. Escape corridors

Corridors which provide for escape in only one direction are referred to as 'dead end corridors', ([Appendix 1c](#)), example diagram, these must remain as sterile areas. Items such as furniture or equipment may not be located or stored, even temporarily, in any dead-end corridors.

Corridors where there are two means of escape, ([Appendix 1b](#)), example diagram may have restricted items contained within them. However, such items are limited, and this standard sets out those limitations.

Corridors always used as a means of escape need to be kept unobstructed, to avoid tripping and collision risks and so as not to hinder passage in the event of an

emergency evacuation. Corridors may not be regarded as an extension to the workspace.

4. Areas of 'dual use'

The phrase "Dual Use" has been used in this guidance and is meant to indicate areas which are utilised for both occupation (e.g. offices, meeting rooms, laboratories, etc.), as well as forming part of a means of escape route.

Two examples are:

- 1) Where an alternative escape route is via a room off a corridor or another room which leads to the outside (either at ground level or an external escape stair) A virtual corridor must be maintained through the room providing the escape route, however this is still a room therefore the other restrictions do not apply. ([Appendix 1d](#))
- 2) A corridor that is sufficiently wide to accommodate a limited amount of furniture, such as chairs to form a waiting area outside an office. Here the primary function is as an (escape) corridor but the 'dual use' for accommodation is permitted in circumstances limited by the width of the corridors, amount and type of furniture, as detailed throughout this standard. It is important that 'inner-inner rooms' are not created and that corridors do not become deemed 'rooms' or useable space – as this will have adverse implications on the building fire risk assessment and acceptable functionality of the building

5. Equipment

Items that are a source of fuel, pose an ignition risk or are combustible and likely to increase the fire loading or spread of fire, should not be located on any corridor, stairway or circulation space that will be used as an escape route. Such items include:

- Portable heaters, e.g. bottled gas (LPG), or electric radiant heaters and electric convectors or boilers.
- Compressed gas or oxygen cylinders.
- Cooking appliances; and
- Unenclosed gas pipes, meters and other fittings.

Depending on the University building, the fire risk assessment and where more than one escape route is available, the items below may be acceptable if the minimum width of the widest exit door is maintained and the items present a relatively low fire risk (as defined by the Health and Safety Office) see photographs in ([Appendix 1e](#))

- Non-combustible lockers conforming to point 7.4
- Vending machines.
- Small items of electrical equipment (e.g. television monitors, water coolers etc).
- Freezers and refrigerators.
- Small quantities of upholstered furniture which meets British Standard 7176 or the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988.
- Small amounts of foliage (i.e. plants).

Note: Any electrical equipment located in corridors must be appropriately maintained and PAT tested

Note: Any furniture or equipment located in corridors must not be located within 500mm of any fire safety provision or be located such that it obscures the effects of these systems (e.g. emergency lighting or detector head).

6. Waste materials

Waste materials such as packaging, paper recycling bags, general waste bags, and cardboard boxes must NOT be stored in corridors; where such items are awaiting collection by cleaning staff they must be kept in rooms.

University recycling and waste bins may be located in corridors but only where provided with automatic fire alarm detection and where there are two or more means of escape available (i.e. not in dead end corridors or staircase enclosures). However, these bins must be compliant in design to the University's requirements and be regularly emptied. At no time shall the bins obstruct the means of escape or restrict the width of the corridor, such that it affects the escape route.

7. Furniture

7.1 Obstruction to escape routes

Most furniture is large and will obstruct escape routes. Furniture may not be placed in any corridor if it narrows the remaining width of the corridor to less than that of the widest escape door.

In addition to the above any furniture that is placed in corridors where it may be knocked over and cause a risk should be secured to the floor or wall such that it is not vulnerable to being knocked over. Any such furniture must also be located on only one side of the corridor.

Redundant furniture must not be stored in corridors whilst awaiting disposal by campus staff, such furniture must be retained in offices until it can be disposed of in a safe manner.

7.2. Furniture for events or functions

As all furniture represents fuel for a fire and it is necessary to minimise the amount of combustible material within corridors with two or more means of escape, the amount of furniture must therefore be limited. This means that chairs, tables etc. can only be placed in corridors where there is a proven need and such furniture should be selected in order to maintain a 'low fire risk' (see section 7.2).

All events and functions must ensure they have proper planning and appropriate risk assessments to be undertaken. This should ensure that all related risks are taken into account.

7.3. Special fire risks

In order to minimise the amount of fuel present in furniture, items should preferably be made of metals, solid woods, laminated wood, chipboards, plastics, and heavily upholstered furniture should be avoided wherever possible. Plastics burn very

vigorously once melted giving off large quantities of dense smoke; whilst woods burn more slowly and give off less harmful fumes.

7.4. Lockers

Persons wishing to place lockers in corridors will need to consult with Estates and Health and Safety Office.

Lockers should have sloping tops fitted to prevent the use of the locker tops for additional storage. The Lockers should be made of steel and have doors that lock. Mesh cages and lockers with excessively large ventilation grilles will not be acceptable in corridors. The lockers will be fastened together or secured to the wall so as to provide a high degree of stability. Lockers must not be free standing since they have the potential to fall and block the corridor.

The contents of lockers should be restricted. In particular, flammable substances are not permitted to be kept in lockers in corridors. In all cases the locker doors should be kept locked shut.

Permitted contents of lockers in corridors:

- Outdoor protective clothing.
- Personal effects of Staff/Students whilst they are in the University Building, books, and papers.

Prohibited contents of lockers in corridors:

- Flammable, highly flammable, or high-risk liquids or gasses.
- Compressed gas cylinders.
- Chemicals, Samples, Biological agents or other such materials.

In all cases the location of lockers will be restricted to those corridors where there is automatic fire detection (at least two detector heads present) and where risk assessment indicates that it is otherwise reasonable.

7.5 Coat Hooks

Coat hooks should be provided within rooms rather than fixed to walls of corridors used as means of escape. To maintain a 'class O' surface spread of flame characteristic, as described in section 9 below.

7.6 Bookcases and filing cabinets

Bookcases and filing cabinets MUST NOT be stored or located within any protected corridor or escape route.

8. Display materials and decorations

Displays are often located in corridors and in entrance foyers, and generally comprise of materials such as paper, cardboard and plastic, which provides a means for the rapid spread of fire. An evaluation must be undertaken as to what material could ignite first and what would cause the fire to develop and spread and assess how materials used in temporary or permanent displays would interact with surface linings and position them accordingly. To reduce the risk of fire spread, consideration must be given to the following:

- Avoid the use of displays in corridors and foyers.
- Minimise the size and number of display areas to discrete, separated areas (e.g. along a corridor).
- Treat displays with proprietary flame-retardant sprays where appropriate; • The use of display cabinets.
- Keep displays away from light fittings and heaters.
- Keep displays away from ceiling; and
- Ensure that there are no ignition sources in the vicinity.

Permanent artwork and display materials connected with art exhibitions or events require separate consideration, please contact the Health and Safety Office for advice.

9. Notice boards

Wall mounted notice boards, display boards and bulletin boards are used throughout the University as an essential and convenient way of communicating information to staff and students. However, open notice boards which have substantial amounts of paper attached are vulnerable to arson. A fire involving a notice board can facilitate the rapid spread of flames and the production of a significant amount of smoke.

Due to this increased risk notice boards are given one of two surface spread of flame ratings (defined in British Standard 476: Part 7)

Class O: Notice boards which comply with 'Class O' requirements are glazed notice boards with aluminium frame, fire resistant toughened glass doors and 'Class O' core material with lockable fire resisting covering

Class 1: Open type boards with fire resistant material covering

Dead end corridors with only one direction of escape [Appendix 1c](#) must only have 'Class O' style notice boards which are restricted to 20% of the total ceiling and wall surface area of the corridor.

9.1 Corridors with an alternative means of escape (not dead ends)

Open notice boards are allowed in corridors with escape in two directions but must meet the following criteria:

- The corridor has automatic smoke detection within the section that the notice board is to be fixed
- The boards are located away from radiators/heaters
- Open notice boards must be restricted to one side of the corridor, unless they are 'Class O' boards, when they may be used on both sides of a corridor
- Notice boards must meet 'Class 1' requirements with a fire-retardant material covering providing that the surface area of the 'Class 1' material does not exceed 20% of the total ceiling and wall surface area of the corridor
- The remaining area must be 'Class O'. In applying the 20% surface area factor, any poster, display board or similar items fixed to the wall or ceiling surfaces shall be included in the calculation as 'Class 1' items.
- The board should be suitably managed. The name and contact details of the

- person responsible for the board must be displayed on each board.
- Notices must be pinned down at all four corners and must not extend beyond the confines of the board.
 - Notices of a permanent nature should be laminated.
 - Untidy boards tend not to get read so remove old material regularly.
 - Notice boards in corridors must not be used for dispensing leaflets.

Such materials must also comply with the University's Policy on the display of Posters and may be subject to removal if it does not.

10. Temporary signs or notices

Temporary signs and notices to aid new students or navigate persons to conferences rooms etc may not be placed on pillars and walls, any required navigation or notification signs must be via the local Front of House team

Any such notices must include the University logo, contact details of the person responsible for the notices and on completion of the event they must be removed as soon as possible.

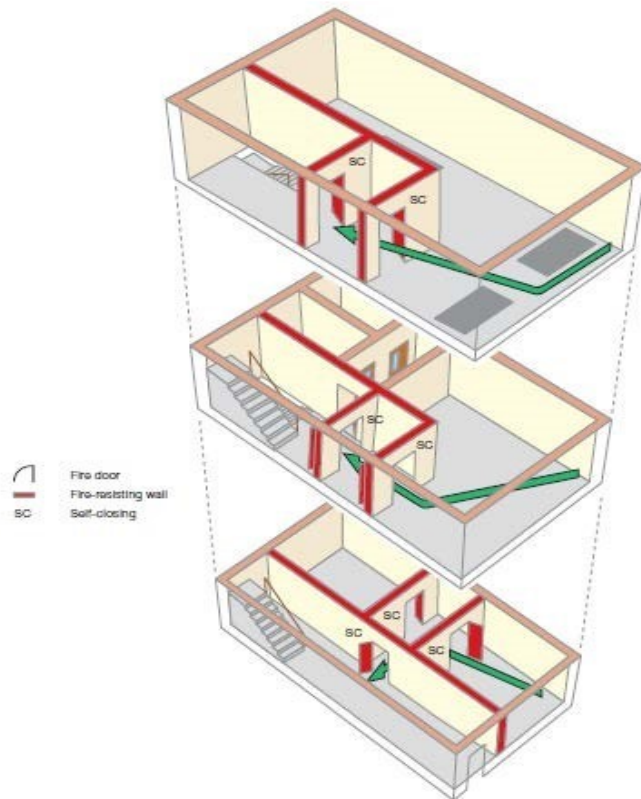
All other unauthorised notices and any notices without contact details must be removed immediately.

11. Variations

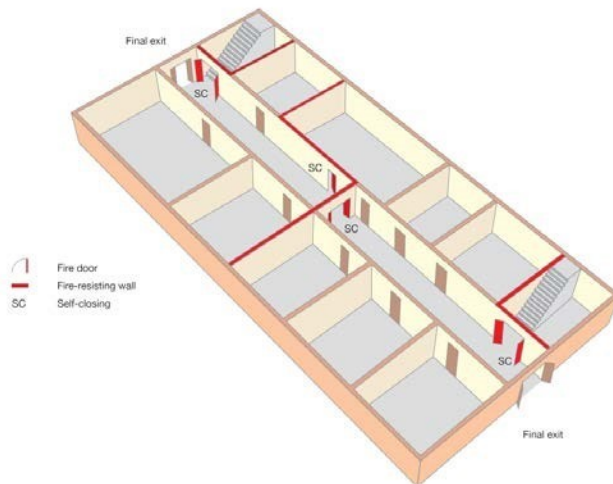
If it is required and necessary to veer away from the requirements of this standard then an appropriate risk assessment must be undertaken and submitted to the Health and Safety Office, prior to any change being implemented

12. Appendix 1: Example Diagrams

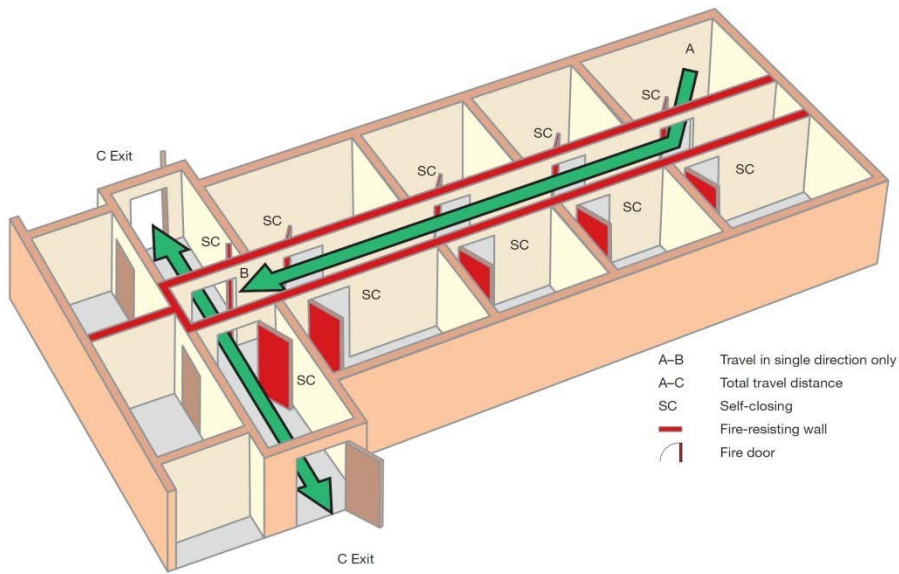
1a Staircase Enclosure with lobby protection:



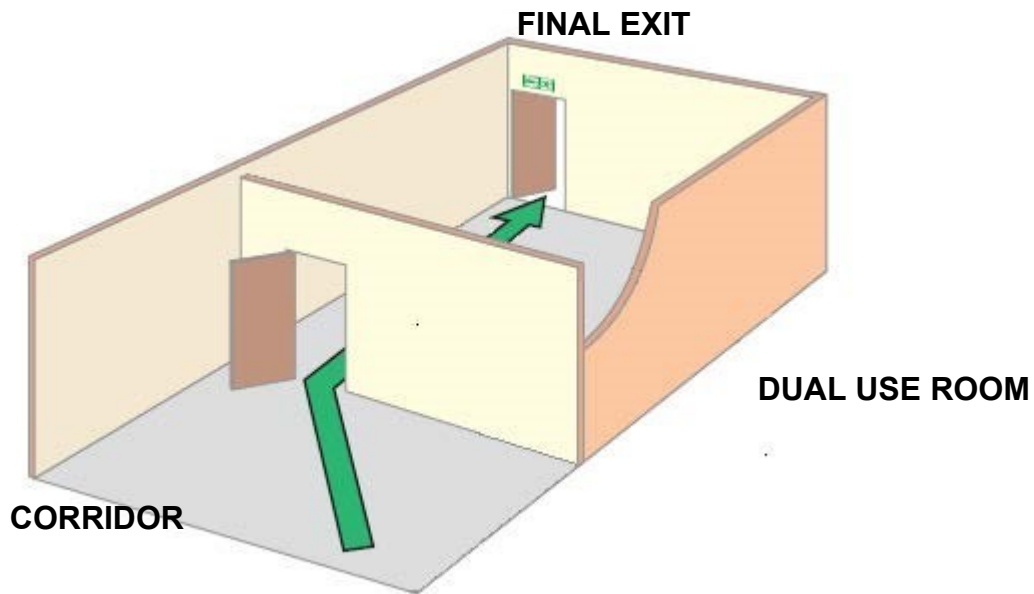
1b Two means of escape:



1c Dead End Corridor (A to B):



1d Example of a room with 'dual use' providing a means of escape (section 4a)



1e Example of a corridor maintaining the width of the door with furniture stored in it



NOT ACCEPTABLE

