

University of London

Senate House and Stewart House

Fire safety arrangements

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Fire Safety Arrangements – Senate and Stewart House

1. Introduction

This document sets out all aspects of the fire precautions and procedures in force at Senate House and Stewart House, University of London. It is essential to note the fire alarm systems in each building are linked and fully networked. Therefore if a smoke detector or a call point is activated in one building, the location of the activation will appear on each fire alarm panel and the alarm will sound in both buildings simultaneously. Both buildings are also physically linked through corridors on certain levels and this allows the joint use of the evacuation staircases in either building if necessary.

2. Fire Risk Assessment

As required by the Regulatory Reform Order (Fire Safety) 2005, each building has a fire risk assessment that has been prepared by a competent person. The fire risk assessments cover the building occupancy levels, the alarm system, fire marshalling, staff training, provision of fire extinguishers, maintenance of equipment, widths of staircases and final exit doors, etc. for each of the two buildings. These documents are kept up-to-date to reflect any material changes in usage, layout, etc and are held on file by the Finance & Estates Department. The London Fire and Rescue Service will periodically ask to view the fire risk assessments and may comment on whether they consider them to be suitable and sufficient and they may offer advice or even insist on improvements to the fire safety arrangements in force if they feel that to be necessary.

3. Action to be taken by a person discovering a fire

In the event of any person discovering a fire, the alarm should be raised by pressing the nearest manual call point.

4. Action to be taken by occupants on hearing the Fire Alarm

All staff, students, visitors, contractors should leave the building in a safe and orderly manner by the nearest exit and where appropriate, encourage others to do so. If leaving by the main reception desks in Senate or Stewart House, please give any relevant information regarding the fire to security/reception. If exiting through any of the other exits please pass this information to the fire marshals or security officers.

5. Fire Alarm System

Both buildings are linked and fully networked to the same fire alarm system and therefore if a smoke detector or a call point is activated in one building, the alarm will sound in both buildings simultaneously. Manual alarm call points are provided at all storey exits, final exits and other strategic points throughout the buildings. Alarm sounders are situated throughout the buildings to provide audible cover in all areas. Automatic fire detection (AFD) is provided to at least L3 standard throughout Stewart House and the South Block and Tower of Senate House. AFD in the North Block is being upgraded to the same standard during the current refurbishment project.

A two stage fire alarm system operates throughout Stewart House and all areas of Senate House between 07.30hrs and 19.00hrs (Monday – Friday) except above the 7th floor of the tower. When an AFD device (smoke or heat detector) activates, 5 minutes are allowed to investigate the cause and confirm if a fire is present or not. If the main reception desk at South Block is not informed within the 5 minutes, the system goes into full alarm. The system will also go into full alarm if (a) a Manual Call Point is activated or (b) more than one AFD device is showing fire or (c) the AFD device that activated is situated above the 7th floor of the tower since it is not possible to reach that area to investigate within 5 minutes.

The two stage system is enabled by the duty engineer (from BBW) at approximately 07:30 each weekday morning and the exact time is recorded in the logbook kept at SH main reception. The two stage system is disabled each evening around 19:00 and the exact time is recorded in the log book – the two stage system may be extended beyond 19:00 if there is an evening event taking place and an extension was considered practical after a risk assessment of the individual circumstances that takes into account the number of

security staff on duty, etc.

At all other times a single stage alarm system operates.

Once the alarm is activated the sounders must not be silenced until the building is fully evacuated. The evacuation must continue even if a 'false' activation is determined. Stopping the evacuation in mid-progress will cause confusion and could undermine the effectiveness of future evacuations.

A VESDA (Very Early Smoke Detection Alarm) system operates in Computer Centre suite located in the basement of Stewart House - in addition to the normal ceiling smoke heads. If the VESDA units pick up any smoke particles in the air, an intermittent alarm FOR THIS SYSTEM will sound on the Ground and Basement floors of Stewart House. Also when activated the VESDA system appears as a zone on the Stewart House fire alarm panel. If this happens it is important that ULCC are contacted immediately and that the Estates department and BBW maintenance teams are informed ASAP.

If a normal smoke detector on the ceiling of the suite is activated, the two stage system for Senate House and Stewart House will operate as per the rest of the building i.e. i.e. pre-alarm or full alarm depending on the time of day. The Computer Centre is protected by an Argonite gas suppression system which when in automatic mode will 'dump' the gas should two ceiling fire alarm detectors in the computer suite activate.

6. Fire safety signage

All rooms with more than one exit have the fire exits marked with fire exit signage that meets the safety signs and signals regulations. Outside individual rooms there is suitable and sufficient fire exit direction signage in all areas to guide occupants from any area to the outside of the building.

7. Fire extinguishers

Adequate numbers of fire extinguishers – water and carbon dioxide are provided close to each storey exit and at other strategic points throughout the buildings. All floors of Stewart House are equipped with hose reels. There are dry risers on the following staircases in Senate House: (a) T1 Staircase; (b) No. 4 Staircase; (c) No. 10 Staircase; (d) No. 2 Staircase; (e) No. 7 Staircase.

8. How the emergency services are to be called

The fire brigade is called by the receptionist from the South Block during normal operational hours. Outside normal operational hours the fire brigade is called by the Stewart House reception, manned 24 hours. The member of security staff calling the fire brigade will liaise with the Fire Brigade when they arrive on site or hand this task over to Security Manager if available. Detailed procedures for security staff in the event of a fire alarm at any time are set out further below.

9. Fire marshals

The buildings are divided up into zones, with each zone covering part of a floor. Each zone has a designated zone fire marshal and a deputy. Zone fire marshals are members of UoL staff or staff from the several other organisations with accommodation in the buildings. Occupants should need no other prompting to leave when the fire alarm sounds; however, when an alarm sounds during normal operational hours, zone fire marshals quickly sweep their area of responsibility to determine whether occupants have heard and understood the fire alarm. They should make a visual check of the area, they are not expected to check every room, particularly if doors are closed. They also assist disabled persons or report their location and any other noted problems to a fire brigade officer, a security officer or a senior member of staff. Fire marshals are instructed not to return to their zone if they are away from their zone when the alarm sounds as this could be confusing to occupants if they ascend stairs when occupants are descending.

A full list of the current zone fire marshals is available on the intranet.

Obviously, not all zone fire marshals will be present at all times. Accordingly, during normal operational hours all staff are expected to act as basic fire marshals when an alarm sounds – leaving promptly, advising visitors, assisting disabled persons or reporting their location as above.

10. Conference, Events and Meeting Rooms

Conference, Events and Meeting Rooms - the University has a large number of rooms used for conferences, events and meetings and many attendees in these rooms will be unfamiliar with the building. For all conferences, events and meetings, **the person in charge of the event is responsible, AT ALL TIMES, for ensuring that arrangements are in place to ensure that the room is cleared and the attendees are encouraged to leave the building if an alarm sounds.**

These arrangements may involve additional security staff having to be engaged to act as fire marshals or ensuring that adequate numbers of catering or other staff servicing the event will need to be aware of the fire evacuation procedures and be adequately briefed to act as fire marshals to advise and assist the guests in safe evacuation from the building. An instruction card with basic evacuation information is posted in the conference, events and meeting rooms.

For externally booked events the responsible person will be a member of the conference team. For internal and academic events it will be the responsibility of the Central Activity or Institute organising the event, and this responsibility will need to be allocated to an individual prior to the event taking place.

11. Building exits and assembly points

All final exit doors open to a place of relative safety, they are either push bar operated or already in the open position. Where doors are held in the shut position for controlled access via a swipe card, these doors default to open in the event of fire alarm activation. There is a manual override box adjacent to each swipe card door which can be operated in the event of a system malfunction.

It is not possible to maintain a checklist of occupants and therefore a roll call is not conducted. However, four assembly points are traditionally used and staff should assemble at the one used by their department.

1. Pavement along Malet Street sunken gardens
2. Pavements in Montague Place by British Museum
3. The pedestrianised area of Thornhaugh Street between SOAS and the Institute of Education
4. The pavement in front of 25-30 Russell Square

The ODG and BCP liaison should assemble at the Malet St sunken gardens.

12. Staff re-entry to the building, following evacuation

Staff should be aware of their departmental assembly points - see (11) above - and remain there until the all clear is given by security staff. Under no circumstances should staff re-enter the building until they are told to do so, even if the alarm has been silenced.

To enable the Library to reopen in an orderly fashion, Library staff will be requested to re-enter the building ahead of other staff. Following the re-entry of Library staff, all other staff will be asked to re-enter the building in an orderly manner. Staff should use the stairs if possible so that the lifts are available to those less able to climb the stairs.

13. Evacuation of disabled persons

There are protected refuge points on all floors with a communication link to the reception desk. Staff or visitors with mobility difficulties such that they cannot descend stairs should make their way to a refuge point and contact the reception desk. They will then be informed as to the status of the emergency, i.e. whether it has been found to be a 'false alarm', and therefore they and any person accompanying them can remain safely where they are or if they will need to be assisted to evacuate from the building. If the latter is

the case, this will be carried out by trained persons using evacuation chairs. There are evacuation chairs sited in the following locations:

- South Block Main Reception- telephone switchboard room
- Library 4th Floor adjacent to main lifts
- Stewart House reception.

14. Specific arrangement for potentially high fire risk areas i.e. if controls are not followed.

The car parks and emergency generator fuel storage area (compactor shed) are deemed as potentially high risk due to the risk of arson and bulk fuel storage. To minimise opportunities for arson in the car park, waste bins are to be kept locked; skips are to be of the enclosed type or to be securely fenced off. To minimise risk in the compactor shed, AFD has been fitted and the shed is to be kept locked when not in actual use. In addition arrangements similar to a petrol garage forecourt are to be in place – (i) no smoking; (ii) no naked flames; (iii) no heaters or any other sources of ignition to be used in the area; (iv) close off the area to keep out unauthorised persons during fuel deliveries; (v) follow instructions on the tank in the event of a spillage.

15. Staff Training

All UoL staff receive training in fire awareness at their induction session held by UoL staff development section. Zone fire marshals receive specific fire marshal training using the Essex Fire Services DVD - 'Fire Marshalling' along with further information from UoL's fire safety adviser. Security staff receive similar specific training plus fire investigation techniques for the two stage system and the use of evacuation chairs.