



Leonard Stanley Village Hall

Fire Safety Policy

June 1st 2021

This document sets out the Fire Safety Policy of Leonard Stanley Village Hall.

Introduction

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 applies to England and Wales and will take effect on 1st October 2006. It reforms current fire safety laws and covers general fire precautions and other fire safety duties in non-domestic property. The Order requires:

- the appointment of a 'responsible person (s)'
- a fire safety 'risk assessment' and
- fire precautions to be put in place where necessary and where it is reasonable and practical to do so.

The Fire and Rescue Authority will be responsible for enforcing the Order and will inspect premises and undertake audits of fire risk assessments. However, they will target their resources at premises that are deemed to be high risk e.g. those that are considered to be a high risk to people and the community (such as night clubs) and not those that are well constructed, well managed and have adequate prevention measures in place and therefore considered low risk.

Responsibilities of the village hall management committee

The main emphasis under the 2005 Order is towards reducing the risk of fire and preventing fire.

Responsible Person

The village hall management committee will, as the body in control of the premises, be the 'responsible person'. The responsible person is responsible for complying with the Order and is required to either carry out a fire risk assessment and then take the necessary steps to reduce or remove the risk so that it is as low as possible or delegate this task to somebody else.

The responsible person must appoint one or more 'competent persons' (who can be committee members) to undertake the risk assessment and carry out any of the preventative and protective measures required. A competent person is someone with enough training and experience or knowledge and other qualities to be able to implement these measures properly. (A village hall committee member who knows the building and the use made of it could probably be judged to have enough 'knowledge and other qualities' if provided with information about companies servicing the hall's fire protection equipment, maintenance schedules, fire officer's contact details and previous advice and this information sheet.)

Having carried out the risk assessment the appointed person needs to:

- communicate clearly with the rest of the committee (see below)
- ensure that the hall and necessary fire protection equipment is maintained in an efficient state and in good working order and repair by a competent person and in accordance with any manufacturer's instructions.

The appointed person needs to make sure that the whole committee are consulted and informed with regard to fire safety matters but in particular:

- provide appropriate instruction in the use of equipment
- ensure the committee are aware of any risks identified and the measures taken to reduce the risk
- ensure the committee are aware of any proposals for improving fire precautions
- the presence of dangerous substances and the risk to users of the premises
- the agreed system for contacting the emergency services and evacuating the building if necessary
- to ensure that the committee co-operate with each other to keep the hall safe from fire and its effects and do not do anything that places themselves, other people or the hall at risk.

The village hall management committee needs to co-operate with the appointed person to ensure that the hall and its users are safe from fire and its effects.

Risk Assessment

Fire Officers warn that:

- over time, bad management practices can create hazards and advise committees to look out for the following: Fire doors propped or held open with door wedges and cabin hooks. 95% of people killed in fires are killed by smoke, so closing fire doors is vitally important.
- rubbish accumulation and storage of flammables, especially in boiler rooms where there is an ignition source. Get rid of rubbish

Carrying out a Risk Assessment

A fire risk assessment should be carried out once per year with a periodic fire safety review once per quarter, as per the checklist in Appendix A.

A risk assessment, as explained in detail in ACRE's Village Hall Information Sheet 15, Health and safety legislation and village halls, is "nothing more than a careful examination of what could cause harm to people, so that you can weigh up whether you have taken enough precautions or should do more to prevent harm". The Government's fire guidance confirms this: "a fire risk assessment is an organised and methodical look at your premises, the activities carried on there and the likelihood that a fire could start and cause harm to those in and around the premises".

The aims of the fire risk assessment are:

- to identify the fire hazards
- to reduce the risk of those hazards causing harm to as low as reasonably practicable
- to decide what physical fire precautions and management arrangements are necessary to ensure the safety of people in the premises if a fire does start.

The five steps of a fire risk assessment are:

- I. identify fire hazards
- II. identify people at risk
- III. evaluate, remove, reduce and protect from risk
- IV. record, plan, inform, instruct and train
- V. review

Documentation

It is not an option to do nothing in the belief that the hall is 'low risk' and won't be inspected anyway; it is an offence not to comply with the Order. If an inspection were to be carried out to check that the hall is complying with the Order written evidence of the risk assessment and the steps taken to deal with any findings will be required.

Responsibility to hirers

Village hall management committees have a responsibility to ensure that hirers are aware of the fire safety regulations and appoint a person to take responsibility at the event.

Every booking confirmation will contain information about fire safety and details of the location of fire safety equipment such as fire extinguishers.

Smoking Regulations

All enclosed public places and work places in England became smoke free on 01 July 2007. The legislation applies to 'enclosed' or 'substantially enclosed' premises that are open to the public or that are used as a place of work by more than one person, and/or where members of the public may attend and/or receive or provide goods or services. Fire Officers warn that over time, bad management practices can create hazards.

No- smoking signs must be displayed that meet the requirements of the law. The draft regulations require all non-smoking premises to display signs: equivalent to A5 size in area, carrying the international no-smoking symbol and words such as, 'No smoking: It is against the law to smoke in these premises'.

Appendix A – Periodic Safety Review Checklist

This is not intended to take the place of a fire risk assessment but should be used as a means of ensuring that safety standards, established after the fire risk assessment, are being maintained. It might be appropriate to run over the list at the time of committee meetings, provided they are held at least once a quarter.

- Has the structural fire resistance been impaired by alterations and repairs?
- Have any alterations or repairs been planned, or carried out, which might affect the fire resistance?
- Have any improvements or decorating been planned, or carried out, that might affect flame spread characteristics of surface linings?
- Have any furniture, curtains or drapes been brought in, or are going to be delivered, that need consideration of their flammability properties?
- Are curtains clear of the ground?
- Are any self-closing mechanisms of fire doors operating and closing the doors properly?
- Are emergency exit push-bar devices functioning correctly?
- Are fire exits and escape routes clearly marked and illuminated?
- Are the lighting, and emergency lighting, systems adequate and functioning correctly?
- Is an approved seating plan on display?
- Is the means of ensuring that the maximum permitted number of people entering the hall is not exceeded, operating?
- Are the gangway limits being adhered to?
- Are floor coverings in good condition'?
- Has the electrical equipment and supply been professionally checked?
- Has the chimney been swept?
- Has the firefighting equipment been serviced?
- Has the detection system and battery been checked?
- Are the smoking rules being adhered to?
- Are the areas open to the public, free of combustible stores?
- Is rubbish being kept safely and removed frequently?
- Are the security measures functioning?
- Do all committee members know how to use the firefighting equipment?
- Are there any hazards anticipated or overlooked?