



FIRE SAFETY: CHOOSING A FIRE ASSEMBLY POINT

Best Practice Guidance Produced in Partnership with Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue

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INTRODUCTION

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (RRO) requires that “emergency routes and exits must lead as directly as possible to a place of safety”.

A “place of safety” is usually designated as the Fire Assembly Point and is a key piece to any emergency plan. It should be well-known and clearly marked to provide an easy location during an emergency. Within the building the evacuation notices should indicate the assembly point.

For many premises a single assembly point is sufficient, but you may need more than one, e.g. because of prevailing weather conditions, hazardous materials location, occupants needing to exit from opposite sides of a building, or due to the scale or complexity of the premises.

In larger premises, there may be multiple assembly points, with each area having its own dedicated point. Each assembly point should have a safety officer responsible for managing the affairs of the assembly point during an emergency until the situation is all clear.

The assembly point should be located far enough away from the building to afford protection from heat and smoke in a fire situation but not so far away as to discourage people from using it. Fire Assembly Points should be in positions that do not put staff, visitors and users of the building at risk from emergency vehicles responding to the incident, or from general/other traffic in the vicinity, therefore the Fire Assembly Points should be located away from, and off the vehicle access routes leading to the building. Ideally the Fire Assembly Points should be located so as not to require the crossing of a road or movement through trafficked areas.

Fire Assembly Points are temporary gathering areas where it can be immediately determined if everyone is out of the building. Appropriate decisions should be made regarding continuance of use of the Fire Assembly Points for longer durations. Management and staff should undertake fire drills so that they will be familiar with what should be done in the event of a fire occurring and the locations and use of the Fire Assembly Points.

When it comes to choosing a specific assembly point, picture your own office or workplace. Where are the potential hazards? Would you want to have a meeting place beside these potentially hazardous locations? To get an idea of where the assembly point should be, think of the safest locations that are free from hazards, and that have good lighting, then make your evacuation plans accordingly. Use your common knowledge and get input and feedback from your staff to ensure that everyone has a say regarding the potential threats of the proposed assembly point.

You should also consider all your options before adjusting or finalising your plan. The location of assembly points should be regularly reviewed particularly if there is any significant change within the premises. Finally, you may need to consider different assembly points for different types of incidents e.g. fire, chemical leaks, bomb threats etc. These may need to consider factors such as ground conditions (slopes, hard standing, and grass), prevailing weather conditions, and distances from buildings. Further guidance can be found in the Fire Safety Risk Assessment Guides.





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