



## **Emergency Procedures in Schools**

### **NEU guidance for members, reps and local officers**

This briefing sets out advice on the procedures to be adopted for dealing with various types of emergencies in schools and on sources of more detailed advice from the NEU and others.

#### **Planning for emergencies**

The NEU has produced a wide range of guidance documents addressing concerns about routine health and safety issues in schools. Occasionally, however, emergency situations can arise and in such eventualities, teachers need to know what practical steps to take. This guidance seeks to enable teachers to assess the adequacy of their school's emergency procedures and to reassure them that professional help from outside sources is always at hand.

Contingency planning for emergencies and disasters is essentially an extension of the risk assessment principle. Consequently, a basic understanding of risk assessment and its applications in other areas of health and safety policy is likely to be very helpful to those dealing with the management of risk in the context of emergency and disaster planning.

Details of other NEU health and safety guidance documents relevant to this topic are given at the end of this briefing.

#### **Employers' duties regarding emergency procedures**

Regulation 8 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 requires employers to provide employees with information on procedures to be followed in the event of danger or threat of danger. Should the Department for Education (DfE) or Health and Safety Executive (HSE) issue new or updated codes of practice on particular topics, head teachers and others in control of educational premises must incorporate these codes into their health and safety policies and procedures.

School emergency plans should cover all foreseeable major incidents that could put at risk the occupants or users of the school. This plan will indicate the actions to be taken in the event of a major incident so that everything possible is done to save life and prevent injury. The plan should become part of the school's regular risk assessment.

Staff should in turn be informed of their school's procedures to be followed in the event of emergency situations arising involving, for instance, bomb threats, fire breakout, gas leaks, electrical faults, flooding, medical emergencies, extremes of temperature owing to boilers breaking down or inadequate ventilation, problems with building works/contractors, or intruders on school premises/violence in schools.

Emergency procedures for the full range of possible incidents should be made known to new and temporary members of staff as soon as possible after their appointment.



All occupants of a school, with the possible exception of very young children, must be able to recognise alarm signals within their school and should be familiar with the available escape routes and assembly points after evacuation.

Appendix 3 contains further guidance on employers' health and safety responsibilities.

### **Preparing a plan**

Emergency plans – sometimes called disaster management plans – are best produced as a result of proper consultation with the school community as a whole. NEU safety representatives in particular can play a key role in the development of such policies. The following pages set out:

- what should be included in an emergency plan
- detailed notes on different types of emergencies
- links to sources of further support where appropriate.

Many of the constituent parts of an emergency plan might already exist within other school policies and procedures, such as those dealing with safety on educational visits, school minibus safety, fire safety, school security etc. This information can provide the basis to which further policies and procedures can be added in order to arrive at a comprehensive planning document.

Check to see what disaster management plans have been produced by the local authority. Those drawing up an emergency planning policy for community and voluntary controlled schools must ensure that it complies with the local authority provisions. Local authority documentation can also be of great assistance to governing bodies of foundation and voluntary aided schools, in cases where local authorities consent to making such material available.

Employers of independent schools, academies and free schools will need to make their own arrangements for emergency planning, and NEU health and safety representatives and health and safety advisers should seek to ensure such policies are robust and fit for purpose. All NEU members, wherever they work, should be covered by an effective emergency planning regime.

### **Risk assessment**

The traditional five-step risk assessment approach works as a good model for developing school emergency plans:

1. Identify the hazards posed by different possible situations.
2. Decide who might be harmed and how.
3. Evaluate the risk and determine the precautions.
4. Record and communicate findings.
5. Review and revise as necessary.

Should uncertainty arise concerning any of the above stages, expert advice should be sought. In cases of concern, NEU members should in the first instance [contact the NEU](#).



It is important that any measures prescribed in the plan are fully thought through. For example, in the event of an evacuation, what is the procedure for carrying out a proper inspection of the affected area prior to re-occupation? What happens to staff and pupils if the building is not considered safe to re-enter following an evacuation? Emergency plans must contain the answers to these and similar questions, so that there is no room for doubt or ambiguity.

Local variables should be fully integrated into the policy. Such issues likely to affect emergency plans might include:

- the age range of the pupils
- the number of pupils on roll
- the number of pupils with special educational needs (SEN)
- the age and condition of the school buildings
- the location of the school – urban, suburban or rural
- any specific hazards in the vicinity of the schools, such as busy roads, railway lines, expanses of water or industrial sites.

#### **Other points to consider**

In any emergency situation, many issues must be successfully co-ordinated if matters are to proceed in a calm, well-organised fashion. Roles should be set out in advance so that if the unthinkable happens, everyone knows exactly what they are expected to do.

Consideration should be given to making the necessary staffing arrangements to ensure that, for example:

- there is efficient co-ordination of any external emergency assistance summoned to the incident
- management of staff and pupils is calm and confident, with distress and disruption kept to a minimum
- an appropriate number of trained fire marshals are available to assist in evacuating school buildings in case of fire or other emergencies
- first aid provisions are at least in line with the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981
- competent staffing is available to turn off gas, electricity or water should the need arise
- telephones and other communications are effectively managed
- alternative staffing arrangements are available in the event of the absence, or incapacitation, of others.

With regard to staffing matters, it should be noted that teachers who are not members of the leadership group cannot be compelled to take on responsibility for health and safety matters. No such requirement is contained within their contracts. For the same reason, teachers cannot be compelled to become first aiders or administer medicines to pupils.

In cases of accident and emergency, however, teachers must always be prepared to help as they and other school staff in charge of pupils have a general legal duty of care to act as any reasonably prudent parent would. In such emergencies, teachers should do no more than is obviously necessary and appropriate to relieve extreme distress or



prevent further and otherwise irreparable harm. Qualified medical treatment should be secured in emergencies at the earliest opportunity.

These points are discussed further in the NEU health and safety briefing *Managing Health and Safety in Schools*.

### **Note on the Civil Contingencies Act 2004**

Local authorities have certain responsibilities and powers in relation to major civil emergencies, accidents and hazards under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. This legislation came into being following the fuel crisis and the severe flooding in the autumn and winter of 2000, and the outbreak of foot and mouth disease in 2001. A Government review of emergency planning arrangements concluded that existing legislation no longer provided an adequate framework for contemporary civil protection needs, and that new legislation was needed.

The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 clarifies the roles and responsibilities of emergency services and local authorities, and formalises a structure for their co-operation. It also updates the provisions of the Emergency Powers Act 1920 which were widely felt to be inappropriate for modern purposes.

Further information about the provisions of the Civil Contingencies Act can be found [here](#).

### **Evacuation - special needs and disabilities**

The Equality Act 2010 requires employers to make 'reasonable adjustments' to their premises to ensure that disabled people are not at a disadvantage. This includes ensuring that disabled people can leave the premises safely in the event of a fire or other emergency.

There are a number of ways of affording proper protection to disabled people in the event of an emergency. Which approaches are most appropriate in individual circumstances will depend on a number of factors, including:

- the design, layout and age of the buildings
- the number of escape routes and exits
- the number and individual needs of people using the premises.

Appropriate modifications to audible alarms and escape route signs may be necessary to enable those with visual or hearing impairments to evacuate school buildings successfully.

In order to facilitate the evacuation of those with mobility impairments, a range of options can be considered. Successful evacuation from upper floors is likely to be the most pressing concern, unless the school consists of a single storey. To resolve this problem, one or more of the following approaches might be appropriate:

- the installation of special evacuation lifts



- the provision of evacuation 'chairs' which can be carried down stairs by two people, one either side of the disabled person
- the creation of a specifically protected refuge in cases where use of stairways is problematic.

A refuge is an area that is separated from fire by fire-resistant construction and which has access via a safe route to a storey exit. It provides a temporarily safe space where disabled people can wait pending the assistance of the emergency services.

A school's emergency risk assessment should inform the choice of approaches which might be most appropriate in any given setting. In the case of specific fire risk assessments it is prudent to obtain the advice of the local fire authority before making any final decision.

### **PEEPs**

Emergency evacuation plans for those with disabilities are called Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs). Where staff and regular visitors to a building require a PEEP, it should be provided by the senior manager with responsibility for premises management. The PEEP must be tailored to the individual needs of the person concerned, and should give detailed information on their movements during an escape. As noted above, it is also possible that some building adaptation will be required in order to facilitate their escape and to reduce the need for personal assistance.

A 'standard' plan may be used for visitors or infrequent users of the school building. It is not appropriate for employees and should not be accepted as a substitute for a full-scale PEEP. The standard plan, nevertheless, should take account of:

- the disabled person's movements within the building
- the operational procedures within the building
- the types of escape that can be made available
- the building systems, eg the fire alarm
- the existing exit plan.

The Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) advises that good negotiation skills, sensitivity and a level of discernment are required on the part of anyone carrying out a PEEP. It points out that disabled people may feel pressured to do more physically than they would generally be able to achieve; or may be afraid that back-up systems and support will not be made available to them. The DCLG stresses that training for those drawing up PEEPs is essential.

Full guidance on emergency evacuation for disabled people is available [here](#).

### **Notes on different types of emergencies**

The following pages contain guidance on planning and management for a number of different emergency situations. These include: evacuation – special needs and disabilities; fire evacuation procedures; bomb threats and the discovery of suspect devices; gas leaks; flooding; high winds; electrical equipment failures; extremes of



temperature; construction work; medical emergencies; intruders on school site; violence at work; and reporting accidents and injuries.

### **Fire evacuation procedures**

The current legal requirements governing fire safety procedures in schools are set out in the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. This legislation places a duty on all employers and other 'responsible persons' to undertake fire risk assessments.

As part of this, employers must provide employees with information on:

- procedures to be followed in the event of danger from fire
- details of fire fighting measures
- details of any fire marshals nominated to implement those measures.

The NEU advises that regular fire drills are carried out, records are kept and fire safety information is given to all employees (in particular new employees).

Full union guidance is set in the NEU's health and safety briefing Fire Safety in Schools, which sets out advice on the legal requirements and on proper precautions and clear procedures to be followed in the event of fire. NEU guidance on evacuation and re-occupancy of premises is contained in Appendices 1 and 2. A short note on the duties of fire marshals is set out at Appendix 4.

### **Security issues - bomb threats and the discovery of suspicious devices**

Although schools are statistically much more likely to be targeted by malicious hoaxers than by serious threats, the threat posed by the possible planting of explosive or incendiary devices on school premises cannot be dismissed. Contingency plans need to be in place, with which all staff are familiar, to deal with such a threat.

Issues which schools need to consider include:

- how telephone threats should be dealt with
- what to do if a suspicious device is found on school premises
- whether, and how, the school will be evacuated
- what to do with the pupils following an evacuation
- arrangements for searching the premises.

### **Telephoned bomb threats**

The overwhelming majority of telephoned bomb threat calls are made by malicious pranksters, whose aim is to cause disruption. Making such calls is a crime and details should always be reported to the police, even if the caller is easily recognisable for example as a current or former pupil.

### **People receiving telephoned bomb threats in schools should:**

- keep calm
- try to obtain as much information as possible, being cautious not to provoke the caller
- dial 1471 (if that facility is available)
- report the call to the police and head teacher immediately.



### **Discovery of suspicious packages or devices on school premises**

In some cases a suspect device might be found on school premises without any form of warning having been given. In such situations the surrounding area should be cleared and the police called immediately. The level of risk posed by such devices can vary widely, so any assessment of a suspect item should in all cases be left to the security professionals. In the meantime, the precautionary principle should prevail.

### **Suspicious packages or devices – managing the risk**

In any building subject to public access, it is important to remain cautious with regard to suspicious packages or unfamiliar objects. This is especially true at times of heightened national security. Observance of routine housekeeping measures, such as control of visitor access to school buildings, is one of the best defences against this form of attack.

Security measures should form part of a school's routine safety checks, alongside regular checks on fire extinguishers, sprinklers, smoke alarms and fire blankets.

All staff should be try to maintain a general awareness of what should and should not be around them, as such knowledge will assist greatly should it be necessary to determine the potential risk posed by an unfamiliar object.

### **Whether, and how, the school should be evacuated**

A preliminary assessment of the telephoned threat will need to be made by the head teacher or other senior member of staff in charge, in consultation with the member of staff who took the call. If there is the slightest doubt about the nature of the call, an evacuation should be considered.

Similarly, if suspicions are raised by an unidentifiable package or other article on the school site, an evacuation might be unavoidable. The discovery of one such item is no guarantee that there will not be others around the school, so a precautionary evacuation of all school buildings might well be necessary. For advice on identifying possible suspect devices, see the information set out in the Home Office document Protecting Against Terrorism, which has replaced Bombs – Protecting People and Property and can be found at: [gov.uk/government/publications/protecting-against-terrorism](http://gov.uk/government/publications/protecting-against-terrorism)

Protecting Against Terrorism advises that the biggest dilemma facing anyone who has responsibility for an evacuation decision is how to judge where might constitute a place of safety. The purpose of evacuation is to move people from an area where they might be at risk to a place of lesser risk. If, for example, an evacuation might take staff and pupils past a suspicious device outside the building, evacuation may be the riskiest course to take, unless another route could be chosen.

The Home Office document states that the decision to evacuate will normally be taken by the organisation itself but that the police will advise. In exceptional cases the police may insist on evacuation, or may insist that people do not leave the building. In order to react sensibly an evacuation plan must be in place.



Appendix 1 to this briefing sets out guidance on evacuation plans, while Appendix 2 gives guidance on re-occupancy of premises.

### **Searching the Premises**

Protecting Against Terrorism advises that police will not normally search premises following receipt of a bomb threat. This is because: "They are not familiar with the premises and layout and will not be aware of what should be there and what is out of place. They cannot therefore search as quickly and as thoroughly as staff who work there all the time."

Although this advice does have a sound rational basis, equally it is no part of any teacher's contractual obligation as a teacher to conduct searches. The teacher's responsibility is that of any citizen to assist in the protection of the community. The NEU believes that local authorities and other employers should make provision for suitability trained security staff to search schools in the event of bomb threats.

### **Mobile telephones**

Mobile telephones should not be used where the presence of an explosive device is suspected.

### **Gas leaks**

As with other emergency situations, emergency procedures should be in place in each school to deal with the possible incidence of a gas leak.

An evacuation procedure similar to those for fire drills or for bomb threats will be required. As part of that procedure, the head teacher should ring the 24-hour gas emergency service on 0800 111999, and follow the official advice given. If possible, the mains gas supply for the school should be turned off.

Electrical switches and mobile telephones should not be operated. No-one should smoke or strike matches.

Wherever possible, doors and windows should be opened.

The emergency telephone number for the gas emergency service should be on prominent display at all times in the school office, and should be checked periodically to make sure it is up to date.

### **Structural collapse - practical advice**

If you are in a building collapse or explosion:

- if possible, get out quickly and calmly
- if you can't get out of the building, get under a sturdy table or desk.

### **If you are trapped by debris:**

- cover your nose and mouth with a cloth or clothing
- move around as little as possible to avoid kicking up dust, which is harmful to inhale
- if possible, use a torch so that you can see your surroundings



- tap on a pipe or wall so that rescuers can hear where you are; use a whistle if one is available. Shout only as a last resort, as shouting can cause you to inhale dangerous amounts of dust.

## **Flooding**

### **Action in response to floods and flood alerts**

Where a flood warning has been issued in respect of an area, good preparation is vital to the minimisation of risk should floods occur.

1. Listen out for local news reports, updates and warnings on radio and televisions.
2. Follow advice from the Environment Agency, local authority and emergency services. This is important even for those in places apparently unaffected by flooding, as there may be advice regarding travel to work in the wider geographical area.
3. Call the Environment Agency's Floodline on 0345 988 1188 for more information.
4. Monitor the Environment Agency's Flooding Updates at: [apps.environment-agency.gov.uk/flood/31618.aspx](https://apps.environment-agency.gov.uk/flood/31618.aspx)
5. Scrutinise the employer's major incident plan and ensure it is both adequate and that safety representatives have been properly consulted.
6. Working with the employer, liaise with emergency services if there is any likelihood that the premises might be evacuated in the event of a flood.
7. Disseminate information and guidance to members, such as that set out on the Cabinet Office Preparing and Planning for Emergencies website at: [gov.uk/preparation-and-planning-for-emergencies-responsibilities-of-responder-agencies-and-others](https://www.gov.uk/preparation-and-planning-for-emergencies-responsibilities-of-responder-agencies-and-others)
8. Electrical items should be unplugged and removed to a place of safety such as an upper storey or a high shelf.
9. Gas and electricity may need to be switched off. This should be done by a competent person such as a site manager. If there is a suspected gas leak, follow the guidance set out earlier in this briefing.
10. Under no circumstances should the safety of staff or pupils be jeopardised. It is important that anyone affected by a flood or a potential flood is aware of basic safety rules, for example:
  - do not attempt to walk, wade or swim through floodwater
  - do not drive through floodwater
  - avoid contact with floodwater – it may be contaminated by sewage
  - if you are trapped by flooding, stay by a window and try to attract attention.

### **Following a flood**

1. Ensure that a risk assessment is carried out prior to re-occupation of the school. No-one should be expected to work without an adequate supply of fresh water and without sanitary facilities. This would be contrary to the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992.
2. The affected areas will need to be dried out and thoroughly cleaned and disinfected. Floodwater contains not only silt but sewage. Dampness can



promote the growth of fungus and mould which can cause allergies and breathing problems if inhaled.

3. The following should be checked and verified safe prior to resumption of use:
  - electrical and gas connections
  - electrical equipment and plant, if affected
  - heating systems, if affected
  - fire safety systems.
4. If portable heaters are to be used to heat and dry out the premises, ensure that they are positioned in well-ventilated areas away from combustible materials, and positioned so as not to endanger staff or pupils. Under no circumstances should petrol or diesel generators be used indoors due to the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.
5. Any hazardous materials or substances which have been affected by floodwater should be quarantined and specialist advice obtained prior to their disposal. If chemicals are stored on the premises, they may have leaked out.
6. After flooding, rats and other vermin can often be displaced from flooded buildings and will move to other premises in the vicinity so employers must be vigilant in checking for infestations.
7. Ensure that school security has not been compromised.
8. Remove damaged items and equipment, and store securely away from any building.
9. Check fire exits and escape routes prior to re-occupation.
10. Where there is potentially hazardous structural damage resulting from the flood, the local authority/employer should be contacted before re-occupation.
11. In the event of any fire safety concerns, contact the local fire authority.
12. Where health and safety concerns are unresolved, schools and/or the employer should approach the HSE for specialist advice.

TUC advice – Health and Safety in Flooded Areas – is available [here](#).

## High winds

When extreme gales are forecast, it is prudent to take steps to ensure everyone's safety, and to minimise potential damage to buildings and property. For example, loose articles such as ladders, unsecured outdoor seating and waste bins should be appropriately secured, as should doors and windows.

If the storm occurs outside school hours, consideration should be given to the closure of the school pending improved weather conditions. Not only are there risks to staff and students on the school site itself, but also road traffic conditions are likely to be extremely hazardous for those travelling to work.

If the gale develops during the school day, staff and pupils should remain indoors as much as possible. Those unable to avoid venturing outside should take care to keep away from buildings, trees and fences. Also, contingency arrangements should be put in place for the supervision of pupils beyond the afternoon session where journeys home are considered too hazardous.



In cases where structural damage has been sustained by school buildings, an assessment of the damage by a competent person should be sought once the adverse weather conditions have subsided. The school should not be re-opened until the site has been declared safe.

Further information is available on the [Cabinet Office Preparing and Planning for Emergencies website](#).

### **Electrical equipment failures**

As well as the general legislation in place under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, specific legislation also exists on electrical safety requirements at work and it applies in schools in the same way as all other workplaces. It is to be hoped that by following health and safety requirements and by proper risk assessments being conducted, schools may be alerted to potential electrical faults before they become dangerous.

Taking precautions in respect of electricity is essential, and staff and pupils must be properly educated in the principles of electrical safety. Teachers supervising pupils working with electrical equipment should have adequate knowledge and experience of electrical work, an understanding of hazards and the precautions which need to be taken, and an ability to recognise whether it is safe for work to continue. On a practical level, the union's advice is that teachers cannot be required to undertake any electrical maintenance or repair work and, without exception, such work should be allocated to an individual with appropriate training and expertise.

It is essential that school first aiders receive training in dealing with an injury involving electricity and receive refresher training at regular intervals. All accidents involving electricity should be recorded in the school's accident logbook and reported to the local authority on health and safety reporting forms.

### **Extremes of temperature**

#### **Low temperatures**

During working hours, the temperature in all workplaces inside buildings shall be 'reasonable'. (Source – Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992: Regulation 7.)

The temperature in workrooms shall normally be at least 16 degrees Centigrade unless much of the work involves severe physical effort in which case the temperature should be at least 13°C. (Regulation 6: Approved Code of Practice (ACoP), paragraph 43.)

Thermometers should be available at a convenient distance from every part of the workplace but need not be provided in every workroom. (Regulation 6: ACoP, paragraph 57.)

The Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 previously included minimum temperatures for different areas of a school (classrooms, sick rooms and gyms). These



were withdrawn in England when the 1999 regulations were replaced by the School Premises (England) Regulations 2012. This should not prevent NEU representatives in England arguing that 18°C should remain the minimum temperature for areas with normal levels of physical activity, for example, classrooms.

The situation with regard to school temperatures in Wales continues to follow the 1999 regulations. These provide that, in areas where there is the normal level of physical activity associated with teaching, the appropriate minimum temperature is 18°C. In areas where there is a lower than normal level of activity (eg sick rooms) or higher than normal level of activity (eg gyms and also washrooms), the appropriate minimum temperatures are 21°C and 15°C respectively. Temperatures in school classrooms should therefore be at least 18°C.

Full NEU guidance on addressing problems of very low temperatures in schools can be found in the health and safety briefing *Heating in Schools*. This document sets out union advice on the relevant legal requirements and on ensuring proper precautions and clear procedures are followed in the event of extremes of temperature.

### **High temperatures**

There are no specific legal maximum working temperatures for schools or indeed other workplaces. NEU policy is that 26°C is the maximum temperature at which teachers should be expected to work, other than for very short periods.

Extremely high temperatures can affect the ability of teachers and pupils to concentrate and to work effectively, and can cause physical discomfort and illness. If people get too hot, they risk dizziness, fainting, or even heat cramps. In very hot conditions the body's blood temperature rises. If the blood temperature rises above 39°C, there is a risk of heat stroke or collapse. Delirium or confusion can occur above 41°C. Blood temperatures at this level can prove fatal and even if people recover, they may suffer irreparable organ damage.

A spell of very hot weather, therefore, can increase the risk of adverse health consequences for pupils and teachers, especially if the school buildings accumulate heat easily and few if any control measures have been put in place to mitigate the situation. It is possible to envisage circumstances in which the head teacher, in the interests of the safety and welfare of pupils and teachers, may need to consider closing all or part of the school for a period of time. It is preferable that such measures form part of a planned response to extreme weather conditions, rather than a knee-jerk emergency reaction to a situation which has been given little or no forethought.

Where the temperature in a workroom would otherwise be unreasonably high, all reasonable steps should be taken to achieve a comfortable temperature. Where a reasonably comfortable temperature cannot be achieved, local cooling should be provided. In extremely hot weather, fans and increased ventilation may be used instead of local cooling. (Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992: Regulation 6: ACoP, paragraphs 46 & 47.)



### **Construction work in schools**

Building works in schools potentially pose a substantial risk to the health and safety of staff and pupils. General health and safety legislation such as the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 imposes legal obligations on employers and on contractors carrying out building work to take care and ensure the health and safety of employees and of others, such as pupils, affected by such work. The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 impose specific requirements for larger building projects.

Even though much construction work in schools does not fall into this category, the NEU believes that the specific requirements of the CDM regulations for preparing health and safety plans and maintaining proper records represent good practice which should be applied at all times.

The NEU believes that, where possible, all building work in schools should be carried out during holidays or half-terms or at weekends to minimise disruption.

NEU safety representatives have the right to carry out safety inspections in the workplace during building works to ensure, for instance, that there is adequate protection against falling objects or that appropriate safety procedures are being observed in relation to specific processes, eg paint stripping, excavation, vehicle movements etc.

### **Cases of Imminent Danger**

NEU safety representatives do not, at present, have the legal right to 'stop the job' when risks to health and safety arise. The employer or head teacher will have the authority to stop the work when there is imminent danger to staff, pupils or visitors. Employees themselves are allowed by law to stop work and leave their place of employment in case of imminent danger to their own health and safety, under section 28 of the 1993 Trade Union and Employment Rights Act, although such action should not be taken except in exceptional circumstances.

Full guidance is set in the NEU's health and safety briefing Construction Work in Schools. This sets out the union's advice on the legal requirements and on ensuring proper precautions and clear procedures to be followed in the event of accidents in schools involving building works.

### **Medical emergencies**

#### **First aid procedures**

It is vital that all school staff know who their first aiders are and how to contact them, and that there are agreed procedures in place for dealing with all kinds of emergencies, including those in isolated areas such as playing fields. To ensure this, first aid notices should be clearly displayed giving information on the names and location of first aiders and the location of first aid equipment.



The NEU recommends that, as a minimum, every school should have at least one qualified first aider and one designated 'appointed person' to take charge of first aid matters in their absence. The hazards present in schools mean that it would be inappropriate for any school to be without a qualified first aider. Full NEU guidance is set in the health and safety briefing First Aid in Schools.

### **Administration of medicines**

There is no legal or contractual duty on school staff to administer medicine or to supervise a pupil while taking it. This is a purely voluntary role and is recognised as such by the DfE. In cases of accident and emergency, teachers must always be prepared to help as they and other school staff in charge of pupils have their general legal duty of care to act as any reasonable prudent parent would. In such emergencies, however, teachers should do no more than is obviously necessary and appropriate to relieve extreme distress or prevent further and otherwise irreparable harm. Qualified medical treatment should be secured in emergencies at the earliest opportunity.

### **Violence at work/reporting accidents and injuries in schools**

#### **Minor accident or injury**

The law states that all schools must have a system for reporting and recording accidents and injuries sustained by both pupils and by employees. The union believes that 'near miss' incidents that do not lead to injury should also be reported and recorded.

#### **More serious accident or injury**

In the case of more serious injuries the local NEU association or division should be advised. Teachers should also discuss the matter with the [NEU](#).

The NEU also believes that schools should forward details of all accidents and incidents recorded on accident forms to their local authorities.

#### **Death or major injury**

Incidents falling in this category must by law be reported to the HSE. The responsibility for making reports to the HSE rests with employers.

Other sorts of incidents to be reported to the HSE

The law requires employers to inform the HSE of any "dangerous occurrence" which happens at the workplace, even if it does not actually result in an injury. Examples of dangerous occurrences, as defined by law, include:

- collapse of walls, floors or buildings or collapse of scaffolding
- fires or explosions
- release of substances which may damage health (eg asbestos fibres).

It is essential that all incidents, whether minor or serious, be reported as soon as possible after the event, preferably within 24 hours. This is both to help prevent further incidents occurring and to act before memories fade.

See further information about reporting injuries, diseases and dangerous occurrences on the [HSE website](#).



### **Post-disaster management and recovery**

It is important that there is an awareness of the range of reactions pupils and staff may demonstrate after a traumatic event. Steps which might be taken once the immediate crisis is over could include:

- practical measures aimed at restoring some sense of security to the school community, such as improvements to safety/security arrangements
- a debriefing session for staff - this could be carried out by a trained professional
- adherence to 'normal' school routines as far as possible
- the provision of appropriate support systems for pupils and staff; this might include counselling services and specialist treatment for those at the heart of the crisis.



## Further information

### Guidance

Government information:

[The Emergency Planning section of the DfE website](#)

This provides comprehensive guidance on emergencies in schools. It sets out advice on preparing adequate plans for possible emergency scenarios and, where appropriate, includes links to further information and support available on the websites of other government departments.

Guidance on dealing with violent incidents in schools is contained in the Home Office document [Addressing Youth Violence and Gangs](#)

HSE publications are available, priced and free, from the HSE website at [hse.gov.uk](http://hse.gov.uk)  
GOV.UK recovery guidance - community engagement

The following government website sets out how those responding to an [emergency might involve the community in the recovery process](#).

### RoSPA

The Safety and Disaster Management in Schools section of the website of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) can be found [here](#).

### Personal safety resources

The Suzy Lamplugh Trust has material available for school governors, heads, teachers and young people on many aspects of personal safety. For further information contact The Suzy Lamplugh Trust, National Centre for Personal Safety, 218 Strand, London WC2R 1AT, tel: 020 7091 0014, email [info@suzylamplugh.org](mailto:info@suzylamplugh.org) or go to: [suzylamplugh.org](http://suzylamplugh.org)

### Useful contacts and addresses

Government departments:

DfE

Queries should be directed to: [education.gov.uk/help/contactus/dfe](http://education.gov.uk/help/contactus/dfe)

First aid organisations

St John Ambulance

Tel: 020 7324 4000

[sja.org.uk](http://sja.org.uk)

British Red Cross

44 Moorfields, London EC2Y 9AL

Tel: 0844 871 1111

[redcross.org.uk](http://redcross.org.uk)



Bullying and violence  
Kidscape  
2 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0DH  
Helpline 08451 205204  
kidscape.org.uk

Counselling and advisory bodies  
Cruse Bereavement Care  
PO Box 800, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 1RG  
Tel: 020 8939 9530  
Helpline: 0870 477 9400  
cruse.org.uk  
Specific information tailored for children at: [cruse.org.uk/children](http://cruse.org.uk/children)

National Association of Citizen's Advice Bureaux  
Myddleton House, 115-123 Pentonville Road, London N1 9LZ  
Tel: 020 7833 2181 – this is an administrative office only.  
For advice, go to: [citizensadvice.org.uk/](http://citizensadvice.org.uk/) where you will be directed to your local bureau.

Mind, mental health charity  
15-19 Broadway, Stratford, London E15 4BQ  
Tel: 020 8519 2122  
In Wales, Mind Cymru, 3rd Floor, Quebec House, Castlebridge, 5-19 Cowbridge Road East, Cardiff CF11 9AB  
Tel: 0292 039 5123  
Email: [contact@mind.org.uk](mailto:contact@mind.org.uk)  
Infoline: 0300 123 3393  
[mind.org.uk](http://mind.org.uk)

Samaritans  
The Upper Mill, Kingston Road, Ewell, Surrey, KT17 2AF  
FREEPOST RSRB-KKBY-CYJK Chris, PO Box 9090, Stirling, FK8 2SA  
Tel: 08457 909090  
Email: [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)  
[samaritans.org](http://samaritans.org)

The NEU's guidance documents referred to in this briefing are available online in the Health and Safety section of the union's website.



## Appendix 1

### Evacuation plans

Essential components of an evacuation plan

All plans should cover:

1. Designated routes and exits.
2. Designated staff to act as marshals and as contact points once the assembly area is reached.
3. An assembly area or areas at least 500 metres (where practical) from the buildings.
4. Training for staff with particular responsibilities, and practices for all staff.

All plans should be discussed in advance with the police, the local authority and the emergency services.

### What to do with pupils

Finding a suitable place to house hundreds of children on short notice requires forward planning.

Such planning, which would need to involve local authorities and schools working together, would be expected also to cover emergencies other than bomb threats which might require the evacuation of the premises, for example, fire or flood. Some local authorities may have drawn up plans to cover such emergencies involving the use of other schools or community halls. Transport would need to be arranged at short notice and arrangements for contacting parents of younger children put in place. There should be contingency plans for catering in case the emergency is prolonged.



## Appendix 2

### Re-occupation of premises after emergency evacuation

The checklist set out below is intended to assist NEU health and safety representatives in schools which have been temporarily closed because of bomb scares, fire or flood. It sets out some of the issues which need to be addressed before staff and pupils can return to school.

Employers should in all cases carry out a risk assessment by reference to the issues identified below. As with other risk assessments, the outcomes should be recorded in writing and should be available to NEU health and safety representatives before the areas are re-occupied. Nobody should re-enter school buildings until officially cleared to do so.

1. In the case of arson attacks, has re-occupancy been discussed with the police, since the building will be a crime scene?
2. Are there any parts of the building which need to be made structurally sound? Competent assistance should be sought from a surveyor or structural engineer. School staff cannot make such assessments with any validity, and may place themselves in very real danger should they attempt to do so. Unsafe areas should be completely isolated from occupied areas of the school.
3. Is the site secure enough from intruders to ensure the safety of pupils and staff?
4. Have all mains water, electricity and gas supplies to the school been checked by a competent person?
5. In the case of fire, have air quality tests been carried out?
6. Have the premises been thoroughly cleaned, and debris and odours removed?
7. Is there any asbestos present which may have been disturbed? If so, has a competent person checked this? If disturbed, has it been sealed as an interim measure, prior to removal? If not, the affected area of the school would need to be sealed off and air sampling tests may need to be undertaken. More detailed information on air tests and asbestos removal is contained in the NEU briefing *Asbestos in Schools*.
8. In the case of fire, are the alarms and smoke detectors in working order? Have the fire extinguishers been checked and replaced if necessary?
9. Is the central heating and hot water system working satisfactorily?
10. Is the available furniture and equipment suitable and safe for use by staff and pupils?
11. If certain classrooms will have to remain out of use for some time, has suitable temporary accommodation been found either in the school or in other premises? If in other premises, has transport been arranged?
12. Have all books been professionally cleaned?
13. Are there adequate numbers of toilets/washrooms?
14. Are there adequate escape routes in the event of another fire?
15. Has the evacuation procedure been revised?
16. Is a staffroom available?
17. Are there adequate eating facilities for staff and pupils?



## Appendix 3

### Health and safety responsibilities

Legal responsibilities in schools are complicated by the fact that local authorities are not the employers of teachers in all types of educational setting. The following table provides an at-a-glance guide to clarify who is the employer in different types of school.

| Type of school                          | Employer                                                                                         |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Community and community special schools | Local authority                                                                                  |
| Voluntary controlled schools (VC)       | Local authority                                                                                  |
| Maintained nursery schools              | Local authority                                                                                  |
| Pupil referral units (PRUs)             | Local authority                                                                                  |
| Foundation schools                      | Governing body                                                                                   |
| Voluntary aided schools (VA)            | Governing body                                                                                   |
| Trust schools                           | Governing body                                                                                   |
| Individual academies                    | Governing body                                                                                   |
| Academies that are part of a chain      | Academy trust, though sometimes (very rarely) the individual academy governing body <sup>1</sup> |
| Free schools                            | Governing body                                                                                   |
| Independent schools                     | Governing body or proprietor                                                                     |
| Sixth form colleges                     | College corporation                                                                              |

Education employers have duties to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable:

- the health, safety and welfare of teachers and other education staff
- the health and safety of pupils in-school and on off-site visits
- the health and safety of visitors to schools, and volunteers involved in any school activity.

### Responsibilities for risk assessment

The duties on employers outlined above implicitly include a duty to assess risks and take necessary precautions. Employers also have specific legal duties to carry out risk assessments for all aspects of workplace health and safety due to the requirements of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and other regulations such as the manual handling, Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) and fire safety regulations.

### Practical implications

In community and voluntary controlled schools, local authorities are ultimately responsible for ensuring the execution of suitable and sufficient risk assessments in respect of all activities undertaken at the school. They also have responsibility for overseeing the implementation of appropriate control measures to manage health and safety risks – such as the risks posed by emergencies and disasters – in their schools.

<sup>1</sup> The answer is often set out in the funding agreements – if there is a master funding agreement for the chain as a whole, the central trust is usually the employer of all staff in academies.



As part of this, they will need to make certain that robust emergency plans and procedures are in place, and that they are being followed.

In foundation and voluntary aided schools it is the governing body which must satisfy itself that a school is meeting its legal obligations with regard to risk management. It must therefore make certain that full risk assessments have been carried out with regard to emergency planning, and that appropriate emergency procedures have been adopted.

Day-to-day decisions on health and safety matters fall to the head teacher in all types of school, with reference to the governing body or local authority with regard to more weighty matters. Responding to an emergency situation is not a day-to-day occurrence and is likely to require close liaison between the head teacher and the governing body and/or local authority. An example of a decision normally requiring the sanction of the governors and local authority would be to close a school temporarily in response to a particular emergency situation, eg flooding.

In the event of an emergency it may not always prove possible to liaise with the local authority. If normal channels of communication have been disrupted, it will be up to the head teacher to take the lead over matters such as school closure – seeking consensus with any members of the governing body who are available. Similarly, head teachers facing a decision over whether to evacuate a school building will almost certainly need to act swiftly and will not usually have sufficient time to consult governors or the local authority/academy trust over the preferred course of action. Indeed, indecision or uncertainty in such situations may well worsen an already critical situation.

While the head teacher may assume day-to-day responsibility for executing these measures, it is ultimately for the governors – and local authority in community and voluntary controlled schools or academy trust – to ensure that a school's emergency procedures are fit for purpose, and that all related policies are executed in full.



## Appendix 4

### Fire marshals

All school fire safety risk assessments must describe the measures in place to ensure that fire evacuation procedures are properly supervised, and that those carrying out this supervision have had sufficient – and recent – training in order to adequately fulfil this task.

Most staff will, of course, already have some level of supervisory duties in fire evacuation procedures. In a secondary school, for example, heads of department might co-ordinate supervision of evacuation in specific areas of the school, while senior managers might fill in any gaps and ensure the school's fire evacuation procedures are being correctly followed. Classroom teachers will have supervisory responsibility for individual classes.

Current legislation requires that there must be a sufficient number of competent persons trained as fire marshals to ensure that the fire procedure is followed correctly and that the evacuation of premises is undertaken quickly and safely. The procedures implemented must protect relevant persons from serious and imminent danger resulting from fire in all circumstances.

The duties of fire marshals might include:

- helping those on the premises to leave
- checking the premises to ensure that everyone has left
- using firefighting equipment if safe to do so
- liaising with the fire and rescue service on arrival
- shutting down dangerous equipment or services
- performing a supervisory/managing role throughout.

Fire marshals can free up other staff to look after the welfare of their classes, safe in the knowledge that they are part of a well-ordered fire evacuation system co-ordinated by trained personnel.

In a school, the natural candidates to become fire wardens would be site supervisors and administrative staff, who would not have classes or individual pupils to look after. Those in the leadership group could be called upon too, given their seniority and their reduced teaching load. Classroom teachers would be the least suitable candidates to undertake the role, as they will always have a direct responsibility for the class in their care.

Normally, managers request volunteers to carry out the role of fire marshal, and anecdotal evidence would suggest that there is usually a sufficient response to meet the need which has been identified in the fire safety risk assessment. Where this is not the case, it might be necessary to ask individual members of staff to take on these duties instead. In such circumstances acceptance of the role is likely to be expected unless there is good reason, such as a medical condition or disability. The employer must comply with the law, and employees must co-operate with the employer as regards the



duties and requirements placed on the employer by law: section 7, Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974.

The process of appointing fire marshals should not be high-handed and autocratic. The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 places a specific responsibility on employers to consult employees, or their elected representatives, about nominating people to carry out particular roles in connection with fire safety.

Moreover, employers are obliged to consult safety representatives about arrangements for nominating fire wardens to implement the measures for fire fighting. The Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977 include these provisions.

More information on fire marshals and fire evacuation procedures can be found in the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) guidance (published 2006) Fire Safety Risk Assessment: Educational Premises. This can be downloaded free of charge from the DCLG website at: [gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-risk-assessment-educational-premises](http://gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-risk-assessment-educational-premises)