



FIRE ALARM | Lawdale Junior School

Guidance on the Action to take in the Event of the Breakdown of Fire Alarm System

Lawdale Junior School

September 2025

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1. INTRODUCTION:

1.1 The following areas must be incorporated within the Head teachers / Facilities Managers risk assessment, so that a safe working environment can be maintained whilst the fire alarm system is inoperative for a short period of time (e.g. no more than 2 or 3 working days maximum). In all circumstances when the alarm will be inoperative for longer than 2-3 days, the London Fire Brigade and Tower Hamlets Fire Safety Team should be notified so that they can inspect the premises and advise on any additional controls needed.

For more information on your local fire safety office, please contact the London Fire Brigade.

Tower Hamlets Fire Safety Team

Tel: 020 8555 1200

Fax: 020 7587 2959

1.2 It should be noted that the following guidance might require enhancement in terms of additional measures that need to be considered and introduced appropriate to the school or premises involved. Further guidance can be obtained from either your Directorate Safety Advisor or the Corporate Safety and Civil Protection Unit

Corporate Health & Safety and Civil Protection Unit

3rd Floor, Anchorage House

2 Clove Crescent

London, E14 2BE

Tel: 020 7364 5000

2. Risk Assessment:

2.1 The school should complete a risk assessment for this risk. An example risk assessment is included in appendix 1 of this guidance.

3. ALTERNATIVE MEANS OF GIVING WARNING IN THE EVENT OF A FIRE:

3.1 Hand bells, air horns, klaxons or whistles can be deployed as the temporary means of giving warning in the event of fire. However, the medium deployed must be appropriate to the size of the building, number of floors etc. Also a sufficient number of hand-bells, air horns, klaxons or whistles would have to be readily available to ensure that adequate provision is made on each floor area.

3.2 In most circumstances, at least two hand bells or air klaxons would have to be available on each floor (at either end of the floor adjacent to fire exit staircases for example). However a travel distance of 30 metres to each hand bell or klaxon should not be exceeded. It is suggested that the hand bell or klaxon be positioned in the escape corridor, or staircase, on a table or similar stand, in a prominent position and preferably sign-posted in order to eliminate any confusion. The hand bells or klaxons should be augmented by whistles. It is recommended that a sufficient number of whistles (Acme Thunderer or similar) should be purchased for issue to a sufficient number of staff based on all floors of the building.

4. APPOINTMENT OF ADDITIONAL FLOOR 'FIRE WARDENS':

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4.1 The Fire Brigade has further recommended that during the temporary failure of the permanent alarm system, additional floor Fire Wardens must also be appointed. Fire Wardens in this instance would be deployed to patrol floor, rooms and others area's

In order to ensure that:

- A fire, or a smell of smoke or burning, can be investigated and if safe to do so, dealt with as rapidly as possible.
- That the alarm can be raised as rapidly as possible.
- That, if safe to do so, a fire can be extinguished.
- So that basic fire prevention duties are carried out. (e.g. arranging for obstructions and rubbish to be removed immediately, ensuring that fire doors are closed, routine hazard spotting etc.
- So that they can assist disabled persons from the premises

4.2 In order to maintain and fulfil the above duties, 'Fire Wardens' will have to be excused from their normal contracted duties. The Head teacher / Facilities Manager must also ensure that a sufficient number of "Fire Wardens are appointed to ensure that:

- At least one warden is on patrol on each floor of the building (depending on floor area).
- That sufficient cover is available in order that wardens can be relieved for normal and necessary break periods. (NB: consider cover for: toilet breaks, smoking breaks, mid-morning refreshments, lunch breaks etc.)
- That all wardens on patrol have access to a phone so that they are able to alert the Fire Brigade in the event of a fire, or suspicion of a fire.

5. SUPPLEMENTING THE TEMPORARY MEANS OF GIVING WARNING IN THE EVENT OF A FIRE:

5.1 Additionally, the assessment must ensure that the revised procedure for raising the alarm (whilst the permanent alarm system is inoperable) is adequate and suitable for the premises.

5.2 Consequently, the Fire Brigade advise that in schools, all teaching staff should be issued with a whistle during the period that the permanent fire alarm is inoperable, in order to augment the temporary means of giving warning in the event of a fire that has been put into place by the school.

For example:

- In the event of a fire (or on the suspicion that there is a fire) being discovered by an appointed floor fire warden, he/she should immediately raise the alarm via the nearest hand-bell or klaxon (as applicable).
- **All teaching staff whilst evacuating their individual classrooms or teaching area's would supplement the Fire Warden's alarm by blowing their whistle whilst evacuating the school building.**

- All other school staff, pupils and visitors etc. on hearing a hand-bell and / or whistle being sounded shall immediately commence to evacuate the building.
- Vice-versa, In the event of a floor fire warden hearing a whistle sound, he/she shall immediately supplement the alert by sounding the nearest available hand-bell or klaxon (as applicable).

5.3 The emphasis must be on ensuring that an adequate and effective means of giving a clear, sufficiently loud and distinct form of warning in the event of a fire is in place. The type and form of warning chosen must be distinct and unambiguous!

5.4 The temporary arrangements that are put into place must be notified to staff, pupils, contractors, members of the public (as applicable) resorting to the building, in order to eliminate any potential confusion regarding the temporary means of giving warning in the event of fire. This information must be given in writing.

6. COMMUNICATION BETWEEN FLOOR FIRE WARDENS AND THE PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE FOR CALLING THE FIRE BRIGADE:

6.1 The Head teacher / Premises Manager must also ensure that suitable and adequate arrangements are evaluated and put into place to ensure that there is effective and speedy communication between floor fire wardens and school support / switchboard staff (or other responsible school / premises staff – whose duties would include calling the Fire Brigade in the event of a fire). In this case, the use of mobile phones would be permitted.

6.2 The chosen method of communication must be appropriate, clear and unambiguous and staff must be informed of the temporary arrangements in writing!

7. COMMUNICATING THE REVISED EVACUATION PROCEDURE:

7.1 During the period that the permanent fire alarm system is inoperable, the school's / premises fire evacuation procedure would have to be revised to take into account and notify the temporary method of warning in that will be given in the event (or suspicion of) a fire.

7.2 The revised fire instructions must be:-

- Issued to all staff.
- And displayed (in order to replace existing fire instruction / fire action notices) throughout the school, in prominent positions, particularly adjacent to hand-bells and/or klaxons.
- Communicated to all pupils (during school assembly for example) and all school visitors
- Disabled staff and pupils: The breakdown of the fire alarm system could pose additional risk in the evacuation of temporary / permanently disabled staff. It may be necessary for the line manager to complete a personal emergency evacuation plan (PEEP) detailing any additional arrangements put in place during the fire alarm breakdown to assist disabled colleagues to evacuate the premise.

8. NOTIFYING THE CORPORATE SAFETY & CIVIL PROTECTION UNIT:

8.1 The Corporate Safety & Civil Protection Unit must be informed on all occasions when an electronic, permanent fire alarm system becomes inoperable within any school or Council building.

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8.2 The Corporate Health and Safety Unit will advise on all relevant fire safety matters and will also notify the Fire Brigade of the occurrence and the temporary arrangements that have been put into place.

8.3 The London Fire Brigade may notify, under the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, any additional steps that the school / FM manager must take to ensure the safety of staff, pupils, contractors and visitors (as applicable) whilst the permanent fire alarm is inoperative. As previously stated, the Fire Brigade must be informed in all circumstances where the alarm system will be inoperative for more than 2-3 days. They will then decide whether to inspect the premises and / or comment on the control measures outlined in the risk assessment in place for the temporary measures.

RISK ASSESSMENT



LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS CORPORATE RISK ASSESSMENT FORMAT

Establishment/ Directorate / Section:
Address: LAWDALÉ JUNIOR SCHOOL

1. TASK OR ACTIVITY COVERED BY THIS ASSESSMENT

Breakdown or failure of the school fire alarm system.

2. HAZARDS IDENTIFIED (potential to cause harm)

- 2.1 Outbreak of fire will remain undetected due to failure of automatic fire detection equipment.
- 2.2 Staff / visitors unable to actuate fire alarm system to give warning in the event of fire.

3. CONSEQUENCES OF THE HAZARD (i.e. what is the potential harm)

- 1) Potential for staff, pupils and visitors sustaining fatal or serious injury as a result of an undetected outbreak of fire.
- 2) Potential for fire development due to inability to activate the fire alarm system and as a result staff, pupils and visitors being placed at risk (fatal or serious injury).

4. PERSONS AT RISK

All staff, pupils and visitors

5. CURRENT CONTROLS (including legal compliance)

- 1) School to enact the written procedure for this event.
- 2) Additional floor fire wardens (either staff or temporary premises staff) to be engaged to undertake fire watching duties, including floor patrols. The fire wardens appointed must not be engaged on any other duties apart from fire watching.
- 3) Fire wardens to raise warning with whistles in the event of a fire being discovered whilst patrolling.
- 4) Teaching staff to be issued with whistles, so that they can augment the fire wardens air horns in the event of fire.
- 5) In the event of warning (bells and whistles) staff, pupils and visitors will evacuate the building using the designated escape routes and staircases and on evacuation of the building report to designated fire assembly point at rear of main playground.
- 6) Fire wardens Administration will notify the Fire Brigade of the fire or assign the nearest available person with a working mobile to do this .

6. SEVERITY OF OUTCOME(tick or outline as appropriate)			
Minor/ slightly harmful injury or illness	Harmful injury or illness incurring time loss from work or subjects	Serious injury or illness	Life threatening or fatal injury or illness
		1&2	1&2
PROBABILITY OF HARM (tick as appropriate)			
Unlikely/ Improbable	Likely	Highly Probable	Certainty
1&2			

8. FINAL ASSESSMENT OF RISK (where appropriate)			
Low	Medium	High	Very High
1&2			

9. ACTION REQUIRED (continue on separate sheet if required) 1) The current controls that have been put into place by the school are to be strictly adhered to. 2) A copy of this assessment shall be emailed to all staff. 3) Additional controls are to be considered on the introduction of any new school, or on the introduction of new equipment or electrical / mechanical apparatus etc. 4) This assessment must be immediately reviewed in the event of an incident. Action to be taken by_ _____ To be completed by _____
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10. ARRANGEMENTS FOR OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH MONITORING (where appropriate)
NOT APPLICABLE.

Revised Fire Procedures in the Event of Fire Alarm Breakdown

1. The Headteacher will notify the fire brigade that the fire alarm is not working if it is expected the alarm will not work for 2-3 days.
2. The Headteacher will notify all staff and all visitors of the revised procedures as staff enter the building. (ie provide them with this notice) and pupils in a special assembly.
3. The following staff will be appointed Fire warden duty in the event of a fire alarm breakdown:

Ground floor	Raani/ Judith
First Floor	Michelle/ Nancy
Second floor	Arifa / Yazmin/ Anika /Khadiza
Top floor	TA present at time of alarm

They will patrol their assigned areas and be alert to any signs of fire, smoke etc. or any items that may block safe exit ie items on staircases.

These staff will not be assigned any other duties whilst the fire alarm is not working.

4. In the event of a fire (or on the suspicion that there is a fire) being discovered by an appointed floor fire warden, he/she should immediately raise the alarm via the nearest hand-bell or klaxon (as applicable)
5. The fire warden raising the alarm will use their personal mobile to call the fire brigade or the working mobile of the next nearest member of staff. The person who raised the alarm and organised calling of the fire brigade will notify the Headteacher or manager in charge of who called the fire brigade by phone or in person immediately.
6. **All teaching staff whilst evacuating their individual classrooms or teaching areas would supplement the Fire Warden's alarm by blowing their whistle whilst evacuating the school building.**
7. All other school staff, pupils and visitors etc. on hearing a hand-bell and / or klaxon or whistle being sounded shall immediately commence to evacuate the building, ensuring disabled staff pupils and visitors are assisted according to their Personal Evacuation Plan

- 6 Vice-versa, In the event of a floor fire warden hearing a whistle sound, he/she shall immediately supplement the alert by sounding the nearest available hand-bell or klaxon (as applicable).
7. All staff, pupils and visitors should assemble at the far end of the playground and check everyone is present. No-one should re-enter the building until they are informed it is safe to do so by the fire brigade.