

Standard Operating Procedures

Internal Fire Safety Audits

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Approved by	Health & Safety Committee
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Aim and scope of Standard Operating Procedure

The aim of this Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is to explain the process, responsibilities, and monitoring arrangements for Internal Fire Safety Audits conducted at Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust. It is a requirement of the Trust Fire Safety Policy, HTM-05 and the Regulatory Reform Fire Safety Order 2005 to have suitable arrangements in place to ensure fire safety is continually maintained; use of internal audits assists with identifying concerns and addressing them promptly.

Target Staff Categories

All staff

Key amendments to this Standard Operating Procedure

Date	Amendment	Approved by:
10th July 2025	New key document	H&S Committee

Internal Fire Safety Audits

1. Introduction

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 documents the responsibilities of the Trust to have arrangements in place to ensure fire safety is maintained. The Trust's Fire safety policy supports this legislation and the Department of Health's Health Technical Memorandum (Firecode) HTM-05. The Fire Safety policy highlights that the Trust must ensure fire risk assessments for each site are formally conducted on an annual basis (as a minimum). It is recognised the findings are "a snapshot" noted at the time of the risk assessments and that conditions or behaviours or equipment may change over time that may adversely affect fire safety. The use of regular internal audits assists in spotting and addressing lapses which affect fire safety within the Trust. This standard operating procedure explains the process, responsibilities, and monitoring arrangements for Internal Fire Safety Audits at Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust.

2. Scope of Internal Fire Safety Audits

Internal Fire safety audits assess the environment (e.g. to ensure evacuation routes are clear), firefighting equipment (e.g. manual call points available, smoke detectors, firefighting equipment) but it does not examine staffs training competency (training records) or service records. Training / service information is presented to members of the Fire Safety group via reports on a quarterly basis to monitor / address concerns.

Internal audits are regularly conducted by competent internal Trust staff (Fire Safety Advisors). External audits are also conducted periodically however these are conducted by external bodies e.g. Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue, Fire risk assessors, to further assess legal compliance; these are separate from this SOP.

3. Responsibilities

To enable this SOP to be effectively implemented the following responsibilities must be fulfilled:

- **The Director for Estates and Facilities**
 - Will ensure there are adequate resources available to conduct Internal Fire Safety Audits.
- **The Head of H&S Fire and Safety**
 - Will ensure there are written arrangements for conducting internal fire safety audits and a competent Fire Safety Team to support the implementation of them.

- **The Fire Safety Manager**
 - Will ensure the quality and frequency of conducting the internal fire safety audits is suitable and sufficient.
 - Will ensure the Fire safety team are supported when auditing, to ensure findings and actions are actively tracked.
 - The Fire Safety manager will provide support where issues require escalation to address adverse findings.
- **The Fire Safety Advisors**
 - Will produce an Internal Fire Safety Audit tool that will assess the effectiveness of fire safety within an assessed location and plan a program of internal fire safety audits.
 - They will issue a report listing the findings of the audit in a timely manner to the manager of the area audited and request adverse findings are addressed.
 - They will track completion of actions required to address any findings and escalate concerns if adverse finding actions are not addressed within a timely manner.
 - They will include the outcome of internal fire safety audits in fire safety performance reports to the Fire safety group
 - They will continually review the audit tool and revise as necessary to enable continual improvement.
- **Managers**
 - Are responsible for ensuring fire safety is continually considered and managed within their area as described.
 - They will allow fire safety advisors to conduct Internal Fire safety audits within their area.
 - They will liaise with and discuss any adverse findings with the fire safety advisors and implement actions to address within the time frames given.
 - If there are issues noted that are beyond the managers responsibility to address (e.g. financial concerns, space limitations) then they must escalate these through their Divisional governance process and gain their support.
 - All must note that compliance against the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 is a must do and not for negotiation.
- **All staff**
 - Will support Managers and fire safety advisors in addressing fire safety concerns and assist in maintaining fire safety.
- **Fire safety Group**
 - Will review the performance reports provided by the Fire safety advisors
 - Where concerns are noted that cannot be addressed by the group, then consider/conduct escalation to the Health and Safety committee (as documented within the Terms of Reference for the fire safety group).

4. Fire Safety Internal Audits – The Process:

4.1. Conducting Fire Safety Internal Audits

- The fire safety advisors (FSA) will use an audit tool that is approved and available for use.
- The FSA's will ensure a program of internal fire safety audits is preplanned to ensure all patient areas and other relevant areas of risk are assessed monthly. They will assess which areas are not vital (e.g. some non-patient offices) and assess these on an ad-hoc basis.
- When conducting the audits the FSA's will use a set of approved questions to ensure a consistent auditing approach is adopted. They will assess if the area is compliant or not with the questions (based on a yes / no response). If, however, anything else untoward is noted that would not be covered by the audit tool, then this will be reported separately to the manager. The audit tool covers the following points:
 - **The environment:** to assess if it is suitable and effectively considers fire safety (e.g. evacuation routes are clear, fire exits not blocked).
 - **Firefighting equipment:** to assess if it is appropriate for the location, in good order and accessible (e.g. manual call points available, smoke detectors suitable, firefighting equipment).
 - **Fire safety hazards:** to be assessed (e.g. any electrical concerns, equipment (e.g. toasters) flammable products stored / used appropriately) to identify if there are concerns or improvements are required.
 - **Any other fire safety concerns** / hazards that will impact on fire safety.
 - **General legal compliance** with the Regulatory Reform Fire Safety Order (2005).
 - **Assessment of any issues previously identified.**

4.2. Distributing Findings of Internal Fire safety Audits

- The findings of the internal fire safety audits will be issued to the manager of the respective area.
- If there are any urgent adverse findings, the FSA's will inform the manager at the time of the audit, explain the action required and the timeframe for completion.
- For all adverse findings, the respective manager will be issued with the written findings of the audit, action required and timeframe for completion.

4.3. Monitoring of audit actions

- The FSA's will track the actions for completion against the timeframes in the audit

- The audit action owner will provide a progress report to the fire safety team ahead of the completion date. Should the action not be completed, an explanation will need to be provided
- A summary of the findings of internal fire safety audits for all areas/ sites will be included in quarterly fire safety performance reports which are issued to the fire safety group (FSG). Any actions of particular concern that are not being addressed promptly must be highlighted to the FSG for their support / escalation.
- Annually an overview summary of the internal fire safety audits will be included in the Annual Fire Safety report and presented to the FSG and Health and Safety Committee.

5. SOP review

This SOP will be monitored by the Head of Health & Safety and Fire Safety and the Trust fire safety group for compliance. The promotion of continual improvements in the management of fire safety will mean that this SOP will be revised if an improvement in process affects the content of this document.