

INFORMATION SHEET

Fire Door Safety Guidance

Background Information

The University has a duty to reduce workplace risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level by taking sensible and proportionate preventative measures. University appointed responsible officers for Faculties/ PSU's must work with other employers (tenants) or contractors sharing the workplace so that everybody's health and safety is protected. In the context of COVID-19 this means working collaboratively and sharing essential safety information.

The principal legislation relating to fire safety is the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order England & Wales 2005 (referred to as RRFSO). This legislation requires the University to have in place suitable measures to manage fire safety and be able to evacuate a building promptly and safely (as a guide between three and four minutes) should a fire alarm activation occur.

COVID related Fire Safety Issues

There has been increasing number of reports from our Security team whilst patrolling buildings out of hours that they have come across fire doors have been wedged and left open by various methods.

The phased return of staff to the University, plus the continued emphasis on working from home, will impact on the number of existing trained fire wardens who will be available within our buildings.

Any reduction in fire warden coverage will inevitably mean that instances of fire doors being wedged open will not be reported as often as previously.

The fire door issue will be further compounded with increased ventilation and reduction in 'touch points' being part of the COVID controls. The holding open of fire doors may be seen by some staff as a requirement to reduce any possible transmission of the COVID virus.

The University have put in place measures to mitigate COVID risk which includes enhanced cleaning, including 'touch points' such as door handles and push pads, plus Estates Technical Services have carried out modifications to ventilation systems to provide optimum efficiency in accordance with COVID guidelines. Staff and students are also reminded to regularly wash their hands and/ or use sanitiser when on Campus as part of the COVID controls. Useful associated guidance can be found on the [Health and Safety Staff Intranet pages](#).

It must be appreciated that the wedging or holding open of fire doors with any device is a breach of fire legislation. Both the Fire Brigade Union plus our own insurers have issued

reminders to the University to be extra vigilant to ensure fire doors are not wedged or held open during the COVID period.

The following guidance will explain the importance of keeping fire doors closed as a passive fire safety measure. Should a fire incident occur, a closed fire door will prevent smoke and heat from entering an escape route to allow staff, students and visitors to evacuate from a building safely.

COVID Recovery Period	
Fire Door Information and FAQs	
<p>1. Q: How are fire doors be identified?</p> <p>Fire doors will have a sign on the door to indicate the door as a fire door. Examples of typical signs are shown opposite.</p>	
<p>2. Q: Can fire doors be held open?</p> <p>No. The only exemption to this is if the fire door is held open by a device which is interfaced with the fire alarm to automatically close upon activation of the fire alarm. The location of these doors is generally within corridor areas which have heavy pedestrian usage. The door is then held open to reduce wear and tear on the door, plus is convenient for the passage of staff and students.</p> <p>Typical examples of the different types of hold open devices are shown opposite. All doors which are being held open will have a sign indicating that it is an automatic fire door and should not be obstructed to allow the door to close effectively.</p> <p>Q: A delivery of equipment or supplies, etc. are expected - can the doors be held open to facilitate the delivery?</p> <p>Yes but for a short duration only, typically 5-10 minutes as a guide, with the person holding open the door having the responsibility for closing the door following the delivery. Should a fire alarm activation occur during this period, this person should close the door immediately.</p>	  

Q: Why can't the University install additional hold open devices during the COVID period?

Only certain fire doors can be held open with an automatic device. This will depend on their location and will be subject to a risk assessment to ensure primary fire evacuation routes remain fully protected. Although automatic fire doors will close upon activation of the fire alarm, there may be a time delay in this activation. For example, there is insufficient smoke to activate a smoke detector due to an obstruction or the ventilation system is diverting smoke. We want our doors to close as soon as possible to protect fire escape routes from the passage of smoke to allow staff, students and visitors to evacuate safely.

Automatic hold open devices are expensive to install and must be regularly maintained, tested and serviced which is also a factor to consider.

Q: How important are fire doors towards fire safety?

Fire doors when closed will clearly assist in preventing smoke in the early stages of the fire from obscuring designated fire escapes routes and will contain smoke to a specific area.

This is extremely important not just for staff and students but particularly for disabled persons who might take a little longer to evacuate and may require assistance in evacuating.

As a fire develops, the fire doors will prevent the rapid spread of fire within the building, allowing the Fire and Rescue Services to fight the fire.

The photographs of fire doors opposite, clearly illustrates this. The fire doors are riser doors within the University's Engineering Central building which was the scene of a major fire incident in August 2020.

The closed doors contained the fire and heat within a riser. The first picture shows the outside (escape route side) of the riser fire door where



the paint has not blistered. The inner face of the door is heavily fire damaged but still intact.

Just for information, manufacturers of fire doors have independent tests carried out on their products which allow doors to be certified as fire doors.

The photos opposite show three fire doors under test. The central door is a fully compliant door with fire resisting glazing, intumescent smoke seals fitted and is still maintaining its fire integrity approaching 30 minutes. The doors on the side which are non-compliant i.e. not having fire glazing or smoke seal fitted, have both failed and after just 4 minutes are allowing the passage of smoke and flames to escape.

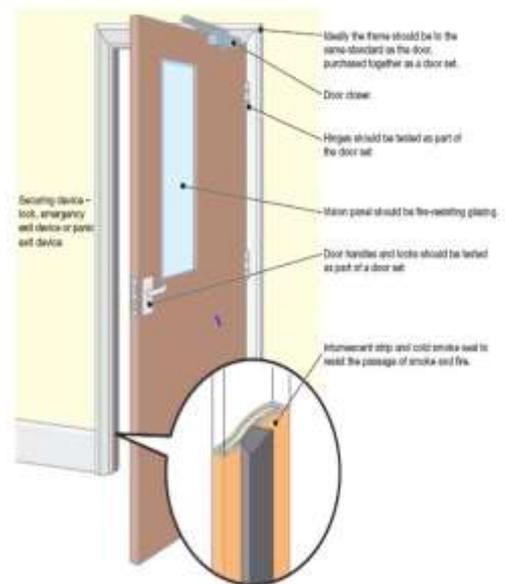
A fire door which is not closed is not a fire door!



3.

Fire Door General Information

- Fire doors are made up of various components - see example opposite. The door itself is usually made from a solid timber frame. Glass vision panels can be fitted with heat resisting glass be able to withstand exposure to the heat condition in a fire test for at least 60 minutes before it reaches a temperature high enough to soften it.
- The door will have a self-closing device normally an overhead door closer or floor spring closer device.
- The fire door will have a sign on it indicating that is a fire door.
- Around the edges of the door or within the door frame will be the intumescent cold smoke seal, which is designed to expand when temperatures reach beyond 200°C to seal the gaps between the door and frame. The smoke seal which is similar to a draught excluder will prevent smoke from escaping via the door gap in the initial stages of a fire. Exceptions may apply where the leakage of the smoke is essential for detecting a fire early.
- The fire door manufacturers details will show how many minutes of fire a door can withstand, for example an FD30 has been tested to withstand 30 minutes. The most common two codes are generally considered to be FD30 and FD60. The test procedures manufacturer's use is specified in BS 476-22:1987 or BS EN 1634-1:2014.
- The University regularly inspect fire doors, however, staff should report any obvious damage to a fire door such as, the door not closing correctly.



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We all have a part to play in fire safety at Swansea University.

With less staff on site, particularly fire wardens, we would appreciate your help to keep everyone safe:

- Please report any instances of fire doors being wedged or held open which you may come across.
- Report any obvious faults in fire doors which you come across such as, a door not closing properly or a damaged closer.
- Report any instances of fire escape routes or stairwells being blocked such as, furniture or deliveries within these areas.



We continually seek additional staff to become fire wardens. If you would like to volunteer training can be provided via Zoom and takes about one hour.

Please contact the Fire & Premises Manager Philip Moremon for details. Email: p.j.moremon@swansea.ac.uk or contact the H&S team: healthandsafety@swansea.ac.uk