

CHICHESTER HALL

FIRE SAFETY RISK ASSESSMENT

Reviewed February 2023

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Introduction

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, which came into force on 1st October 2006, replaces most fire safety legislation with one simple order. It means that any person who has some level of control in premises must take reasonable steps to reduce the risk from fire and make sure people can safely escape if there is a fire.

The Order applies to virtually all premises and covers nearly every type of building, structure and open space. It applies to community halls and community premises and is relevant, therefore, to the Chichester Hall.

This Fire Safety Risk Assessment has been carried out in accordance with the requirements of the Order and having regard to the Government guidance on Fire Safety Risk Assessment in Small and Medium Places of Assembly. The guide describes five steps that should be taken when carrying out a Fire Safety Risk Assessment:

Step 1 – Identify fire hazards

Step 2 – Identify people at risk

Step 3 – Evaluate, remove, reduce and protect from risk

Step 4 – Record, plan, inform, instruct and train

Step 5 – Review

The Fire Safety Risk Assessment follows this structure and has been carried out for each of the principal areas of useable space in the hall, namely:

Ground floor level:

1. Main entrance and facilities
2. Main hall
3. Kitchen
4. Store room
5. Swallow room
6. Stage (including an under-stage storage area)

Lower level (rear of the building only):

7. Changing rooms and showers/toilets

8. Boiler room

Loft:

9. Storage area

For each of these areas an assessment has been carried out of sources of ignition, fuel, and oxygen, fire detection, fire fighting equipment, escape routes, emergency lighting, signs and notices.

The findings of this assessment are contained in the accompanying table and the key points discussed in the following paragraphs.

Step 1: Fire Hazards - Sources of Ignition, Fuel and Oxygen

The main sources of ignition are the various items of electrical equipment located in the kitchen e.g. dishwasher, microwave, fridge, water heater, extract fan. The cooker is a gas-fired range cooker, which uses mains gas.

There is a gas boiler for the central heating and hot water, with associated controls, located in the boiler room. Additional controls are available in the Swallow Room bathroom.

Elsewhere, sources of ignition include electric sockets and lighting located throughout all the hall areas. Heaters in the main hall area are located in recesses with sufficient air circulation to avoid excessive build-up of heat.

The principal sources of fuel are concentrated in the under-stage cellar and loft storage areas and include materials utilised by the Witley Pantomime Company in their productions.

Elsewhere, the main sources of fuel are stage curtains, wooden floor and panelling and the wooden stage itself.

The main source of oxygen is the natural airflow through, doors, windows and other openings. This natural airflow is sometimes supplemented by mechanical means when the extract system in the kitchen is used and when the high level fans in the main hall are operational.

Step 2: People at Risk

People who use the hall and may be at risk if there is a fire include:

- Hirers and potential hirers
- The Chichester Hall Management Committee
- Contractors
- Cleaner

These groups include children, the elderly and people with disabilities (mobility, hearing or vision impairment).

Step 3: Evaluate, remove, reduce and protect from risk

1. The risk of fire occurring

It is considered that the risk of fire occurring is relatively low. The main sources of ignition comprise electrical equipment and the gas cooker located in the kitchen, the gas boiler in the boiler room and electrical equipment used for performances. Combustible materials are kept away from these sources and all equipment and boilers are regularly serviced and maintained in a good state of repair. There is no fuel storage on site and waste is housed externally in an enclosed container.

Elsewhere, electric sockets and lighting are regularly maintained. PAT Testing occurs annually – hirers are required to use PAT tested equipment only.

2. The risk to people from a fire starting

An evaluation has been carried out of the actual risk to people identified in Step 2 in the event a fire did start and spread from those areas with the main sources of ignition i.e. kitchen, boiler room, stage.

The main entrance and facilities, the main hall, kitchen, store room and Swallow room are all at ground floor level and are open to the various escape routes available. The elevated stage has steps to the rear on either side, which link into the main escape routes.

There is an under-stage storage area, which is a relatively confined space, with a common entrance exit to the main hall and an additional emergency exit via the changing rooms. There is also access to a loft area accessed from the main entrance using a loft ladder. Both of these areas are used by the Witley Pantomime Company, are normally locked and are not accessible to other users of the hall.

3. Removal/reduction of the hazards that may cause a fire

The identified potential hazards comprise the range of electrical equipment contained in the kitchen which is an essential part of the facilities available to the users of the hall. Removal would not be in the best interests of the hall or its users and the potential hazards are reduced as far as possible through regular maintenance, inspection and servicing.

Similarly, the boiler is essential for the comfort and well-being of users of the hall. Any potential hazards are minimised through regular servicing.

The materials stored by the Witley Pantomime Company represent a potential hazard and they are encouraged to reduce these to the minimum practical and to be kept tidy and confined to a specific, secured, area. If this guidance is not adhered to then the Committee needs to act to control this hazard.

No naked flames are permitted within the hall. This is communicated to all hirers.

The hall is kept clean and tidy and flammable materials are minimised and kept away from fire hazards.

4. Removal/reduction of the risks to people from a fire

The fire risk to people has been reduced to as low as reasonably practicable by ensuring that adequate fire precautions are in place to warn people in the event of fire and to allow them to escape safely.

Interconnected mains operated smoke/heat alarms with backup batteries are fitted in the kitchen, Swallow Room, main hall, loft, below the stage and the boiler room. There is also a battery only smoke alarm in the corridor by the kitchen. The alarms serve to protect the ground floor (especially those people located in the kitchen and store room, from which there is only one exit).

Owing to the layout of the remainder of the ground floor (in particular the number and orientation of fire exits, the size of the fire exit openings and the relatively short travel distances to the nearest exit), it is considered that a shout of "fire" provides sufficient warning to allow a safe evacuation from the building. Numbers are limited to 238, based on the terms of our licence. These restrictions are conveyed as part of the license agreement for hall users. Additionally a manual fire bell is provided in the main hall.

Fire extinguishers for particular types of fire are situated in the main entrance, main hall, Swallow room, kitchen and the stage on the ground floor and changing rooms and boiler room on the lower floor, as detailed in the accompanying table. These are inspected annually. A fire blanket is located in the kitchen.

There are five main escape routes available at ground floor level and they are readily accessible from all parts of the building. All are independent of each other with emergency escape signage. The main escape routes are: (1) via the main entrance; (2) via an external fire door off the main hall on the southern elevation; (3) and (4) via the main corridor linking the main hall, kitchen, store room and Swallow room on the northern elevation; and (5) via a corridor linking the main hall and Swallow room on the southern elevation. In addition, escape routes are available from the elevated stage via stairs on either side to the rear and via movable stairs into the main hall.

The lower level has independent access (6) and (7) to "home" and "away" changing rooms that are linked via a corridor that also provides access to shared showers and toilets and the boiler room. The connection between the lower and ground floor levels via the under-stage storage area is maintained permanently closed and designed for emergency use only.

Escape routes are all unencumbered and are listed in the accompanying table. External fire doors on the northern - (3) and (4) - and western (1) elevations lead to the outside car parking areas that provide open space for safe and easy clearance of the hall; doors on the southern - (2) and (5) - elevation lead to the adjacent playing field, which is the fire assembly point. Fire doors (1) and (3) are step-free and are therefore preferred for those with mobility or vision impairment.

Escape routes and exits together with the locations of fire-fighting equipment are indicated in the accompanying table and attached diagrams.

Each fire extinguisher has operating instructions clearly displayed.

Emergency lighting, fire exit function and fire extinguishers are checked monthly.

5. Installation, testing and maintenance

An annual check is made of the fire extinguishers, and a certificate of inspection obtained. A periodic inspection of the electrical system is undertaken in accordance with the guidance provided by the "Electrical Safety First" organisation and an electrical condition report obtained. The gas boiler is serviced on an annual basis. Fire retardant treatment is applied to the stage curtains – most recently in 2021 – due for retreatment in 2026.

6. Conditions of Hire

The terms and conditions of hire of the hall state that fire and other exits must not be obstructed and that illuminated fire exit signs must be on and entrance doors closed for all public entertainment. They also state that naked flames (e.g. candles) are not permitted. The terms and conditions of hire are shown on the hall web-site.

Step 4: Record, Plan, Inform, Instruct and Train

1. Significant findings and action taken

The main findings of the Fire Safety Risk assessment, including the actions taken to prevent fire occurring and to reduce the risk to people are contained in the preceding sections of this report.

2. Emergency plan

See attached.

The hall has a relatively simple layout with clear and well-signed escape routes. As explained above, the terms and conditions of hire state that fire and other exits must not be obstructed and that illuminated fire exit signs must be on and entrance doors closed for all public entertainment. In addition, hirers are reminded that fire extinguishers are not to be moved from their normal locations.

3. Information and instruction

The terms and conditions of hire require that a Temporary Responsible Person be appointed - refer to Figure 59 of the HM Government Fire Safety Risk Assessment for Small and Medium Places of Assembly for a typical checklist (attached).

A key plan indicating the location of fire doors and fire extinguishers (see attached) is posted on the notice boards at various prominent and visible points throughout the hall, along with the emergency plan.

Step 5: Review

This Fire Safety Risk assessment has been carried out for the hall following the introduction of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. The assessment is kept under review particularly with regard to any potential new risks and the need to keep them under control, and also to ensure that the fire precautions are still working effectively.

Location	Sources of ignition, fuel and oxygen	Fire detection, fire fighting and precautionary equipment#	Escape routes	Emergency lighting, signs and notices
Main entrance and facilities	Electrical control cupboard, supply points and lighting	CO ₂ fire extinguisher positioned by the electrical control cupboard	Main entrance (1)*	Outside the main entrance
Main hall	Electric sockets and lighting.	Water fire extinguishers at both ends of the hall. Smoke detectors	Main entrance, exits on north and south elevations (2)* and (3)*.	Outside exit (2)
Kitchen	Gas cooker, electric sockets and lighting, dishwasher, extract fan, water heater, kettle, microwave, fridge.	CO ₂ fire extinguisher and fire blanket positioned by the doorway – heat detector (also Carbon Monoxide detector)	Exits on north elevation (3)* and (4)*	None
Store room	Electrical supply points and lighting	None	Exits on north elevation (3)* and (4)*	None
Swallow room	Electrical supply points and lighting (spot light ring)	Water fire extinguishers at the southern doorway.	Exits on north and south elevations (4)* and (5)*	Exit on south elevation (5)
Stage (including an under-stage storage area)	Stage lighting and supplies for production equipment. Stage curtains.	Water and CO ₂ fire extinguisher at the southern side of the stage. Water extinguisher below stage. Water extinguisher at northern end of stage Smoke detector below stage	Exits on north and south elevations (4)* and (5)* from rear of stage	In corridor behind stage
Changing rooms and showers/toilets	Electrical supply points and lighting	Water fire extinguisher by the northern doorway	Lower level exits on east elevation (6) and (7)	None

Boiler room	Gas boiler, central heating and hot water systems, electrical supply points and lighting	CO2 fire extinguisher by the doorway Smoke Detector	Lower level exits on east elevation (6) and (7)	None
Loft storage area	Electrical supply points, heater and lighting	Smoke detector	Main entrance (1)*	None

#All fire extinguishers have appropriate (luminous) signage providing instructions on suitability and method of operation.

*Exit marked with emergency escape signage.

Figure 59: Emergency plan for the temporary responsible person

As the responsible person for the event/function, etc. you have legal duties with regards to the safety of those persons assisting or attending the event.

Before the event or function you should be aware of:

- what fire protection systems are present;
- how a fire will be detected;
- how people will be warned if there is a fire;
- what staff should do if they discover a fire;
- how the evacuation of the premises should be carried out;
- where people should assemble after they have left the premises and procedures for checking whether the premises have been evacuated;
- identification of key escape routes and exits, how people can gain access to them and escape to a place of safety;
- arrangements for fighting fire;
- specific arrangements, if necessary, for high-fire-risk areas;
- how the fire and rescue service and any other necessary services will be called;
- procedures for meeting the fire and rescue service on their arrival and notifying them of any special risks, e.g. the location of highly flammable materials;
- what instruction employees or helpers need and the arrangements for ensuring that this training is given;
- limitation on numbers of people;
- any chains and padlocks which need removing from fire exits, etc.;
- exit doors which are required to be in the open position are secure; and
- checking that all escape routes are clear of obstructions and combustibles.

Before the event or function you should decide:

- the arrangements for fighting fire;
- the arrangements for means of escape for disabled persons;
- the duties and identity of staff who have specific responsibilities if there is a fire;

- the arrangements for the safe evacuation of people identified as being especially at risk, such as contractors, those with disabilities, children, members of the public and visitors;
- how you will proceed if life safety systems are out of order, e.g. fire-detection and alarm systems, sprinklers or smoke control systems;
- who will be responsible for calling the fire and rescue service and any other necessary services;
- who will meet the fire and rescue service on their arrival and notifying them of any special risks, e.g. the location of highly flammable materials; and
- your plans to deal with people once they have left the premises, especially children.

At the start of the event or function you should notify all those present about:

- the smoking policy;
- the emergency warning signal;
- who is supervising and how to identify them;
- location of exits and escape routes;
- taking only valuables immediately to hand but not to go to collect other belongings;
- the location of muster points; and
- what will happen after that (e.g. re-entry to the building).

During the event or function you should ensure that:

- escape routes and exits do not become blocked;
- your smoking policy is adhered to;
- no naked flames are started (unless authorised e.g. candles);
- where naked flames are present that combustible material is kept clear;
- rooms do not become overcrowded;
- noise levels cannot drown out the fire alarm; and
- if necessary, the number of persons in your premises is limited or controlled.

The above list is for example only and will need to be specific to any particular venue or premises.