FIRE AND LIFE SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR EVENTS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this fact sheet is to provide information for a safe environment for events and insure compliance with fire safety standards and regulatory requirements.

This fact sheet helps define policies and procedures that will help ensure compliance with the
- Commonwealth of Massachusetts State Building Code, 8th Edition, 780 CMR.
- Codes and local city regulations as they apply to ensure fire and life safety for events that occur at a Harvard University building.

SCOPE

Whenever one hundred (100) or more persons attend an event inside a Harvard University property that is being used as a venue other than what it is primarily intended for, the individual sponsor, or a representative of the sponsoring organization, must review this guideline prior to the event and assure compliance with the specified guidelines before, during, and after the event.

APPLICATION

This guideline applies to individuals and the representatives of organizations who sponsor events that take place inside University buildings.

DEFINITIONS

Assembly occupancy is generally defined as "occupancy (1) used for a gathering of 50 or more persons for deliberation, worship, entertainment, eating, drinking, amusement, awaiting transportation, or similar uses; or (2) used as a special amusement building, regardless of occupant load." Assembly occupancies might include the following: Assembly halls, auditoriums, club rooms, dance halls, drinking establishments and exhibition halls among others.

Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) - The AHJ shall be the State Fire Marshal and the Chief of the local Fire Department where the event is being conducted. Harvard University Environmental Health Safety (EHS) office in conjunction with the various schools is responsible for enforcing University policy and guidelines.

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Means of Egress - A continuous and unobstructed path of travel from any point in a building or structure to a public space and consists of three (3) separate and distinct parts:

1. the exit way access;
2. the exit way; and
3. the exit way discharge.

A means of egress comprises the vertical and horizontal means of travel and shall include intervening room spaces, doors, hallways, corridors, passageways, balconies, ramps, stairs, enclosures, lobbies, escalators, horizontal exits, courts, and yards.

Exit - The term “exit” shall have the same meaning as “means of egress”.

Occupancy - The term “occupancy” shall mean the use of space or room(s) within a building by a person or group of persons.

Occupancy load is based upon the legal capacity of the building as indicated on the Certificate of Inspection issued under the State Building Code NOT the actual number of people present in the building at any given time.

Occupancy load is the TOTAL number of employees, performers and patrons in a assembly facility as shown on the Certificate of Inspection.

Overcrowding - A condition that exists when either there are more people in a building, structure or portion thereof than have been authorized or posted by the fire code official, or when the fire code official determines that a threat exists to the safety of the occupants due to persons sitting and/or standing in locations that may obstruct or impede the use of aisles, passages, corridors, stairways, exits or other components of the means of egress.

PROCEDURES

1. General Requirements
The following procedures are established to assure compliance with the State Board of Fire Prevention Regulations and State Building Codes and the Harvard University Fire and Life Safety guidelines during events in places of assembly on campus.

2. Responsible Person
Designate a person from your organization who will be responsible for complying with all applicable requirements specified in the Fire and Life Safety for Events Checklist.

The responsible person shall attend and be present throughout the duration of the event to assure compliance with all specified guidelines and procedures. Crowd Manager(s) are responsible to monitor the event once open to the public and shall be present for the entire duration of the event.
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3. Planning the Event
Determine the occupancy capacity of the space you plan to reserve for your event. The space must be large enough to accommodate the expected number of attendees. The posted occupancy capacity must not be exceeded based on use/configuration. The use of chairs, tables, bars, stages, etc. will reduce the capacity of the space.

4. Decorations, Wall Coverings or Sound Insulation
All decorations, wall coverings and sound insulation must be flame resistant, as specified in the Massachusetts Comprehensive Fire safety Code 527 CMR 1, NFPA 1 Section 12.6.4 and Section 20.1.5.4

Materials regulated under 527 CMR, NFPA 1 Section 20.1.5.4 may require destructive testing and a permit for use of decorative materials must be submitted several weeks prior to the event.

The testing and permit shall specify:

1. the material that has been certified as flame retardant;
2. the certifying agency;
3. certification number; and
4. the type of occupancy that the permit is being issued.

Decorations: “shall not obstruct exits, access thereto, egress there from, or visibility thereof”. Decorations: “shall not be placed over exit doors or otherwise be located to conceal or obscure any exit”.

Contact the EHS with any questions concerning the flammability of materials intended to be used in the space.

5. Fire Fighter Detail
Assembly occupancies where candles are in use; and for other purposes where the Fire Marshal deems it necessary for life safety – a paid fire detail maybe required by the local city or town.

6. Open Flames and Pyrotechnic Devices
The use of open flames, candles or pyrotechnical devices are strictly prohibited inside any University building. Persons requesting candles for religious ceremonies should consult with their advisor and or Building Manager.

7. Fire-Safe Flameless Candles
Flameless, battery operated, real wax candles are available and may be used at events. They operate for 350 hours on two “C” size batteries. On the interior of the candle is an LED bulb which creates the warm glow and random flicker of authentic candlelight. Product information on these candles may be found on the web.

8. Tables, Chairs and Aisles
In each place of assembly where seating is provided, except where assembly is seated at tables,
the seating shall be arranged in an orderly manner with ample provisions made for aisles
leading to exits, and no aisle forming a part of the egress system of the place of assembly shall be
obstructed or encumbered.

Tables arranged for dining or other purposes in places of assembly shall be so located in respect
to exit openings, and so spaced apart, that sufficient means of access to exit openings is
provided. Aisles in the direction of exits shall be at least three feet (3’) in width. Suitable access
to aisles shall be provided from all tables. For more detailed information refer to NFPA 101, Life

9. Sterno – Solid Alcohol Fuel Gel Fuel for Food Warming
Sterno type gel fuel may be used for food warming at approved events, as long as the Sterno -
Solid Alcohol Fuel Safe Use Guidelines fact sheet is followed.

10. When Working with Sterno Gel Fuel:
   • Use CAUTION when handling OPEN FLAME products.
   • Use a blunt object, such as a spoon, to pry off the lid.
   • Cup hand over lid when opening the can.
   • Remove excess gel from lid if it is being used as a regulator
   • Wash fuel residue from hands.
   • Place the can underneath the chafing dish or beverage urn before lighting.
   • Make sure the cans are placed securely in the equipment.
   • Use a long handled match or butane lighter to light the can.
   • Use a snuffer paddle, regulator or saucer to extinguish the flame.
   • Wait until the can is cool before touching.

11. When Working with Sterno Gel Fuel, DO NOT:
   • Use a sharp knife to pry off the lid
   • Use a lit can to light another can
   • Carry lit cans
   • Carry chafing dishes or beverage urns with lit cans
   • Touch cans while still hot
   • Allow loose clothing, napkins or tablecloths near flame
   • Use hands to extinguish flame
   • Blow out flame of Sterno type gel fuel to extinguish

12. 60 Minutes Prior to the Start of the Event:
   • Check the panic hardware on all exit doors to assure smooth operation. (You may need
     Security to assist)
   • Open all exit doors to check the door swing, and remove any obstructions. During winter
     weather assure that snow and ice have not created an obstruction.
   • Check to make sure that any handicapped accessible entrances are unlocked and
     unobstructed.
   • Confirm that there are at least two clear exits.
• All corridors, stairways, and egress passageways must be clear and unobstructed.
• Fire doors must never be blocked open or chained shut.
• Confirm that exit signs are present, visible and appear to be operating properly.
• Confirm that emergency lights are operational.
• Confirm that adjoining spaces present no obvious fire hazards.
• Fire extinguishers must be available for use. Check to be sure the pressure gauge is in the green zone and a current inspection tag is attached.
• Know the location of manual fire alarm pull stations and assure that they are visible and easily accessible.
• Contact the University Operations Center to help correct any deficiencies or obstructions.

13. **Fire Alarm Evacuation Announcement**
The following announcement or similar announcement must be made at the start of the event, and between musical sets:

“In the event of a fire alarm, please proceed calmly to your nearest exit, leave the building and move away from the building. Please note the location of the nearest exit to you. Be aware that the way you entered the building may not be the closet way out. Sitting or standing in the aisles and doorways is not permitted. Smoking is not allowed inside any University building. Please turn off or silence all pagers and cell phones. Thank you and enjoy the performance.”

14. **During the Event**
• Ensure that the occupancy capacity of the space has not been exceeded.
• Continue to monitor all exits, halls and stairways to be sure they are remaining clear and unobstructed.
• Ask anyone blocking an aisle or a doorway to move.

15. **After the Event**
At the completion of the event, the responsible person shall complete and sign the Event Fire and Life Safety Checklist to verify that all appropriate fire safety procedures were accomplished. Follow your school’s document retention requirements.

16. **Assembly Occupancy Capacity Calculations**
Occupancy capacities have been calculated by the City Building Inspector department and are subject to change, based on inspections by the local Fire Department, under provisions of the State Building Code, 8th Edition.

**Posting of Occupancy Load** – Every room or space that is an assembly occupancy shall have the occupancy load of the room or space posted in a conspicuous place, near the main exit or exit access doorway from the room or space. Posted signs shall be of an approved legible permanent design and shall be maintained by the owner or authorized agent.

• The “**Net Floor Area Allowances per Occupant**” is based on an observation of the room configured for normal usage. Usually the “Net Floor Area” represents the total floor area of an empty room. If the room contains a stage, a display case, a bar, a large table or chair, or any other
permanent or semi-permanent fixture, the space occupied by the obstruction must be subtracted from the total area of the room to arrive at the “Net Floor Area”.

- “Concentrated Use” capacities are based on the number of people standing in a room (5) net square feet and are calculated at seven (7) net square feet of “net area” per occupant with chairs only.

- “Unconcentrated Use” capacities assume that people are seated at tables will reduce capacity to 15 net.

- “Non-Fixed Seating” refers to chairs that are easily removed from the room. Folding chairs and table chairs in classrooms are examples of “Non-Fixed Seating”.

- “Fixed Seating” refers to seats in auditoriums or gymnasiums, where the seats or bleachers are permanently affixed to the floor.

For additional information on Occupancy Load, please refer to 780 CMR Chapter 10, 8th Edition

RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Event Sponsors
   - Groups that sponsor events in University buildings must appoint a responsible person whenever attendance at the event will exceed 100. A trained Crowd Manager(s) may also be required based on the scope of the event.
   - The responsible person must also complete the Event Fire and Life Safety Checklist. The checklist is available on-line here.
   - The responsible person shall perform an inspection of the space before the start of the event using the checklist and be present throughout the duration of the event to assure compliance with the Event Fire and Life Safety Guidelines.
   - If food warming is required, ensure that the guidelines for the safe use of Sterno type gel fuel are followed as described in item 9 of this fact sheet.
   - At the completion of the event, the responsible person shall complete and sign the Event Fire and Life Safety for Events Checklist to verify that all appropriate Fire Safety Guidelines have been accomplished. Forward the completed checklist to your schools respective event coordinators/department.

2. Facilities
   - Assure that the set-up of tables and chairs is done in accordance with fire code specifications as referenced in this fact sheet.
   - Be responsible for the maintenance of life safety equipment (emergency lighting, exit signs, doors and emergency hardware)
   - Documentation of Crowd Manger Fire & Building Safety Checklist is retrained on file as required by the code 527 CMR 1.00, NFPA 1 (2012 Edition) Section 20.1.5.6.4

3. Fire Safety – EH&S
   - Provide training regarding the implementation of this program.
   - Review Crowd Management requirements for significant University events upon request.
• Review the policy annually and update as needed.
• Review a list of capacities for all assembly areas annually.

4. Public Safety – Harvard University Police Department (HUPD)
Many events held in University spaces may require a police detail. Typically, an event where there are 100 persons or more in attendance and alcohol is being served, a police officer detail is required.

Many other events often require police details, event organizers should contact the Harvard University Police Department to inquire about the need for a police detail. HUPD Information.

REFERENCES

• 527 CMR 1.00 – Massachusetts Comprehensive Fire Safety Code based on the 2012 edition of NFPA 1


• Commonwealth of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 148

• Commonwealth of Massachusetts State Building Code, 8th Edition

• Sterno - Education and Safety website, accessed July 2011