Fire Alarm User Function Testing

FAQs

Why are we implementing these changes?

Most organisations test their fire alarms weekly in strict compliance with British Standards, this is in order to remind people what the evacuation signal sounds like, to make sure you can hear it whilst you're working and to see if the system is functioning as intended. We are at the very early trial stages and have selected a small number of buildings to pilot this project, this is with the aim to determine if weekly testing is something we can establish in order to enhance safety and compliance.

Will this be disruptive, do we really need to do it weekly?

This kind of weekly testing happens in most buildings in the UK, e.g. hospitals, shopping centres, offices, educational establishments etc. You will have the opportunity to influence the time and day of the test but it is important that people who could potentially be affected by fire are in the building at the time of test and hear the fire alarm being sounded.

What could happen if we don't do the testing?

Although modern fire alarms are very reliable and have some intelligence built in, there is no substitute for actual function testing. If there is a fire, you'll want to be reassured that the system will operate as designed and fulfil its intended purpose.

What happens if something goes wrong during the testing?

Simply contact the Estates helpdesk who will immediately despatch an engineer, however we will give you simple instructions and training on how to carry out the testing and what to expect.

Will I be liable if there is a problem?

We want you to support us in making the University a safe place to work and study, you are not responsible for the maintenance of the fire alarm system. We want you to check and report any issues but won't be holding you responsible if things go wrong.

What happens if I'm late in doing a test or miss a test completely?

It is important to do the test at the same time and day each week so people know when to expect a test and what to expect. If a test is late or missed, it's better to reschedule for the following week rather than cause confusion by doing it later or on the wrong day. It is often helpful to use your Outlook calendar to set a reminder and don't forget if you're off work, someone else needs to do it.

How many people does it take to do the testing?

Ideally each building needs a team of 3 volunteers, only 2 people are required to do the test each week - the third person provides cover when needed.

Who should be doing the 'user function testing?'

We thought that fire wardens / marshals would be a good place to start so we've asked them first. We need volunteers that are regularly in the building at the same time and day each week but you don't need to be a technical wiz to do this testing!

* A "user" is a person or organisation having control of the building (or part of the building) in which the fire detection and alarm system is installed.

When will my building be scheduled for testing?

We are working with a range of different building types to understand how to make it as easy as possible. Someone from the Estates department will contact you to discuss how and when testing could be implemented.

I want to help – how do I get involved?

In the first instance please contact the Estates helpdesk ideally by email and we'll give you a call to set up a meeting – we'll come to you so you're not inconvenienced.

Why aren't Estates doing this testing?

The Estates department are responsible for the regular inspection and maintenance of the fire alarm system. This type of maintenance can take several hours and often requires a team of specialists to carry it out. The user test is a brief, but regular activity which will help us better understand how the system in each building is performing.