



NHS Management Executive  
St. Andrew's House  
Edinburgh EH1 3DG  
16th February 1998  
Telephone 0131-244  
Fax 0131-244 2323

Dear Colleague

**FIRE SAFETY POLICY**

**Summary**

1. The purpose of this letter is to provide colleagues with a revised statement of fire safety policy in respect of premises occupied by the NHS in Scotland (Annex A). It provides a more precise and concise definition of policy and details the mandatory requirements which must be complied with by NHS Trusts and other holding bodies. It does not impose new obligations but does separate Departmental policy from operational guidance. Consequently the Policy and Principles part of Firecode in Scotland, issued under MEL(1994)35, is now superseded.

2. It is recognised that fire safety is not a stand-alone issue but one to be dealt with alongside others in the overall risk management of health and safety matters. In that context attention is drawn to MEL(1997)80 "Health and Safety Issues in the NHS in Scotland" which, amongst other things, stated that all NHS employers should give a high priority at board level to ensuring the safety of staff, patients and visitors and to meeting their statutory health and safety obligations.

**Action**

3. The revised fire safety policy and associated mandatory requirements have immediate effect.

**Other Information**

4. The Estates Environment Forum has queried the status of Firecode in Scotland in relation to the Building Regulations. A note is attached at Annex B which addresses this point. It has been agreed with the Scottish Office Development Department, the Department responsible for building control matters.

**Addressees**

For action:

Chief Executives, NHS Trusts  
General Managers, Island Health Boards  
General Manager, State Hospitals Board for Scotland  
General Manager, Common Services Agency

For information:

General Managers, Mainland Health Boards  
General Manager, Health Education Board for Scotland  
Executive Director, SCPMDE

**Enquiries to:**

Mr Ian Grieve  
Room 352a  
St Andrew's House  
EDINBURGH EH1 3DG

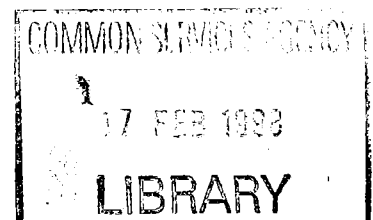
Tel: 0131-244 2777

Fax: 0131-244 2323

Email:

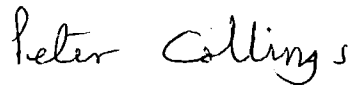
igrieve.doh.stand@gtnet.gov.uk

SCOTTISH HEALTH SERVICE COMMON SERVICES AGENCY TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT LIBRARY	
CLASS	67
ACC.	102051
Date	17 FEB 1998 Price



5. As a result of the publication of the new fire safety policy statement and its separation from Firecode in Scotland, the latter will in future serve the purpose of providing best practice guidance on compliance with statutory and mandatory requirements. The amendment of Firecode in Scotland will continue to be led by the Estates Environment Forum.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Peter Collings".

**Dr Peter Collings**  
Director of Finance

**SCOTTISH OFFICE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH (SODoH)  
NHS IN SCOTLAND MANAGEMENT EXECUTIVE (NHSiS ME)**

**FIRE SAFETY POLICY FOR NHSiS**

**Purpose**

- The purpose of this document is to provide all NHSiS bodies with an unambiguous statement of fire safety policy.

**Policy**

- Statement 1 All NHSiS bodies must comply with all statutes bearing upon the fire safety of staff, patients and visitors and the premises which they occupy.
- Statement 2 All NHSiS bodies commissioning new premises for owner occupation, or leasing newly constructed premises from another party, must be satisfied that such premises comply with all statutes bearing upon the fire safety of newly constructed premises.
- Statement 3 The SODoH must identify all mandatory requirements necessary to underpin statutory obligations having regard for the particular nature of healthcare premises.
- Statement 4 All premises used for NHSiS purposes; new or existing, owner occupied or leased; must be managed in accordance with the mandatory requirements set out hereafter.
- Statement 5 The SODoH must provide guidance on compliance with those aspects of statutory and mandatory requirements which are particular to healthcare premises. This will be effected through the publication of Firecode in Scotland by the NHSiS Estates Environment Forum.
- Statement 6 The Scottish Office Home Department, in liaison with SODoH, will recommend that all Scottish fire authorities have regard for the mandatory requirements set out hereafter and for the guidance referred to at Statement 5 when dealing with healthcare premises occupied by the NHSiS.
- Statement 7 The Scottish Office Development Department, in liaison with the SODoH, will advise Scottish building control authorities that the mandatory requirements set out hereafter and the guidance referred to at Statement 5 will provide useful guidance when considering applications for building warrant for healthcare premises provided for the NHSiS and when assessing whether the Technical Standards for compliance with the Building Standards (Scotland) Regulations are being met.

**MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS (Policy Statement 4)**

## Introduction

- 1 Fire safety is not a stand-alone issue but one to be dealt with alongside others in the overall risk management of health and safety matters. However fire in a hospital or other healthcare premises can be especially serious because of the difficulties and dangers associated with the emergency evacuation of patients, many of whom will be highly dependent. For this reason and because patient care areas are not designated under the Fire Precautions Act 1971 the mandatory requirements set out hereafter must be complied with. They apply to all chief executives and general managers with operational responsibility for the delivery of healthcare. Subsequent references to Trusts and to chief executives should be read as embracing Health Boards, other NHSiS bodies and general managers with equivalent responsibilities.

## Requirements

- 2 Trusts must have a clearly defined fire safety policy covering all premises which they occupy.
- 3 Trusts must have an effective fire safety management system which provides for:
  - the preparation and upkeep of fire safety policies and the coordination of fire safety management throughout the Trust;
  - means of ensuring emergency evacuation procedures for all areas;
  - means of ensuring that for patient care areas, appropriate emergency response teams are established and that sufficient staff are available at all times to provide assistance with patient evacuation in a fire emergency;
  - means of ensuring that procedures are in place to undertake fire risk assessments throughout the Trust and to monitor these on a regular basis to ensure that they remain relevant;
  - means of ensuring that procedures are in place within the Trust to provide all staff with fire safety training once in every twelve month period with the training appropriate to the duties of the staff and their place of work;
  - means of ensuring that appropriate training exercises are undertaken at least annually for the fire response teams and other staff who are involved in patient evacuation;
  - means of ensuring that whenever Trust premises are in use, the senior member of staff present, or duty officer, has a nominated responsibility for fire safety, and that they are provided with appropriate training to enable them to undertake their duties effectively;

- means of receiving reports of all fire incidents from the Trust's fire safety adviser, informing the executive director, or chief executive as appropriate, of their contents and arranging for them to be acted upon.
- 4 Trusts must consider the appointment of a specialist fire safety adviser to provide specialist technical support, including:
- advising on the application of the provisions of legislation, Firecode in Scotland and other guidance;
  - involvement with estates staff and others, in fire safety audit and fire risk assessments and assisting with reports to management;
  - preparing training programmes, organising regular fire drills and staff training, witnessing the effectiveness or otherwise of fire drills;
  - recommending remedial action when necessary and arranging for accurate records of staff training and fire drills to be kept centrally;
  - keeping records of all fire incidents and ensuring that fire reports are prepared;
  - managing the work of assistant fire advisers and other fire prevention staff, where necessary.
- 5 Trusts must report fires involving death or serious injury to the Health and Safety Executive under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985. In addition, fires involving death, serious injury or damage on a large scale must be notified immediately by telephone or fax to the:

Building and Estates Adviser  
Directorate of Finance  
NHS in Scotland Management Executive  
St Andrew's House  
Regent Road  
Edinburgh  
EH1 3DG  
Tel: (0131) 244 2079  
Fax: (0131) 244 2323

This must be followed up by a detailed report of the fire as soon as is reasonably practicable. If further information is likely to emerge from ongoing enquiries, this should be indicated and the material made available as soon as possible.

All outbreaks of fire must also be reported internally and actions identified to ensure that all possible lessons are learned.

**The Building Standards (Scotland) Regulations 1990 and National Health Service in Scotland Firecode**

1. The Building Standards (Scotland) Regulations 1990, made under the powers in the Building (Scotland) Act 1959, are enforced by the building control departments in each local council. The requirements of the regulations are defined in the Technical Standards for compliance with the Building Standards (Scotland) Regulations 1990 as amended and cover, amongst other matters, structural fire precautions, means of escape from fire, and facilities for fire fighting. The Regulations and Technical Standards apply to all new building work and to alterations and extensions to existing buildings. This includes healthcare premises.
2. However, the fire precautions and fire safety strategies in the Technical Standards do not directly address the additional risks in healthcare properties associated with those areas not designated under the Fire Precautions Act 1971, namely those areas to which patients have access. Additional recommendations for the layout, design and construction of new NHS healthcare premises, new extensions and major alterations to existing healthcare premises are therefore made within the suite of documents which constitute National Health Service in Scotland Firecode.
3. The Technical Standards for compliance with the Building Standards (Scotland) Regulations must be achieved as required under the Building (Scotland) Act 1959, but the relevant parts of National Health Service in Scotland Firecode should be used as detailed guidance and as an explanatory memorandum which may help in meeting Parts D,E and S of the Technical Standards.