

CHAPTER VII

Provisions on Safety Matters



Section B

FIRE SAFETY

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A. Introduction

1. Fire is a serious threat to the personnel and property of any organization, including the United Nations. Fires cause numerous injuries, deaths and losses of assets in organizations each year. Fire is a potential hazard in all United Nations premises because an outbreak of fire would jeopardize life, property and the delivery of programmes and projects.
2. While the primary responsibility for the safety and security of United Nations personnel rests with the host country, all United Nations organizations are responsible and accountable for providing adequate measures to prevent fires and protect personnel members and others at United Nations facilities against fire. Individually, all United Nations personnel are responsible and accountable for compliance with fire safety standards and taking reasonable efforts to prevent fires.
3. Losses from fires are preventable by applying basic fire prevention principles and being prepared for emergencies. Within the United Nations, fire prevention is the primary strategy for fire safety; however, mitigation measures for rapid detection, raising the alarm, containment and suppression must also be put in place, in addition to reliable measures to rapidly evacuate personnel and others who may be present on United Nations premises.
4. This strategy requires the highest level of systematic planning and preparedness at the managerial level, including proper procedures and continuous training. Effective management practices require the development and implementation of policies and procedures to protect personnel and property by preventing and/or dealing with fires and preparing for emergencies.

B. Purpose

5. This policy sets out the key elements of fire safety that all United Nations Security Management System (UNSMS) organizations shall follow to minimize the risk¹ from fire to personnel, to other occupants of United Nations premises, including visitors, and also to the premises itself and the property contained therein.
6. This policy must be read in conjunction with the “United Nations Fire Safety Guidelines”.

C. Applicability

7. The policy is applicable to all organizations participating in the UNSMS and their personnel (herein referred to as “United Nations personnel”) as defined in Chapter III of the Security Policy Manual (“Applicability of United Nations Security Management System”).

¹ Please also refer to *Security Policy Manual* Chapter IV, Section A (Security Risk Mangement).

8. This policy has special application for United Nations personnel and managers who are responsible for the implementation of and adherence to fire safety policy, procedures and programmes on United Nations premises.
9. As per *Security Policy Manual* (SPM), Chapter IV, Section E (“Security of United Nations Premises”), United Nations premises are defined as all categories of land and physical areas that are utilized or occupied by the organizations of the United Nations Security Management System, including structures such as buildings, offices, warehouses, stores, shops, dwellings, containers, prefabs and tents.
10. For government facilities hosting United Nations personnel, this policy shall be applied in accordance with the provisions of the *Security Policy Manual* (SPM), Chapter IV, Section N (“Minimum Operating Security Standards”), Appendix 1, paragraph 6.3.

D. Conceptual Overview

11. United Nations system organizations confront many challenges in achieving adequate and acceptable fire safety coverage. Major obstacles include the following:
 - (a) United Nations organizations are often located in spaces which pose fire safety hazards and over which the United Nations has no proprietary right to enforce or make significant structural changes;
 - (b) Limited or non-existent fire safety regulations resulting in buildings available to United Nations having minimal fire safety features;
 - (c) Inadequate infrastructure to support fire safety systems and provide the necessary resources to fight fires.
12. There are three key elements to overcoming these challenges:
 - (a) Using risk management principles, United Nations system organizations shall combine fire prevention and mitigation strategies and measures to protect United Nations personnel and facilities;
 - (b) Make adequate provisions within each relevant budget for fire safety requirements;
 - (c) Collaborate with host country authorities, including local fire services and, wherever possible, building owners.

E. Fire Safety Policy

13. The strategy of the United Nations for managing the risks from fire hazards is one of both prevention and mitigation.² Prevention entails measures intended to lower the likelihood of a fire occurring, such as compliance with applicable fire codes, fire safety rules for building occupants, regular housekeeping, fire safety inspections and training of personnel. Mitigation entails measures intended to lower the impact of a fire once it has occurred, including fire detection and alarm systems, fire suppression systems, fire and smoke compartmentalization, training on the use of fire suppression equipment, fire safety and evacuation planning, emergency evacuation drills, functioning evacuation routes (including alternates) and exits and medical emergency procedures.
14. The principal risk management tool is the Fire Safety Plan. All United Nations premises must have a written Fire Safety Plan that is compliant with the provisions of and template in the “United Nations Fire Safety Guidelines”. The Fire Safety Plan is part of the larger Security Risk Management (SRM) Plan and describes actions required of those with key responsibilities in the prevention and mitigation of fire risks, as well as the responsibilities of United Nations personnel and visitors.
15. The existence of a Fire Safety Plan will be verified by all United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) compliance missions.
16. The “United Nations Fire Safety Guidelines” provide baseline guidance and standards. Where host country fire prevention codes, rules and regulations provide more detailed technically-acceptable guidance and direction, they take precedence over United Nations guidelines. The highest standards, whether they are host country standards or United Nations guidelines, must always take precedence.
17. Where host country fire prevention codes, rules and regulations are absent or inadequate, reference should be made to the United Nations Fire Safety Guidelines. If more comprehensive guidance is required than is contained in the United Nations guidelines, reference should be made to a fire code that is internationally recognized and that is most applicable to the geographical location, for example the International Fire Code. More detailed guidance is found in the United Nations Fire Safety Guidelines.³
18. In those countries where the host country has an established fire safety structure, including fire safety professionals, codes, rules and regulations, United Nations personnel charged with fire safety responsibilities are to consult with host country fire safety professionals and fire safety authorities to ensure that implementation of any provision of United Nations Fire Safety Guidelines is consistent and compatible with the applicable host country codes.

² Security Policy Manual, Chapter IV, Section A (“Security Risk Management”), paragraph 14.

³ See United Nations Fire Safety Guidelines, 2011, Part V, subheading “Fire Codes”.

19. The provisions in the United Nations Fire Safety Guidelines are meant to be used, where applicable, for assessing, establishing and implementing fire safety programs in United Nations premises.
20. In addition to observing all host country fire safety requirements in all United Nations premises, United Nations personnel tasked with fire safety will ensure that fire safety policies and programmes are established in accordance with “United Nations Fire Safety Guidelines” and are in place.
21. Fire Safety Plans shall be regularly reviewed and updated to address any changes in the structure of buildings, functions, contents and any other matters which may have a bearing on fire safety.
22. Fire prevention and mitigation, including standards set out in local or international fire codes, must be factored into the design of United Nations premises and/or in the acquisition of existing premises for United Nations use.

F. Roles and Responsibilities

23. Internationally, the proven and most important element of effective fire safety in any domain requiring fire safety protection is a positive fire safety culture. A positive fire safety culture is primarily achieved and maintained by raising awareness among personnel, applying appropriate fire safety rules and regulations and defining associated responsibilities and accountability. Responsibilities and accountability for safety and security, which includes fire safety, are clearly articulated in the “Framework of Accountability for the United Nations Security Management System”.⁴
24. Negligence and disregard for appropriate safety measures, including fire safety, at any level of responsibility is likely to directly add risk to lives, assets and programme delivery. Regardless of where personnel are located, each UNSMS organization has a duty of care to provide appropriate fire safety measures to lower the risk from fire to an acceptable level.
25. The following establishes the specific responsibilities for fire safety, primarily at the country level, within the UNSMS (see Annex A for schematic).

Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security

26. The Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security has the delegated authority from the Secretary-General to make executive decisions regarding the safety and security of United Nations personnel, premises and assets and is therefore responsible for fire safety within the United Nations.

⁴ United Nations Security Management System, *Security Policy Manual*, Chapter II, Section A (“Framework of Accountability” February 2011).

27. The Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security is responsible for developing fire safety policies, practices and procedures for the United Nations system worldwide and coordinating with organizations of the United Nations system to ensure implementation, compliance and support for fire safety aspects of their activities.

Designated Official

28. The Designated Official (DO) is responsible for ensuring the establishment, monitoring and annual review of all Fire Safety Plans within his/her area of responsibility.

Chief Security Adviser (CSA)/Security Adviser (SA)/Country Security Focal Point (CSFP)

29. The most senior security professional directly supporting the DO⁵ is responsible for monitoring and annual reviews of the Fire Safety Plans within his/her area of responsibility and performs the following duties in this role:
- (a) Coordinates closely with representatives or organizations in his/her area of responsibility to ensure that each United Nations organization and integrated premises (if applicable) is aware of their requirement to have a functioning Fire Safety Focal Point;
 - (b) Ensures each UNSMS organization within his/her area of responsibility has a current Fire Safety Plan;
 - (c) Informs and regularly updates all UNSMS organizations on host country legislation relating to fire safety;
 - (d) Monitors compliance with this policy, the United Nations Fire Safety Guidelines and applicable host country legislation relating to fire safety;
 - (e) In consultation with Security Focal Points and facilities management, provides advice to the DO on the acquisition of new premises;
 - (f) Provides an annual report to the DO and Security Management Team (SMT) regarding the current state of Fire Safety Plans of UNSMS organizations in his/her area of responsibility.

Representative of Organization (country-level)

⁵ This is usually the Chief Security Adviser or another Security Adviser, including their officer-in-charge *ad interim*. Where a Chief Security Adviser or Security Adviser is not present, this term is equivalent to the titles of Chief Security Officer, Chief of Security and Safety Services, Country Security Focal Point or Local Security Assistant (if necessary, in countries where no international professional security adviser has been assigned or is present).

30. The country-level representative of organizations participating in the UNSMS:
- (a) Implements appropriate actions to provide for the safety and security of their respective personnel at the duty station;
 - (b) Ensures that fire safety is a core component of their respective security programmes in the country and that appropriate funding is provided;
 - (c) Appoints an existing staff member as Fire Safety Focal Point;
 - (d) Ensures that their personnel are familiar with all fire safety-related instructions;
 - (e) Takes action on instances of non-compliance with fire safety policies, practices and procedures;
 - (f) Reviews, approves and ensures that the organization’s Fire Safety Plan is properly implemented.

Fire Safety Focal Point (country-level)

31. Each UNSMS organization shall appoint an existing staff member with the responsibilities of a Fire Safety Focal Point in each country where they have a presence.
32. The Fire Safety Focal Point is responsible for coordinating fire safety for the organization in-country in accordance with “United Nations Fire Safety Guidelines” and in collaboration with Chief Security Adviser/Security Adviser/Country Security Focal Point,:
- (a) Coordinates fire safety issues with facilities managers/owners, host country authorities and organization management;
 - (b) Coordinates fire safety inspections, fire safety risk assessments and recommends remedial fire safety measures;
 - (c) Prepares the Fire Safety Plan and Emergency Evacuation Plan;
 - (d) Nominates and trains fire wardens as part of the Fire Safety Plan;
 - (e) Ensures that a competent certified entity conducts periodic maintenance of fire safety and firefighting systems, where available;
 - (f) Rehearses building evacuation plans through regular drills, as required by United Nations Minimum Operating Security Standards (MOSS);
 - (g) Briefs and trains personnel on fire safety;
 - (h) Monitors adherence to fire safety policy;

- (i) Advises management on all aspects of fire safety;
 - (j) In the event of a fire or an emergency evacuation, provides supervision and coordination in accordance with the Fire Safety Plan and Emergency Evacuation Plan.
33. In the absence of a competent local capacity, a qualified and certified fire safety entity may be engaged to carry out specific tasks listed in paragraph 31 above, however, the country-level representative of the UNSMS organization retains responsibility and accountability for those functions.

United Nations Personnel

34. United Nations personnel are responsible at all times for compliance with any fire safety regulations and procedures established at their duty station both on and off duty.

G. Training Requirements

35. All United Nations personnel shall attend briefings and be familiar with fire safety and evacuation procedures in their workplace.
36. All United Nations personnel who have a specific role under the Fire Safety Plan for their organization must be adequately trained in their responsibilities and participate in fire safety and evacuation drills. Training will normally be delivered by, or under the direction of, the Fire Safety Focal Point.
37. Fire Safety Focal Points shall receive fire safety training as and when provided by the United Nations Department of Safety and Security. Fire safety focal points are to be guided in the performance of their duties by the United Nations Fire Safety Guidelines.

H. Enforcement

38. For the purpose of this policy, a fire safety violation is defined as an act or omission that compromises or may compromise fire safety at United Nations premises. Fire safety violations identified during fire safety inspections or as a result of an investigation must be remedied as soon as possible. In the event of an investigation into a fire incident, findings that any United Nations personnel have failed to abide by the terms of this policy may lead to administrative or disciplinary proceedings.

I. Final Provisions:

39. This policy is meant to be made available to all United Nations personnel.
40. This policy enters into force on 15 April 2012.

Annex A

United Nations Fire Safety Responsibility and Accountability

