

Boiler and plant rooms

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1. Purpose

The aim of this procedure is to ensure the health and safety of employees e.g., caretakers, maintenance engineers and contractors who enter and work in boiler and plant rooms.

Boiler and plant rooms contain electrical and heating installations that can present several hazards including:

- Fire or explosion
- Fumes and gases
- Electricity
- Asbestos
- Working at height
- Lone working

2. Scope

This procedure applies to all Council buildings and schools and is especially relevant for responsible premises managers, caretakers, contractors, and maintenance engineers.

For the application of this procedure a boiler or plant room is a dedicated room within a building used to house heating plant or electrical equipment. This will not typically apply to smaller domestic type installations located in cupboards.

3. Policy relevant legislation

The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order

Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012

4. Common hazards

- Carbon monoxide is an odourless, colourless, tasteless, and flammable gas that can be deadly within minutes without warning leading to harmful health effects such as asphyxiation, unconsciousness, or death.
- Dangerous moving parts can lead to entrapment, crushing, shearing, and cutting, causing severe injury or amputation.
- Hot surfaces can lead to severe burns.
- Electrical equipment can cause electric shock, tissue damaging burns, electrocution in severe cases i.e., death or serious injury caused by electric shock.
- Potential exposure to excessive noise levels can lead to irreversible hearing loss.
- Potential exposure to substances harmful to health by way of inhalation, ingestion, absorption through the skin or eyes and ingestion.

- Depending, on the age of the premises, there may be asbestos containing materials.
- Flooding, resulting in slippery surfaces or combined electrical equipment and supplies can cause electric shock or electrocution.
- Fire and or explosions leading to serious injury or death.
- Extremes of temperature.
- Access and egress restrictions

5. Guidance on reducing the risks

General use

Boiler/plant rooms are provided to house mechanical and electrical equipment including boilers, air conditioning equipment, electrical distribution switchgear, pumps, water treatment etc. **They must not be used for storage or any other purpose.**

Access/egress and Security

Entry to boiler/plant rooms should be restricted to maintenance personnel and servicing engineers and other specifically authorised individual.

Do not obstruct access - immediate unrestricted access may be required to mains switches, gas isolation etc. in emergencies.

Boiler/plant rooms and all access to them should be adequately lit. Steep steps should be fitted with a handrail.

Notices



All entrance doors to boiler/plant rooms should be fitted with notices clearly indicating purpose of the room, restricted access to authorised persons, and no smoking signs.

Storage of materials

Flammable and combustible materials must not be stored in boiler/plant rooms. No LPG (Liquefied Petroleum Gas) cylinder or flammable/toxic gas cylinder of any description shall be stored or left in boiler/plant rooms.

Boiler/plant rooms must be kept free of clutter and must not be used for general storage e.g., tools, paint, building materials, furniture, and other equipment.

Ventilation

Air vents should always be kept open, clean, and free from obstruction.

Fire

The risk of fire within boiler rooms is a particular concern and it is essential that adequate control measures are in place.

Boiler rooms should be fitted with adequate fire detection and alarm systems.

All combustion equipment shall be maintained in good order with any defects being immediately reported particularly to minimise any risks of leaks.

No combustible materials of any type are to be stored in boiler rooms.

Fire doors shall be maintained in good order, kept closed and be readily available and easily accessible.

Adequate firefighting equipment shall be kept in the boiler rooms.

N.B. There is no special firefighting equipment intended to deal with fires in gas fired boiler rooms. The gas should be shut off at the isolating valve. CO₂ extinguishers are usually used as they help to neutralise any gas leakage to below the explosive limit.

Once electrical isolation or gas shut off used, the system should only be reconnected by a competent person when the issue requiring isolation has been satisfactorily rectified.

Carbon Monoxide (CO) detection

All areas where gas appliances are present must be fitted with adequate CO detection and alarm systems.

Servicing and maintenance of mechanical and electrical installations

All servicing and maintenance of mechanical and electrical installations must be carried out by a competent person or contractor. Do not attempt to undertake any work which is beyond the scope of your responsibilities or competence.

Operating and maintenance records

All instructions relating to operating and maintenance must be available and displayed, where appropriate, adjacent to the system to which it applies.

For the corporate estate Facilities Management will maintain records of all work carried out in boiler/plant rooms. Schools that arrange work themselves must ensure that all records and logbooks relating to work, and servicing are kept up to date, stored in a safe place and made available to anyone who needs to see them.

Asbestos



Asbestos is commonly found in boiler rooms in ceilings, duct shuttering, pipework insulation, gaskets, flues etc. Information and procedures relating to asbestos can be found in the property's Asbestos Register (Contact: FM ServiceDesk FMServiceDesk@Oxfordshire.gov.uk). An asbestos Refurbishment and Demolition survey must be carried out before undertaking any work that could potentially disturb asbestos materials. Any work affecting asbestos materials must only be carried out by competent contractors.

Asbestos Debris/Residue

Asbestos debris and residue have been discovered in some properties during Refurbishment and Demolition surveys of boiler rooms.

Such debris and residue are not always easily identifiable and can be present in dust deposits on floors and ledges or small deposits bonded to walls and pipework which may have been painted over.

The source of asbestos debris is not always obvious or known and can result from damage to known asbestos containing materials or from historical asbestos removal which may not have been to today's improved standards.

Asbestos materials in a damaged condition, often with associated debris, must not be disturbed. Access to the area by any person should be prevented until the area has been deemed safe for reoccupation. This will usually be as soon as removal works have been completed or following an environmental clean by a licensed contractor. The Council's centrally managed property and facilities budget will fund reactive works related to asbestos incidents.

Report any **damage** to known or suspected asbestos containing materials or debris **immediately** to the FM ServiceDesk FMServiceDesk@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

All managers responsible for premises and site maintenance staff including caretakers are required to attend asbestos awareness training.

6. Links

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the relevant and detailed policies and procedures for dealing with common hazards e.g., asbestos, electrical and gas safety etc. which can be accessed via the intranet or contact

healthandsafetyhelp@oxfordshire.gov.uk

7. Equality diversity and inclusion

The council will regularly monitor and review the impact of this policy and procedure.

The council needs to consider the equality, diversity and inclusion impact of its HR policies and procedures on its employees and in some cases, a formal EIA (Equality Impact Assessment) may not always be appropriate. For any queries on this, please contact the HR Policy Manager in the first instance or email

equalities@oxfordshire.gov.uk.

8. Variation of policy and procedure

This policy and procedure are subject to ongoing review and may be varied by the council from time to time. Examples of variation include the need to comply with new legislation or best practice guidance.