

Didcot Railway Centre
Home of the Great Western Society

Fire Safety Policy 2025, v1

Vision

Our vision is for Didcot Railway Centre to be recognised for the international importance of its collection and the value of bringing to life the golden age of steam as a dynamic Living Museum.

Mission

Our mission is to fulfil our potential as a heritage venue at the centre of its community. Accessible to all, striving to engage and inspire the widest possible audiences in the history and heritage of the Great Western Railway – the pioneering transport infrastructure that laid the foundations for contemporary transport innovation.

Values

Authentic | Welcoming | Engaging | Innovative | Great Quality | Sustainable.

Note: For the purposes of this document only, the term 'Employee' means any person who is:

- Under a contract of service or apprenticeship with us.
- Employed as a labour only sub-contractor.
- Self-employed.
- Under a work experience or training scheme.
- A volunteer worker.
- A 'Young Volunteer'.

General

The Great Western Society (GWS) is a responsible employer and also a responsible body that takes fire safety seriously. We have formulated this policy to comply with our legal obligations to employees and visitors under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (The Order).

This policy addresses our obligation under the above Order that requires GWS to:

- Develop a policy to minimise the risks associated with fire.
- Reduce the risk of an outbreak of fire.
- Reduce the risk of the spread of fire.
- Provide means of escape.
- Demonstrate preventive action.
- Maintain documentation and records in respect of fire safety management.

Fire

As a working museum that operates steam locomotives using coal as a fuel, and wood and hydrocarbons for lighting up, fire is a necessary part of our work. Fire is also used in controlled spaces, such as the forge, and when heating, brazing or welding components in a controlled and risk-assessed environment.

Fire in the context of fire safety in this policy, means an uncontrolled unintended fire.

Overall Responsible Person

The Didcot Railway Centre Manager (DRC Manager) is the Overall Responsible Person and is charged with the responsibility to ensure the safety of our employees,

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visiting members of the public and anyone who is not on the premises who may be affected. The Overall Responsible Person shall make sure, so far as is reasonably practical, that everyone on the site can escape to a place of safety should a fire occur.

Where responsibility is shared with other Responsible Persons, e.g., Didcot Parkway Station Manager, we are required to co-operate by sharing information and collaborating in fire prevention measures.

The Overall Responsible Person must carry out (or ensure that a suitably trained person carries out) a Fire Safety Risk Assessment on an annual basis. A copy of that Assessment will be held with the Fire Risk documentation. In addition, they will ensure that adequate training and fire equipment checks are documented and carried out on a scheduled basis.

Duty Competent Person

When the Centre is open to the public the Duty Manager or Manager of the Day is the Duty Competent Person.

When the Centre is not open to the public the DRC Manager is the Duty Competent Person or in their absence a deputy nominated by them.

Overall, it will be the responsibility of the Duty Competent Person to:

- Ensure there are suitably trained Fire Marshals available when the Centre is open to the public.
- Act as the overall Responsible Person during any fire.
- Be the Centre's focal point for all liaisons with the Emergency Services and other external Responsible Officers when an alarm has been raised.
- Act as a focal point for all GWS/Emergency Services communications during the fire.

Fire Marshals

Didcot Railway Centre is a large site so it is impossible for a Duty Competent Person to know the exact number of persons that may be in any building on Site at any time, or to be able to travel the Site in a reasonable time during a fire outbreak. Therefore, GWS will utilise Fire Marshals to assist the Duty Competent Person during the fire, and they will also have additional responsibilities when there is a fire outbreak. All permanent members of staff and key volunteers receive Fire Marshal training every three years.

A Fire Marshal will:

- Be familiar with the location of the Fire Assembly Points.
- Understand (and act upon) the procedures to report a fire.
- Understand (and act upon) the procedures if a fire is reported to them.
- Be able to perform a sweep of their designated area to ensure no persons are still in place during a fire.
- Ensure means of escape are clear and accessible.
- Identify potential fire hazards and report to the Overall Responsible Person any such findings.

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Documentation and Records

The GWS maintains records to prove that we have acted responsibly. The following records are available in the main Administration office:

- The Fire Safety Policy.
- Fire Evacuation Procedure in the DRC Emergency Plan.
- A record of the Fire Training.
- A record of the review of Fire Evacuation Procedures.
- A record of all Fire Alarm and evacuation tests.
- A record of all inspections and tests of fire-fighting equipment.
- A record of all tests of emergency lighting.
- Records of Fire Risk Assessments.
- Record of the storage location of any flammable or hazardous materials.
- Record and location of all on-Site overnight accommodation.

Employees' Duties

All employees have a duty to take reasonable steps to ensure that they do not place themselves or others at risk of harm. They are also expected to co-operate fully with the GWS in complying with any procedures that we may introduce as a measure to protect the safety and well-being of our employees and visitors.

Communication

The GWS will ensure that all employees are provided with all relevant information related to fire safety and will consult with them on all matters of Fire Safety policy and arrangements. We will keep employees informed of any changes that are made to our fire safety procedures and any related matters from a fire risk assessment.

Procedures

The GWS has the following procedures in order to maintain high standards of fire safety:

- The DRC Manager will record, review, and where applicable, revise the Fire Risk Assessments on the HOPS RA system and associated Safe Systems of Work (SSOW) on an annual basis.
- The Fire Risk Assessments on HOPS will address the safety of all occupants of a facility and the activities carried out therein. Particular attention will be paid to occupants who have a disability or have special needs that might affect their ability to reach safety unassisted.
- The Fire Evacuation Procedures will be reviewed as a minimum annually.
- All permanent staff and key volunteers will be given appropriate training to act as Fire Marshals.
- New staff and volunteers will receive instruction on the emergency procedure to be followed in the event of a fire.
- Permanent staff shall receive Fire Marshal training as part of their induction.
- All escape routes and evacuation points will be established, kept in good working order, and free from obstruction at all times.

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- Fire-fighting equipment will be provided. In general, this means fire extinguishers but additional, or specialised, equipment may be provided where deemed appropriate by the findings of the Fire Risk Assessment.
- All fire-related equipment will be regularly serviced and maintained by a competent person or supplier. If any person notices any defective or missing equipment, they must report it to the DRC Manager as soon as practicable.
- All fire alarm systems will be tested by a competent person, or company, in accordance with the weekly and monthly requirements of BS 5839-1:2017. BS 5839-1:2017 notes that the recommended period between successive inspection and servicing visits should not exceed six months.
- Emergency lighting will be provided for escape purposes as deemed appropriate by the Fire Risk Assessment.
- All fixed electrical installations will be tested to the current fixed wiring regulations and periodicity recommendations.
- All portable electrical equipment on site shall be PAT checked to an agreed schedule.
- Office furniture that is purchased will be to the Furniture and Fittings (Fire Safety) Regulations 1988 or any subsequent regulations.
- All flammable items such as paint, aerosols, gas etc. MUST be stored in nominated and sign-posted locations. No flammable items should be left scattered around the Centre and wood shavings are to be removed immediately after soaking up oil spills.
- Any employees who may have cause to operate a locomotive in a confined space must ensure that they do not emit sparks.
- Lighting up or operation of any steam loco containing a fire is strictly forbidden in the Transfer Shed.
- To comply with the No Smoking laws, smoking is not permitted in buildings, carriages, wagons, on locomotives or in the proximity of flammable materials.
- Safe Systems of Work (SSOW) documentation will identify hazardous areas and work practices. Employees will be required to comply with the requirements of the SSOW, which shall be available on HOPS.

Procedure in the event of a Fire

This procedure will be adopted throughout the Centre and form part of the Operating and General Regulations Manual.

On discovering a fire:

- Shout “FIRE”; evacuate the building or area to a safe distance, sounding the gas horn if available. (If the fire is on a moving train, it will generally be safer to get the train to a platform if there are passengers on board. However, this is subject to judgement at the time).

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- Arrange for someone to contact the Duty Competent Person, who will call the fire service by dialling 9-999 on any internal telephone, or 999 on a mobile telephone and arrange for someone to meet the fire service at the Didcot Parkway station entrance.
- If the Duty Competent Person is not immediately contactable carry out the actions above and if safe to do so, tackle the fire.
- If appropriate, guide any employees or visitors to the designated Fire Assembly points.

Information to be given to the Fire Service:

- Location: Didcot Railway Centre – entrance through Didcot Parkway Station.
- More specific location details if not able to meet the fire service.
- Other details as requested by the Operator.

Approval

There were no changes to the previous version and this policy was circulated to the SMT for information and approved by the GWS Board on 22 November 2025.

It will be reviewed annually.