

# Sanctuary Rooms

Standard Operating Procedure No. TFS - 032

## Document Overview: -

This document gives information concerning the safe use of Sanctuary Rooms as a Fire Safety measure employed in some buildings. It outlines the advice that should be given by Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service (Wiltshire FRS) when responding to enquiries about the provision of such facilities. Wiltshire FRS will give advice to those seeking guidance on Sanctuary Rooms based on the best current advice available.

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This document has been Equality Impact Assessed in accordance with Wiltshire FRS procedure. To view the assessment [click here](#).

## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 Sanctuary rooms can present some problems with security from fire. These problems can be mitigated by the application of good fire precautionary measures.
- 1.2 Ideally sanctuary rooms should be at ground floor level but there will be many that are at first floor level or above and this can hamper easy access from outside.
- 1.3 There are cost implications to the provision of sanctuary rooms and Wiltshire FRS promotes the view that passive precautionary measures are the most suitable and the least likely to be damaged accidentally or through tampering.

## **2.0 Minimum Recommendations**

- 2.1 The following list is considered to be a minimum standard for the securing of an effective sanctuary room: -
  - a) 1 x fire blanket
  - b) 1 x 3ltr water 1 x 1kg Dry Powder extinguisher with controllable discharge
  - c) At least one smoke detector that can be either hard-wired or battery operated. (Battery operated detectors are available free of charge from the local Community Safety Officer or Local Authority Technical Service department)
  - d) A permanently available telephone for calling for assistance

## **3.0 Long Term Arrangements**

- 3.1 Long-term solutions usually require more substantial works.
- 3.2 If the premises are a purpose-built block of flats the floors and ceilings will be a minimum of 30 minutes fire resistance and made of concrete, thus presenting no significant danger to occupants above.
- 3.3 With first floor rooms in two-storey houses it is the very presence of the room below that presents the greatest risk. A fire in the lower room could easily have the effect of 'flushing out' a person from the room above. If the existing ceiling is of plasterboard construction and not damaged in any way (no cracks) it should provide 30 minutes fire resistance. If the ceiling is damaged in any way then there are two methods by which it can be upgraded. Either: -
  - a) The ceiling below can be under drawn with 7mm plasterboard and skimmed with 5mm plaster to seal all gaps and holes. Or: -
  - b) The space between the upper floor and the ceiling below can be filled with fire resistant material such as intumescent foam or another intumescent fire barrier.

## 4.0 High Risk Premises

- 4.1 If the risk from fire is considered extremely high then a dynamic system may be a more appropriate solution.
- 4.2 A small, pressurised sprinkler or water mist system could be installed to cover escape routes or the highest risk areas. This could be a temporary, cylinder-based measure or a fixed system.
- 4.3 In addition Wiltshire FRS guidance is that each room should be fitted with,
- a) A means of summoning assistance such as a mobile phone with a SIM card for automatic connection to a help line plus an appropriate charging point.
  - b) Smoke detection to at least category D as specified in BS 5839 part 6
  - c) A fire blanket
  - d) A fire extinguisher
  - e) Emergency lighting (fixed or portable) with charging point if necessary
  - f) An escape plan if relevant
  - g) At least one window in the room capable of opening as described in Approved Document B (Building Regulations) and fitted with suitable inside locks. It is accepted that persons can escape through a first floor window and drop to the ground in an emergency.
  - h) A means for breaking windows so that escape may be made. It should be noted that the type of glazing must be taken in to consideration. Double-glazing with toughened glass or polycarbonate glazing is harder to break from the inside or outside but it may be fitted on the inside with a 'pull/push out' handle. Georgian wired glass presents other problems the wire prevents the glass being broken easily. A hammer is suggested in some guidance but there is a risk of glass shards falling onto unprotected wrists. A spring-loaded centre punch might be safer provided tempered glass is used.
  - i) The door to the room should be fitted with intumescent and cold smoke strips to prevent the penetration of heat and smoke.
  - j) The door must be a solid core door, securely fixed with robust 100mm steel hinges and capable of giving at least 30 minutes fire resistance.
  - k) The door should be fitted into a solid wall. Plasterboard or straw board partitions are not be suitable from a stability point of view.
  - l) Whatever locks and security devices are fitted, windows and doors should be capable of being easily opened from the inside without the use of a key.