

## UK universities receive fire and safety complaints

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This information was obtained through Freedom of Information (FoI) requests issued to 134 Universities across the UK; and the findings are based on 76 responses.

It is reported that many universities abide by minimum standards for fire safety but do not invest in further technology.

The FoI responses revealed that universities communicate through passive materials (such as posters or designated fire exits or digital materials like webinars) rather than active methods. It also revealed that 92% of universities do not have adaptive signage that switches between predefined routes dependant on the situation. For example if there was a fire the adaptive signage would direct individuals to a safe exit avoiding any exits blocked by the fire.

These findings are particularly relevant given that use of energy at universities is very high and can be described as 'always-on' environments. The high usage increases the risk of electrical fires therefore it is recommended that new technologies are used to protect against these sorts of fires.

Marc Gaunt, segment lead for commercial buildings at Eaton, has stressed the need for adaptive technologies that respond to specific circumstances to ensure safe evacuations.

We have advised many organisations on their fire safety duties under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Ultimately an organisation can be prosecuted by the local fire authority if it is found that there are breaches of the duties set out in the Order.

A suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment should not only check that the current systems in place work but also consider if new, more advanced systems should be put in place.

The impact of not having preventative measures and advanced evacuation systems in place could be devastating. Investing in new technologies based on proper risk assessment should be of paramount importance.

All universities should regularly undertake fire drills to ensure all members of staff and students know and understand evacuation procedures.

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