



Fire Safety Precautions in the Use and Storage of Alcohol Based Hand Sanitiser Products in University Buildings

University buildings and work spaces are being provided with alcohol based hand sanitiser product in the fight against the spread of the virus responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic.

When used, hand sanitisers reduce the spread of infectious diseases by killing bacteria and most viruses on the hands. This prevents transmission of germs between individuals by direct touch or indirectly to other surfaces.

Hand sanitisers come in the form of liquids, gels or foams that are contained in various types of containers and dispensers. They can range from small individual use bottles to wall mounted refillable multi use dispensers and bulk storage drums.

The most common active ingredients in hand sanitising products are combinations of alcohols which are known to kill infectious agents on the hands. The amount of alcohol in sanitisers is normally in excess of 60% of the whole product.

Alcohol based products are highly flammable substances and therefore products containing them must be used and stored with care to mitigate any fire risk.

The following guidance is given in respect of the storage and use of alcohol containing hand sanitiser products:

- Dispensing containers should be positioned to ensure the risk of them becoming dislodged or knocked over is minimised.
- Dispensing and storage containers must be located out of direct sunlight.
- Dispensing and storage containers must not be located adjacent or in close proximity to fire alarm call points, fire extinguishers or dry riser inlets/outlets.
- Locating sanitising stations in escape routes should be avoided where possible however, locating in assembly areas and entry points may be acceptable.
- Dispensing and storage containers should be located where they do not impede fire exit routes and /or associated protected staircases.



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- Dispensing and storage containers must be located away from sources of heat including space heaters, electrical outlets, naked flames, flammable gases, oxygen supplies and appliances or equipment that generate heat.
- Dispensers should not be located within veterinary, research or other process areas where oxygen enriched atmospheres may be present.
- Safe Use Guidance should be displayed at dispensers within staff, student and public access areas.
- Safe Use Guidance should include the following information:
 - Not to use excessive amounts of sanitiser product
 - Hands should be allowed to fully dry and vapours disperse before, touching or using any type of machinery or equipment or smoking / vaping
- Where quantities of sanitiser are stored at or within a building a review of the fire risk assessment will be required, specifically in regard to location of material and availability of appropriate fire extinguishers. In such circumstances and to accommodate the appropriate review the University Fire Safety Adviser should be informed at fire@ed.ac.uk
- Safe arrangements must be established for the storage, disposal and uplift of used containers.