



**Health Protection Agency**  
Chemical Hazards and Poisons Division  
Centre for Radiation Chemical and Environmental Hazards  
24 hour tel: 0844 892 0555

## **Non-Domestic Fire Checklist**

Non domestic fires result in significant hazards and risks. The following checklist covers many of the issues these fires have presented and recommendations are based on observed best practice and lessons learned from past incidents.

**This checklist is designed for agencies involved in the response to minimise public health risks.**

You may not need to use more than a small part of this checklist in responding to a fire. Remember you can call the Chemical Hazards and Poisons Division (CHaPD) for help at any time.

### **CHECKLIST CONTENTS**

- 1. Acute phase response for Health Protection Units (HPUs)**
- 2. Post-acute phase actions – recommendations for incident management team**
- 3. Incident Information Requirements**

### **KEY ACTION POINTS FOR HPUS IN THE ACUTE PHASE**

1. Where is the fire?
2. When did it start?
3. What is burning?
4. What are the toxic hazards to air, water and land?
5. In what direction is the plume moving?
6. What is the population at risk?
7. What are the potential health effects?
8. Is advice on sheltering or evacuation required?
9. Alert key groups including CHaPD, NHS organisations (PCT, HPU, Emergency Department, GPs, NHS Direct, neighbouring HPUs), and local authorities.





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**Other points to consider:**

- Contact CHaPD for advice and information
- Identify affected casualties
- Consider taking biological samples from exposed cases
- Consider environmental sampling in collaboration with the local environmental health department and/or the Environment Agency.

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**2. Post-acute phase actions – Recommendations for incident management team**

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| Assessment<br>(key-page 1) |
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**Environmental Health/Local Authority to confirm that they can or have:**

- Attended scene of fire to gather extra information and possibly undertake sampling
- Contacted Environment Agency and/or Water Utility to warn of potentially contaminated run-off water entering drains or sensitive water courses
- Contacted the Food Standards Agency to warn of any secondary contamination to food sources from plume deposition.

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**Hospital Emergency Department to confirm that they can or have:**

- Recorded all names of patients or enquiries with address, post code and telephone numbers. Follow up may be required
- Activate plans as appropriate with the aim to minimise secondary exposure and contamination; confirm staff are using appropriate personal protective equipment
- If contaminated, try to prevent any patient entering ambulances or emergency department without appropriate decontamination if practicable
- Remove and bag patients' clothing as soon as possible, store in a safe place away from staff and patients
- Assess and manage affected cases according to hazard exposure and consider taking biological samples from any affected sentinel cases
- Check water used in decontamination is contained and disposed of safely - consider contacting the Environment Agency and local water utility
- Manage those exposed who may resist decontamination or follow up if they have symptoms

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**Clean up**

- Contain fire site – children have been found playing on these sites – site security is essential
- Check no further contamination is likely to spread from fire site when fire contained - consider recommending use of water or tarpaulins to maintain dust and debris control
- Clean up must be carried out by appropriately trained and protected staff - consider seeking advice from Health and Safety Executive (HSE)
- Information on clean up needs to be implemented quickly - consider providing public information with the help of the local media which can be followed up by letter drops
- Asbestos must be identified urgently - follow advice from HSE and do not let untrained and unprotected staff remove debris
- Depending on the reported health effects and the products of combustion, it may be appropriate to consider advising local inhabitants on issues including the following:
  - preventing children playing with any debris
  - consider keeping pets indoors until clean up complete
  - do not mow lawns until clean up complete
  - depending on safety, consider asking adults to wear thick plastic gloves and collect debris in gardens, etc. and place in clearly marked containers
  - consider setting up a help line to provide assistance for the elderly or those with disabilities or impaired vision

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### 3. Incident Information Requirements

- Data from CHaPD fact sheets and any literature review
- Data from hospital and GP attendance. Even negative reports are valuable to show minimal harm from fire and mitigation. Any surveillance should be undertaken and data analysed in conjunction with CHaPD
- Data from environmental sampling, including sampling strategy, laboratory UKAS accreditation and results
- Request copy of Fire & Rescue Service report, photographs, video and other relevant material
- Request copy of any CHEMET or other modelling information if not already provided
- Consider requesting copies of Police report, Environment Agency report, Defra report or others
- Copies of any media reports
- Copies of HPU reports to be provided to CHaPD for data records

| Assessment<br>(key-page 1) |
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