

Code of Practice for Unattended Running of Apparatus Outside Normal Working Hours

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1. Overview

Unattended apparatus can be affected by inadvertent isolation or failures of equipment, power and services. This can lead to, for example, build-up of pressure or temperature leading to explosion or fire, release of hazardous substances into the air or the drains, or simple flooding. This is likely to have detrimental effects on the local area and possibly also on those dealing with the emergency. The effects could reach the rest of the building, or in extreme cases elsewhere on campus or the University's neighbours.

2. Purpose

This code of practice sets out the general health and safety responsibilities that apply to the safe operation of apparatus outside of normal working hours. It aims to summarise the relevant duties / expected behaviours described under the Health and Safety at Work, etc Act 1974, Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998, the University Health and Safety policy and other related guidance.

3. Scope

This code of practice is aimed at all staff and students of the University who might leave apparatus running outside of normal working hours, or who have supervisory responsibility for those who do. Although this code is most likely to be relevant to apparatus in laboratories or workshops, it may also apply to some maintenance activities by staff or contractors. It is intended for apparatus which is left unattended only on specific occasions. It does not apply to apparatus that is designed to be left continuously running, such as fridges or air conditioning units. This latter type of equipment could be permanently labelled, if there is a risk of accidental disconnection. A simple notice such as "Do not switch off" may be sufficient.

4. Procedure

All apparatus / processes should be scheduled to run during normal hours, wherever possible.

If working outside normal hours is unavoidable, for example the process continues for much longer than a normal working day, arrangements should be made, wherever possible, for competent local staff to supervise the process throughout.

Where unattended running of apparatus is unavoidable, for example overnight, it must be on an exceptional basis only and subject to approval by an appropriate manager / supervisor. It is also important that adequate information has been given, in advance, to key personnel who may need to take action or give advice.

Risk assessments must be completed for all activities undertaken by university staff / students. Where apparatus is being left unattended, the availability of assistance in the event of an emergency should be documented on the risk assessment, as well as the usual hazards and controls relevant to the activity. For example, which colleagues will need to take actions or provide information to the emergency services or provide first aid to any casualties.

For all high impact activity, taking place outside normal working hours, basic information on the process, emergency actions and emergency contact details should also be notified to the Campus Facilities Management Office and Security using the University form ['Notification to Facilities Management/Campus Security of work in progress'](#). The notification form should be completed by the person conducting the process and countersigned by their manager or Supervisor. A copy of the form should be displayed prominently on or near the apparatus.

Full details of all processes left unattended outside normal hours should also be available, at all times, from elsewhere on or off campus, so they may be accessed in the event of an emergency. Written details should be kept in a different building on Campus or ideally stored online, in a secure location that can be accessed remotely.

5. Emergency Planning

The Universities usual emergency response plan describes the general processes that are followed in the event of an emergency.

As described in Section 4 above, relevant emergency arrangements relating to unattended apparatus must be documented in the risk assessment and shared with the relevant campus Operations team, particularly if these are different to the usual / general emergency response arrangements.

Consideration should be given to all reasonably foreseeable emergencies, for example fire, first aid incident, spillages, etc.

Additional University guidance for [lone working](#) should be considered when determining the emergency arrangements.

6. Further Guidance

6.1. Related Legislation:

In addition to the general duties contained in the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, other, more specific sets of Regulations and guidance may apply.

Links to these and further general guidance on Unattended Running of Apparatus Outside Normal Working Hours can be found on HSE web pages; [Safe use of work equipment. approved code of practice and guidance \(L22\)](#).

6.2. Related University documents:

- [HS044 Risk Assessment guidance](#)
- [HS080 Lone Working](#)
- [Emergency Arrangements](#)
- [University Fire Policy & Procedures](#)

7. Document History

Details of previous reviews are as follows:

Review Date	Reviewer	Summary of Review
February 2018	Helen Pierce (Head of Health & Safety)	Annual review – no changes required
20-Aug-2024	Vikki Wood (AD Health & Safety)	Transferred to new template and added sections for Emergency Planning and Further Guidance
29-Jul-2025	Anastasia Liasides (Health & Safety Advisor)	Transferred to new template and verified links.

This document will be reviewed at least annually hereafter.