

**WEST YORKSHIRE FIRE SERVICE**

**OPERATIONAL PROCEDURE No.1**

**MULTI SCREEN CINEMAS**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

**See SOP 2\_26**

Multi-Screen Cinemas are found in various parts of West Yorkshire in the following forms:

- Traditional Cinema/Theatre building that has been altered to accommodate several smaller capacity Auditoriums (or screens) which usually number up to four.
- Purpose built cinemas accommodating multiple screens and accommodating upwards of 3000 people.

This procedure deals specifically with modern purpose built Multi Screen Cinemas.

## **CONSTRUCTION**

Built to modern building standards almost entirely of fire resisting materials, ie:

- Floors - Concrete
- Walls - Concrete, Brick, Concrete Block
- Partitions - Concrete, Concrete Block
- Roof - Metal skin on Steel Framework with overall layer of Bitumen Felt
- Ceilings - Fire Resistant Tiles on Metal Framework

The buildings are primarily single storey, however, a central core has an upper level giving access to the projection suite. Some office accommodation and confectionary production may be found at this level.

The auditoriums/screens rise from floor level to roof level and are fitted with false ceilings.

Auditoriums/screens are compartmented; no openings exist in the side walls. The only openings to the front are the exit doors, direct to open air and to the rear:

- Entrance doors (ground level) from central corridor.
- Protected aperture to the projection suite (upper level).

Seating in the Auditoriums is central, accessed by side aisles. Occupancy figures can differ, as auditoriums are not uniform ie: from around 180 up to 490.

## **FIRE PRECAUTIONS**

- Auditoriums are virtually compartmented. The audience enters via a foyer and corridor through fire resisting, self-closing doors and exit to open air (one way system).
- Two stage automatic fire detection system with main indicator board and repeater lights situated in corridors to alert staff.
- Break glass alarm points are provided as part of this system.

- Computerised shut down of all screens when fire alarm actuates (after built in delay). Alarm is in the form of a taped message and all house lights are illuminated.
- Fire shutters fitted to all apertures from the projection room.
- Firefighting equipment is usually in the form of hand extinguishers.

## **OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Pre-planning**

Personnel should be familiar with the layout (including projection suite, plant room, electricity room, catering facilities, boiler house etc.) and fire safety provisions within the building and know which areas the public are allowed into.

Some form of marshalling or directing of the public by the management should be agreed following evacuation. Whilst screenings in different auditoriums are staggered, there could be approximately 3500 people inside the building. Once outside the building, this number of people could be a hindrance to operations.

The involvement of the police with regard to crowd control should be considered at pre-planning stage.

Identify a suitable area from which to run Command Support and deploy personnel bearing in mind the constructional features of the building.

Decide whether, as part of the plan, a team should access the projection suite at an early stage. The projection suite allows visual reconnaissance to all the screens.

Fire/smoke stop features should be identified in the plan to ensure these are not breached thereby involving other sections unnecessarily.

Auditoriums should be numbered externally, corresponding with annunciator panel plan, thereby assisting with identification during reconnaissance.

### **Access During Opening Times**

- Access to the cinema will normally be via the foyer. As customers will have left the auditoriums via the exit doors to open air, congestion should not occur.
- Access to the affected auditorium should be from the corridor which would be used by the public

## **Access Out of Opening Times**

- It will normally be extremely difficult to break into an affected auditorium via the external doors. These doors open outwards, are the normal exit doors for the public, and would have no handles, etc, on the outside. They fit flush into the casings and as a security measure, are clad in metal sheeting.
- The exit doors at the end of the corridors are made and fitted as the doors are described above.
- The main doors to the foyer are plate glass and, therefore, easier to access. Correct operational and safety procedures should be adopted prior to breaking in through these doors.
- The main doors are double doors, however, some single leaf pass doors are usually incorporated, and these should be selected where appropriate.
- Access to the upper level can be gained in the normal way having accessed the foyer.
- There is, however, an alternative from roof level. A Perspex roof light is situated above the protected stairway which allows egress from the projection suite direct to open air.
- Access to the projection suite could be gained in this manner and protected route maintained.
- Access via the route described above would enable final exit doors to be opened from the inside, thereby negating the need to cause serious damage to foyer doors (circumstances and timer permitting).

## **Fire fighting**

- The fire loading of these buildings is in the main dictated by the furniture and fittings, seating, etc.
- The building design should assist in firefighting in that incidents should be confined to the compartment/auditorium of origin.
- Due to compartmentation and fire loading, it is not envisaged that large quantities of water would be required at incidents in these buildings.
- Fire in auditoriums should be approached from the access corridor inside the building and not via the external exit doors.
- Due to lack of openings within the compartments/auditoriums, ventilation could be a problem, giving rise to smoke-logging conditions in the access corridor.

- It may be advantageous to deploy monitoring team(s) in the projection room. Firefighters operating on ground level could then be directed via fireground radio, and the Incident Commander could be kept informed of the situation in adjacent auditoriums.
- Careful monitoring of auditoriums on either side of the fire situation should be maintained, especially at roof level, to ensure that heat transference and/or distortion of roof members is not occurring.

## **General considerations**

The Incident Commander must make an immediate dynamic risk assessment in accordance with Operational Procedure No.37 – Incident Ground Risk Assessment.

Premises occupied:

- Contact person in charge and ascertain state of evacuation.
- Initiate evacuation if necessary – assist if in progress.
- Attack fire from access corridors thereby assisting ventilation via exit doors.
- Be prepared for large BA operation.
- Consider locating team in projection suite to assist in directing operations and passing information.
- Ensure team in projection suite have an escape route direct to open air – ensure this is maintained.
- Monitor Auditoriums on either side of fire.
- Police will be required for crowd control (could be 3,000 plus people evacuated) – some will try to leave the site, creating access difficulties for supporting appliances.

Premises unoccupied:

- Identify Auditorium involved from annunciator panel.
- Confirm by external reconnaissance.
- Effect entry via main foyer doors if situation is apparent and developing or via skylight to projectionist's escape stairway where access to internal corridors and emergency exit routes can then be gained and opened.
- Deal with incident as for occupied premises.

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