



GMFRS: Update for High Rise Residents – COVID-19

As a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic and the introduction of social distancing measures Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS) wants to provide reassurance and advice to residents living in high rise buildings across Greater Manchester and an update on recent activity.

High Rise Residents Forum

Due to the unprecedented situation with COVID-19 it has not been possible to hold the quarterly Residents Forum, and we have made the decision to cancel our next high rise residents meeting. The High Rise Task Force know it is important to continue to keep you updated and we will try and ensure regular digital updates are provided.

GMFRS Activity

We are scaling back non-emergency work in an attempt to reduce the exposure of our staff to COVID-19 and protect residents from any potential infection risk

GMFRS wants to reassure residents that although we will be adjusting the way we work to minimise the risk to our Officers and the public, we will continue to undertake fire safety activity and inspections and take steps to ensure visits are undertaken safely.

At this time GMFRS is not offering home visits to deliver our prevention activities but we are offering Safe and Well advice over the telephone – to arrange an appointment please contact us on 0800 555 815 between 9am -5pm.

These measures are being taken to ensure that our frontline firefighters and staff are protected to ensure that we can continue to provide a service and also to protect the public of Greater Manchester.

Ensuring buildings are safe

The GMFRS High Rise Team are continuing to engage with housing providers and managing agents, an event was held on the 11th March to discuss the latest Government advice and explore ways that a consistent standard for fire safety and provision of advice and information can be achieved across Greater Manchester.

GMFRS has written to the housing providers and managing agents responsible for buildings with interim measures to inform them of the updated guidance produced by the National Fire Chiefs Council on the use of Waking Watches and Covid-19.

The Government has now published further information about the Building Safety Programme and specifically Remediation in relation to COVID-19 which can be found [here](#). This confirms that staff undertaking waking watch or other critical fire safety roles are providing vital public safety functions to keep homes safe and is therefore considered to be 'essential work'. GMFRS is engaging with housing providers and Managing Agents who currently employ a waking watch to ascertain whether or not confirmation of the provision is required to ensure the function can be maintained.

Keeping safe in your home

With many people spending more time at home, it's important to do all you can to stay safe. [You can find a range of safety advice here.](#)

We would like to remind you of our flat fire safety advice:

Keeping your building safe:

- Make sure you know the evacuation strategy for your building
- Do not store or place items in the corridors including rubbish
- Never wedge communal doors open
- Report doors that don't close properly
- Never block emergency access to your building
- Park considerately so emergency vehicles can get as close as possible

Staying safe in your flat

- Make sure you know the evacuation strategy for your building and follow it
- If your building has a simultaneous evacuation strategy you must evacuate if the alarm is raised even if you are self-isolating
- Test your smoke alarm once a week by pressing the test button until the alarm sounds
- Take care when cooking, never leave unattended and ensure your cooker is turned off after use
- Make sure you switch electrical items off at night and don't overload plug sockets during the day
- Close all doors at night to prevent fire from spreading
- If you smoke always make sure you extinguish your cigarettes safely

Balcony safety

- Do not use BBQs under any circumstances
- If you smoke make sure you stub cigarettes out and NEVER flick them off your balcony
- Never store flammable materials like gas on your balcony
- Ensure that if you have plants that they are kept well-watered
- Reduce clutter and try and keep items on the balcony to a minimum

Rubbish disposal

- Always dispose of your rubbish according to the building arrangements
- Where you have a communal bin room use it but stay 2 metres away from neighbours
- Rubbish should never be stored in corridors, stairs or hallways
- If you smoke, make sure you stub cigarettes out properly before putting them in your own or communal bins
- Never put batteries or electrical items in your own bin or communal bins

Always call 999 in an emergency.

High Rise Task Force Update

On Tuesday 25 February, Paul Dennett Salford City Mayor and Chair of the Greater Manchester High Rise Task Force and Andy Burnham Mayor of Greater Manchester held a lobby of Parliament to make sure the voices of leaseholders were heard by those with the power to change the law. [You can find out more about the lobby here.](#)

On Saturday 21 February, ahead of the lobby of parliament the Task Force released the Greater Manchester High Rise Residents Survey Summary Report, the findings of which we provided an overview of at our last resident's forum. [You can download the summary report here.](#)

The Task Force commissioned this research to gather and analyse information about experiences and perceptions of fire risk amongst residents living in high rise buildings. Although the initial launch of the survey was [to highlight the key issues affecting leaseholders in Greater Manchester](#) ahead of the lobby of Government, the research was undertaken to inform the future work of the High Rise Task Force. We would like to reassure you that the Task Force have used the survey results to provide a clear evidence base of the issues and concerns faced by residents living in high rise buildings across Greater Manchester. The Task Force are using the findings of the survey to improve the way we continue to support residents, we will keep you updated on this work.

Following the lobby, Paul Dennett and Andy Burnham sent a letter to Robert Jenrick MP urging him to ensure that the budget on Wednesday 11 March demonstrated a commitment from the Government to support residents who have been caught up in this crisis.

As you may be aware, on the 11 March the government announced a £1 billion Building Safety Fund to fund the removal and replacement of unsafe non-ACM cladding systems. [You can find out more about the new fund here.](#)

Although this is an important step forward in supporting affected leaseholders, we know the funding is not enough, it is still limited to buildings over 18 metres therefore excluding many multi-story buildings. Which is why as a Task Force we will continue to raise this issue with Government.

Further Covid-19 Information

If you would like any COVID-19 advice or guidance, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority website provides useful pages to visit for support, as well as information about the Coronavirus response and support available in Greater Manchester: <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/coronavirus/>

Further COVID-19 support and advice can be found through the following links:

- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): what you need to do](#)
- [Hand hygiene advice](#)
- [Self-isolation advice](#)
- [Advice on social distancing and what it means](#)
- [Guidance for the public on the mental health and wellbeing aspects of coronavirus](#)
- [Advice and support on staying mentally well while working at home](#)