



# **GREATER MANCHESTER**

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## **FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

### **COVID-19 FIRE SAFETY ADVICE: INFORMATION FOR HOSPITALITY PREMISES WHICH ARE RE-OPENING**

#### **Introduction**

Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS) is committed to ensuring the safety of the Greater Manchester community through our prevention, protection and response activity. As an enforcing authority for the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (the Fire Safety Order) we are committed to working with businesses to ensure that premises are safe - we do this through providing advice and information as well as carrying out inspections.

The next stage in Government's 'COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021' roadmap for easing lockdown will allow many businesses, including hospitality premises to re-open indoor areas for use by the public, increase the number of people able to attend weddings and remove the 'rule of six' outdoors. These changes are anticipated to take place on or after the 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

GMFRS wants to support businesses across Greater Manchester as they re-open or welcome customers back inside premises. This information sheet is intended to assist you in understanding your fire safety responsibilities and help you incorporate these into your plans for re-opening.

This information sheet provides guidance on meeting some of your key responsibilities under the Fire Safety Order and steps you can take to ensure your business is safe. It is not a comprehensive guide to your legal duties but information about how to access further guidance can be found at the end.

In most workplaces the responsible person for fire safety is the employer – this may be a Company or an individual operating as a sole trader. Managers and other employees may have some responsibility for fire safety where this forms part of their job description or routine duties.

**This information sheet can be used by owners and managers of hospitality premises, it is specifically intended to support those who own or manage pubs, bars, cafes and restaurants.**

## **Fire Risk Assessment**

The responsible person must make a suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment. This means considering how people in or around the premises may be at risk from fire, what you need to do to reduce the risk of a fire occurring and how you will keep people safe. The fire risk assessment will help you identify the potential causes of fire in your premises and identify the arrangements you need to have in place to make sure if a fire does occur, no one in the premises is injured.

Your fire risk assessment should cover:

- Risk, likelihood and consequence of a fire on the premises
- Fire detection & alarms
- Firefighting equipment
- Emergency lighting
- Emergency procedures in particular evacuation of the premises
- Maintenance fire safety systems and equipment
- Staff training

**In licensed premises the Fire Safety Order requires the responsible person to make a written record of the significant findings from the fire risk assessment – this means the steps you are taking to comply with the Fire Safety Order. You must also record the details of any groups of people your fire risk assessment has identified as being particularly at risk.**

The fire risk assessment should be reviewed regularly, including when there has been any changes to the building, or the way the building is used. If no changes have been made, it is good practice to ensure that the fire risk assessment is reviewed at least once a year.

**If you are re-opening after an extended period of closure during lockdown or are changing the way the premises is used, you should review your fire risk assessment.**

## **Training**

The Fire Safety Order requires employers to ensure that their staff are provided with adequate fire safety training when they are first employed and on a periodic basis. The training provided should be appropriate to the risks identified in your fire risk assessment and may vary for different staff members based on their role.

The type of training should be based on the particular features of the premises and should consider the findings of the fire risk assessment.

**If you have new staff or your team has not been in the workplace for some time, you should ensure that fire safety training is included in your training plans.**

## **Fire Detection and Alarms**

The purpose of a fire alarm is to detect a fire and warn people in the premises so they can evacuate. Most hospitality premises will have an automatic fire alarm system and this must be appropriate for the size and layout of the premises. This should normally comply with British Standard (BS) 5839: Part 1. Your fire risk assessment should have determined the type of system required.

To make sure that your fire alarm system works, it should be tested and maintained on a regular basis. It is recommended that all tests, and any maintenance work should be recorded in a logbook. This is a way of documenting your compliance with the Fire Safety Order and will help you with the ongoing management of fire safety arrangements.

**If the premises has not been used for a long period, the fire alarm system should be checked to make sure it is working effectively before you re-open.**

## **Firefighting Equipment**

Your fire risk assessment should determine if you need firefighting equipment in the premises. The most common firefighting equipment found in hospitality premises are fire extinguishers. The number and types of fire extinguisher you have should be determined by the fire risk assessment. Staff should be given appropriate training in the use of fire extinguishers and this should form part of regular fire safety training.

**If you have fire extinguishers, you need to ensure that they are serviced regularly by a competent person. For most extinguishers this means every 12 months.**

## **Fire Doors**

Fire doors are vital to prevent the spread of fire and smoke should a fire occur in your premises. You should have systems in place to ensure fire doors are inspected and properly maintained. A fire door found to be damaged or defective should be immediately repaired or replaced.

If you have fire doors in your premises, they are there to protect people within the building from fire and smoke spread. Leaving them open puts your staff and customers at risk.

If you are concerned that touching doors and door handles may pose a risk of spreading Covid-19, you can install sanitation stations close to doors for use prior to touching door handles. The location of sanitation stations should not prevent the door from opening fully or cause an obstruction on escape routes. In some cases, automatic release systems that work on the activation of the fire alarm can be added to doors. This allows fire doors to be in the open position, but then close to prevent the spread of fire and smoke should a fire occur.

**Fire doors should never be wedged open – propping or wedging open fire doors is dangerous even if you think this will minimise the spread of Covid-19.**

## **Emergency Routes and Exits**

All escape routes should lead to a fire exit that can be easily and immediately opened - in most cases fire exit doors should open in the direction of escape. This exit may be the usual entrance / exit from the building or a specific emergency exit.

**If you have an outdoor seating area, this should not obstruct doors or slow people exiting the premises down – there should be a clear route out of the building.**

Emergency exits should be clearly signed so that if the usual entrance or exit is blocked by fire other escape routes can quickly be located. Where you have emergency lighting you must ensure it is tested on a regular basis and you have a maintenance programme in place. If you are re-opening you should test your emergency lighting system.

Fire exits may be locked when the premises is empty, but must be available for use when anyone is occupying the premises, this includes when staff are on the premises even if you are closed to customers.

**Emergency routes and exits must be kept clear at all times, with no obstructions narrowing or blocking the route or exit doors.**

## **Evacuation Arrangements**

Many premises have introduced one-way systems and other changes within circulation spaces to help prevent the spread of Covid-19. These changes should not impede an evacuation, should a fire occur. It is important that your staff understand that if the fire alarm sounds, they should evacuate the building via the closest exit without delay.

If you have people who do not ordinarily work in the premises present, you must ensure that they are provided with information about the evacuation arrangements and what to do in the event of a fire.

**You must nominate a sufficient number of staff to implement the evacuation procedures and ensure members of the public evacuate the building in the event of a fire. These staff may need additional training.**

## **Fire Hydrants and Riser Inlets**

Fire hydrants and riser inlets are used by firefighters to access water to tackle fires.

Hydrants allow firefighters to access water from the mains supply, GMFRS has approximately 32,000 fire hydrants throughout Greater Manchester. It is our responsibility to ensure that these are inspected and maintained so we can use them when responding to a fire.

In some buildings we also need to use 'risers' these are facilities provided within the building that allow firefighters to connect a water supply to a pipe within the building and then use it on higher floors. This is vital to tackling a fire quickly.



**Fire Hydrant**



**Riser Inlet**

If you have a fire, it is vital that firefighters can access water quickly. Obstruction of fire hydrants and riser inlets can delay firefighting and result in unnecessary fire damage to the premises.

**You should ensure that fire hydrants and riser inlets are not obstructed by street furniture.**

### **How to Contact Us**

If you would like any further information or advice on complying with the Fire Safety Order, please do not hesitate to email us at [firesafetyadmin@manchesterfire.gov.uk](mailto:firesafetyadmin@manchesterfire.gov.uk)

Further information can be found at:

[www.manchesterfire.gov.uk/staying-safe/what-we-do/business-fire-safety-covid-19/](http://www.manchesterfire.gov.uk/staying-safe/what-we-do/business-fire-safety-covid-19/)

### **Useful Information and Links**

There is a lot of useful information and advice available free of charge on the HM Government website [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) and at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fire-safety-law-and-guidance-documents-for-business>

The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) has produced advice on managing fire safety during the Coronavirus Pandemic at [www.nationalfirechiefs.org.uk/COVID-19](http://www.nationalfirechiefs.org.uk/COVID-19)

The NFCC also has guidance on choosing a fire risk assessor at <https://www.nationalfirechiefs.org.uk/Finding-fire-risk-assessor> If you are arranging for someone else to carry out or review your fire risk assessment, you may also want to check that they have experience of undertaking fire risk assessments in licensed premises.