



WARWICKSHIRE
FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

FIRE SAFETY

COVID-19 Return to Work Checklist

Fire Protection

Email: firesafety@warwickshire.gov.uk

Telephone: 01926 466 263



Warwickshire
County Council



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As your business begins to return to normal or “new normal” we within Warwickshire Fire & Rescue Fire Protection want to remind you of your duty, as a Responsible Person, of the requirement to maintain your compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

The purpose of this booklet is to provide guidance on key areas of Fire Safety that will assist you, regardless of your business type, on how to keep yourself, your employees and all other persons as safe as possible.

We understand that in this environment of COVID-19, your priorities will focus on preventing the spread of the virus. However, this cannot be at the detriment of the fire safety within your premises.



YOUR FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 requires you to carry out a Fire Risk Assessment of your premises. This is an organised and methodical audit of your premises, the activities carried on there and the likelihood of a fire starting and causing harm to those in and around the premises.

The fire risk assessment is a dynamic document that is subject to ongoing review.

On your return to work it may be necessary to review your Fire Risk Assessment to ensure that it is current and reflects the way your business now operates. Consider changes such as working practices, stock levels, alterations made to the premises and staff numbers.



MAINTENANCE OF FIRE SAFETY MEASURES

There will always be differences, but principally your premises should be equipped with the following fire safety features:

- A means of raising an alarm in the event of an emergency,
- A means of providing light in the hours of darkness or in areas devoid of natural light,
- Means of fighting fires;
 - Extinguishers
 - Fire Blankets
 - Sprinkler Systems

Where the lockdown has disrupted the regular testing and maintenance of your fire safety systems it would be prudent to contact your service engineers to conduct a “health check” of them.

In any case a regular schedule of testing must be resumed and recorded in a logbook:

- Fire Alarms = Weekly
- Emergency Lights = Monthly
- Extinguishers = Monthly
- Fire Doors = Monthly

You can download our Logbook template [here](https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/frsequipment) or by typing this link into your web browser;
<https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/frsequipment>



PREVENTING FIRES FROM STARTING

The responsible person must reduce the fire risks where it is reasonably practicable to do so and act upon the significant findings of the fire risk assessment.

Good housekeeping will lower the chances of a fire starting, so the accumulation of combustible materials in all areas of the premises should be avoided. Good housekeeping is essential to reduce the chances of escape routes and fire doors being blocked or obstructed.

The premises should be looked at critically to try to identify potential incidents and any acts or omissions which might allow a fire to start. For example, any situation that may present an opportunity for an arsonist, such as external rubbish bins placed too close to the building.

It is advisable to ensure that all portable electrical equipment, including items brought into a workplace by staff, are visually inspected and undergo portable appliance testing (PAT) at intervals suitable for the type of equipment and its frequency of use.



FIRE SAFETY TRAINING FOR STAFF

Your fire safety training should include arrangements and actions to be taken by your employees in order to safeguard themselves and other relevant persons on the premises.

Regardless of whether your numbers of staff have changed, businesses must ensure that they continue to provide appropriate staff training.

If you haven't undertaken staff training for some time, on your return ensure that all staff know what to do in a fire situation.

If those people with specific tasks have not returned to work, ensure that other suitably trained staff are available.

You must consider the needs of lone workers and their fire safety.



EMERGENCY ROUTES AND EXITS

The responsible person must ensure that routes to emergency exits from the premises and the exits themselves are kept clear at all times.

Emergency doors should be fitted with simple fastenings that can be readily operated from the side approached by people making their escape, without the use of a key or code.

If you're having to take on extra stock to cope with demand, you must ensure that at no point should escape routes be compromised.

You should ensure that any measures you take to deal with risks posed by COVID-19 do not involve discounting exits that would ordinarily be available. Escape routes and exits should be available at all material times.



DO'S AND DON'TS



DO'S (ideally prior to opening)

- Update your FRA,
- Refresh/retrain staff in fire safety procedures,
- Check all fire safety systems work properly,
- Consider an "interim" service/health check of fire safety systems where applicable,
- Have the right amount of staff with the correct skills to implement fire safety procedures



DON'TS

- Block escape routes,
- Lock fire exits,
- Prop fire doors open,
- Remove fire doors,
- Allow rubbish or stock to pile up anywhere inside or outside of your premises



Please feel free to use this last page as your checklist

HAVE YOU:

☐ **Reviewed your Fire Risk Assessment?**

☐ **Updated your Fire Risk Assessment?**

The list below is not exhaustive, but changes that require an update of your FRA include:

- A change in staffing levels (up or down),
- A change in stock levels (up or down),
- A change in evacuation procedures,
- A change in how the building is used,
- A change in the layout of the building

☐ **Taken steps to prevent the chances of a fire starting and spreading?**

This will include:

- Making sure all electrical items work properly and have been or will be checked by someone trained to do so,
- Preventing the build-up of combustible stock. This also applies to empty boxes and rubbish in general; you will need to take steps to reduce the risk of Arson,
- Making sure that all fire doors are closed and not wedged open

☐ **Made sure your fire detection system and emergency lights are still in good working order?**

- If the systems have not been checked for the period of lock down there is no need to catch-up on those checks. However, if your premises has manual call points we would advise that all are tested prior to occupation. This way any faults can be picked up and addressed sooner rather than later.
- If the lock down prevented the annual servicing of your fire safety systems, you should rebook if you haven't already done so. If the lock down did not impact on the service, but your systems have not been regularly checked, then it might be prudent to consult with your engineer to see whether an "interim" service or health check is needed.

☐ **Made sure that at all material times there are employees on site to safely carry out all fire safety procedures, especially where there has been a reduction in staffing levels?**

- It is acceptable to temporarily adapt your procedures, but at no point should this compromise the safety of yourself, your employees or any other person that may be on the premises.

☐ **Conducted a full, practical, fire safety drill?**

- This is good to refresh your employees training, but also see what works and what does not prior to members of the public being present

If you need any further guidance please email: firesafety@warwickshire.gov.uk



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