



**GREATER
MANCHESTER**
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Fire safety advice: Information for hospitality businesses

Cafes, bars, pubs, shisha bars and restaurants

August 2024

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.

In recent months, GMFRS has attended some significant fires in small licensed premises where there has been a significant and rapid fire spread involving decorations leading to major damage. As a result of these fires, we want to support businesses like yours across Greater Manchester to keep your customers and staff safe and to assist you in understanding your fire safety responsibilities.

This information sheet is intended for owners and managers of hospitality businesses.

Hospitality businesses are generally referred to for fire safety purposes as 'places of assembly' and can be small and accommodate up to 60 people or medium and accommodate up to 300 people. If you own or manage a business like this, this information sheet provides general 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.

Responsibility for Fire Safety

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. Where the premises are licensed, the license holder or designated premises supervisor may have some responsibility for fire safety as part of their duties to ensure public safety.

It is important that the responsible person for the premises makes it clear who is responsible for fire safety and ensures they have the necessary training.

Duties under the Fire Safety Order

The Fire Safety Order concerns making sure that premises are safe for people in the event of a fire. It requires the responsible person to take steps to reduce the likelihood of a fire occurring and spreading to ensure that if a fire does occur people in the premises do not come to any harm.

There is guidance available from the Government for different types of premises and this is free to download from the Government website under '[Fire safety: guidance for those with legal duties.](#)'

Fire Risk Assessment

The responsible person must ensure a competent person makes a suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment. This means considering how a fire might start, how you will keep people safe, how people in or around the premises may be at risk from fire and what you need to do to reduce the risk of a fire occurring.

The fire risk assessment will help you identify the potential causes of fire in your premises and the equipment and arrangements you need to have in place to ensure no one in the premises is injured in the event of a fire.

Your fire risk assessment should cover:

- Risk, likelihood and consequence of a fire on the premises
- Fire detection and alarms
- Firefighting equipment
- Emergency lighting

- Emergency procedures in particular evacuation of the premises
- Maintenance fire safety systems and equipment
- Staff training

The fire risk assessment should be reviewed regularly and include any changes to the building or the way the building is used. This includes if you make changes to the internal décor of the premises or the layout. If no changes have been made, it is good practice to ensure that the fire risk assessment is reviewed at least once a year. The fire risk assessment should also be available to all employees.

Reducing the risk of and spread of fire

Your fire risk assessment should consider the possible causes of fire and what will happen if a fire occurs. In most premises, the most likely causes of fire will be electrical or related to cooking. You should implement measures and put systems in place to reduce the risk of a fire. For example, regular testing of electrical appliances and cleaning and maintenance of commercial cooking equipment.

Indoor fireworks and other ignition sources

Across Greater Manchester, a number of licensed establishments regularly serve ignited drinks or place Ice Fountains and other indoor sparklers within drinks or foods for decorative appeal.

Ice Fountains and other indoor sparklers contain small amounts of explosives and should be stored safely and away from accidental ignition sources. If you bulk purchase indoor fireworks you should check that you are not storing more than 5kg of Net Explosive Content (NEC). If you store indoor fireworks which in total amounts

to more than 5kg NEC (approximately 900 individual Ice Fountains) you must obtain a license from GMFRS for the storage of explosives.

Combining fire with alcohol and allowing customers to handle ignition sources such as candles, ice fountains and sparklers when intoxicated can be dangerous. Proper precautions must be taken to ensure the safety of both staff members and the customers handling these items.

Drinks should not be consumed while the flames are still burning. If required, drinks and food sources should have ignitable items lit at the customer's table and not carried across open spaces and walkways already ignited. Consideration must be given to the suitability of handing intoxicated customers items containing naked flames.

The use of blow torches to ignite alcoholic drinks poses a risk to employees and customers. If you want to light drinks then you should consider a safe and suitable ignition source. Any ignition should be carried out in a controlled environment, using a small flame that is not capable of producing a large uncontrolled flame effect.

The responsible person must ensure that the risk to relevant persons relating to the use of dangerous substances and ignition sources is reduced or eliminated.

Where drinks are ignited this must be considered in your fire risk assessment. Staff must be trained and you must take steps to ensure that a fire does not occur.

Decorations and wall linings

GMFRS understands that it is desirable for business owners to have an attractive interior décor for customers. However, decorative materials that are used to line walls and ceilings can significantly contribute to the spread of a fire. Not only will this put relevant people at increased risk during a fire but it can also significantly increase the damage caused by fire and smoke and may increase the financial impact of a fire on your business.

When considering the decoration of your premises, you must consider the increased risk of a fire spreading because of the materials you are using. Before installing any decorative materials on your walls and ceilings you should consult with the manufacturer of the material about the suitability of the product for your intended use. You should confirm that the manufacturer can provide certification about the performance of the product in relation to its fire resistance.

Decorations you should consider as part of your risk assessment can include (but are not limited to):

- Temporary decorations (Christmas/Halloween/sporting events etc.)
- Materials designed to provide sound insulation
- Floral (both real and artificial) decorations where these are attached to ceilings or walls
- Curtains/drapes and fabric wall coverings
- Decorative paneling and facades

You should review the fire risk assessment if you make changes to the premises or the decorations in the premises.

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 roles.

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

The training should cover as a minimum:

- The risks from fire identified in the fire risk assessment
- The steps taken to reduce a fire
- The fire safety provisions in the premises and any specific responsibility for testing these
- What to do if a fire occurs
- How and when to use any firefighting equipment
- Evacuation arrangements and staff responsibilities in an evacuation
- Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans and General Emergency Evacuation Plans

You should consider annual refresher training for all employees as well as making sure new employees are provided with adequate training.

Fire Detection and Alarms

The type of system you use must be appropriate for the size and layout of the premises. For example, in small low-risk premises where a small number of people are present, simply shouting “Fire, fire, fire!” may be acceptable.

In more complex premises or those where more people are present, an automatic fire detection and warning system is likely to be necessary. If you play amplified music and or have live musicians in your business, you should ensure that the fire alarm is linked to any music system and/or have systems in place to stop the music if the fire alarm activates.

If you have a fire alarm system, you must ensure you have a system in place to ensure it is maintained in efficient working order and repair if necessary. As part of your system of maintenance and to ensure the effective operation of any fire alarm system, routine inspections and tests should be undertaken in accordance with a recognised standard.

The most commonly recognised standard for fire alarms is British Standard 5839: Part 1, which indicates the frequencies as follows:

- Daily checks
- Weekly tests
- Periodic inspection and test by a competent person (i.e. six-monthly, annual service)
- Non-routine test (e.g. inspection and test of the system following a fire)

The requirements of BS 5839 for testing and maintaining fire alarms are included in the Government guidance.

When planning when and how often you are going to test your fire alarm you should think about the people who work there and their working times. If you decide to carry out a weekly test at the same time every week, it may be necessary to carry out additional tests to ensure all employees are familiar with the sound of the alarm.

All testing and maintenance should be recorded as part of your fire safety arrangements.

Reducing False Alarms

If you have an automatic fire alarm and utilise the services of an Alarm Receiving Centre or Fire Alarm Monitoring Organisation you should ensure that they have up-to-date information about your premises. GMFRS does not respond to automatic fire alarms in most premises during the day unless there is a confirmed fire. You can find [advice on reducing false alarms on our website](#).

Firefighting Equipment

Your fire risk assessment will determine the need for firefighting equipment in your premises.

Types of fire-fighting systems and equipment include:

- Sprinklers and drenchers

- Wet and dry risers
- Foam systems
- Fire extinguishers

The most common fire-fighting equipment found in premises is fire extinguishers. The number and type of extinguisher should be correct for your premises. How many extinguishers you need and what type they are should be identified as part of your fire risk assessment.

If you have fire extinguishers, you should ensure only appropriately trained persons should be asked to use them.

A competent person should service the extinguishers, normally every 12 months. Between services, the extinguishers should be regularly checked to ensure:

- The pressure gauge is in the correct position
- It is not due or overdue a service
- No signs of rust, leaks etc.
- The safety pin in place and no evidence of tampering
- It is sited correctly and with appropriate signage in place

All testing and maintenance should be recorded as part of your fire safety arrangements.

Emergency Routes and Exits

All escape routes should lead to a fire exit that should, in most cases, open outwards. This exit may be a usual entrance/exit from the building or an emergency exit. Fire exits may be locked when the premises is not in use but must be available for use when anyone is using the premises. This means that they should not be locked or fastened in such a way that they can't be easily and quickly opened.

Emergency routes and exits must be kept clear with no obstructions narrowing or preventing routes and exits from use.

In larger premises, where the emergency exit doors are not immediately visible and obvious, emergency signage is likely to be required. Wherever you are positioned in a premises you should be able to see at least one sign, showing a fire exit or escape route. These should be positioned above doors and at any change in direction or change of level. Any fire assembly points should also be clearly marked, and staff trained as to where these are.

If your emergency routes and exits do not have any natural or borrowed lighting (so without your normal lighting it would be dark) you should have emergency lighting. Your fire risk assessment will determine whether emergency lighting is required or not. The emergency lighting may not be as bright as the usual lighting but will be enough to allow people to escape.

Emergency lighting should illuminate:

- Escape routes
- Fire exits
- Exit signs
- Safety equipment (i.e. firefighting equipment, first aid points)

All testing and maintenance should be recorded as part of your fire safety arrangements.

Fire Doors

Fire doors play an important role in preventing the spread of fire and smoke should a fire occur in your premises. Therefore, the maintenance of them is important. A fire door found to be damaged or defective should be repaired or replaced. Fire doors should be inspected on a regular basis and the following points should be considered when an inspection is carried out:

- Any self-closing devices ensure that the doors close completely
- When the door is in the closed position, there must not be any large gaps that would allow the passage of smoke and flame
- The fire door should have the appropriate signage provided (i.e. 'Fire Door Keep Shut' or 'Fire Door Keep Locked Shut')

Fire doors must not be wedged open because they are there to protect people in the premises from fire and smoke if they need to evacuate.

Emergency Procedures

The Fire Safety Order requires you to establish procedures to be followed if there is an emergency. This will normally be how you evacuate the premises if there is, or you believe there is a fire. This is often referred to as an emergency plan.

In developing your emergency plan, you need to consider the following:

- How people will know there is a fire
- Who is responsible for calling 999 and requesting the fire service
- How people will escape the premises - which routes and exits they should use and how anyone not familiar with the premises will be directed out of the premises
- Where people should assemble outside the premises
- How you will ensure that everyone has left the premises
- Who will liaise with Firefighters when they arrive

You should ensure that the emergency plan is available to people who need to understand it. This might be through fire action notices displayed throughout the premises or staff briefings and training.

You must nominate enough people to carry out your plan and they should be competent, meaning they have sufficient training and experience or other knowledge to carry out the procedures.

You should test your emergency procedures through carrying out regular drills.

The emergency procedures must be recorded as part of your fire safety arrangements.

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 firesafetysupport@manchesterfire.gov.uk.

Useful Information and Links

[Fire safety law and guidance documents for business \(gov.uk\)](#)

The National Fire Chiefs Council also has a [guide to choosing a competent 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.