

## WEST SUSSEX FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

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DATE: 29/4/2020

### Message:

#### **Fire safety advice to businesses from West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service**

We have robust plans in place to keep the people of West Sussex safe and this includes business owners, building managers and staff across the county.

We know these are challenging times for businesses, but it is still really important that you review your fire risk assessment, as the coronavirus situation continually changes.

Responsible persons are reminded that they should ensure that the fire risk assessment for the premises is regularly reviewed throughout the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic to take account of any additional risks that may occur. For example, where staff shortages may affect any pre-planned evacuation strategy or where stock and waste has increased and needs to be managed.

If your business is still operating:

New and temporary staff should receive fire safety training and awareness. Staff should be extra vigilant of potential hazards and risks, particularly where staffing levels have been reduced, or if staff are working alone or in an isolated environment:

- Ensure that alarms and emergency exits are still accessible and that alarms can be raised as needed
- Continue fire safety testing and keep ignition sources separate from combustible materials. Even where stockpiling is necessary due to external factors, these safety measures must be followed.
- Do not prop open fire doors, even as a measure to minimise contact between staff
- Ensure your evacuation strategy can be achieved taking into account any reduction in staffing levels and consider contacting your fire risk assessor for further advice
- If you have a waking watch in place at your premises, please find further guidance here ([https://www.nationalfirechiefs.org.uk/write/MediaUploads/COVID-19/NFCC advice on COVID-19 and waking watch - FINAL 25 March 2020.pdf](https://www.nationalfirechiefs.org.uk/write/MediaUploads/COVID-19/NFCC%20advice%20on%20COVID-19%20and%20waking%20watch%20-%20FINAL%2025%20March%202020.pdf))

If you've had to close your business:

If your building is closed for an extended period of time, there are some key steps to take in order to reduce the risk of fire:

- Keep all entrances and exits clear, and rubbish and commercial bins should be emptied and stored securely away from any buildings
- If possible, don't store excessive amounts of stock in a hazardous manner
- Turn off all electrical devices where possible and remove plugs from sockets
- Ensure your building is secure and continue with usual measures to prevent arson
- If your building is connected or adjacent to a domestic dwelling and you have a shared fire alarm, you must arrange for the weekly testing to take place.

We are here to support you:

We continue to provide business fire safety advice during this time. At this time Fire Safety Officers are not carrying out routine visits but are available remotely to help with any queries.

Further guidance and resources for businesses can be found on our web pages

(<https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/fire-emergencies-and-crime/west-sussex-fire-and-rescue-service/business-information-and-commercial-opportunities/>)

For urgent matters and where it is considered that there may be a risk to life, the attendance of a Fire Safety Officer will be made. Officers will be provided with extra personal protection to reduce the risk of coronavirus spread.

You can contact the team on [businessfiresafety@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:businessfiresafety@westsussex.gov.uk) or by calling 033 022 23333