

Dear Responsible Person(s)/Entity.

## 1. Introduction

Following the relaxation in restrictions during the phased 'coming out of lockdown' some businesses are returning whilst others may still be closed. It is not withstanding that Fire Safety still applies. Whether for the protection of your business, or employees and your customers you have a duty of care to ensure you are protected from the events of fire.

In conjunction with advice from Government and the Health and Safety Inspectorate we want to highlight areas that you should consider in relation to the active and passive Fire Precautions you have in your building.

## 2. Closed Premises

Although many premises remain closed during the relaxation period, it is important that the following is considered:

- Risk of arson - Securing premises is important to reduce the risk of arson. This includes removing any external sources of fuel or ignition which could cause fire spread. Ensuring gates and fences are closed and locked as well as having working CCTV, security systems and external lighting may help to prevent the anti-social behaviour which can lead to arson.
- Shared Means of Escape - Securing a premise should not affect the means of escape from other premises which are still open, from residential buildings or where wayleave agreements are in place.
- Maintaining Fire Safety Measures;
  - The internal fire protection measures such as fire doors should be kept closed and in good order as these provide vital protection in event of fire.
  - The maintenance and testing of the fire detection and alarm system should be continued. This should be prioritised based on the risks identified especially in businesses that are closed and have residential accommodation above.
  - Where the fire detection and alarm system serve multiple premises, (some of which may still be operating) it should be ensured that the system still provides the required level of cover to all areas. Arrangements should also be put in place to access closed areas of the building if maintenance is required

## 3. Premises about to re-open.

With premises starting to re-open and operate again there are points which need to be considered regarding Fire Safety. On return to a premise it may be necessary to review and update the premises Fire Safety Management Plan to ensure it is current and reflects the way the premise is operating. Points to be considered may include (not exhaustive):

- Where staffing and occupant levels have changed this may affect evacuation arrangements in event of fire (see advice in Evacuation in FAQs below).
- Where parts of the premises are not being used or are being used differently e.g. working and operating practices may have changed due to rearrangement of layouts, this may affect the means of escape (see Means of Escape in FAQs below).
- Ensuring means of escape are easily available as they may not have been used for some time or where an escape route is shared, and other premises remain closed.
- Reviewing measures implemented to increase security/reduce the risk of arson whilst the premises have not been used, as these may have adversely affected fire safety

measures.

- Reviewing storage and stock levels e.g. the amount and positioning of stock.
- Where fire safety measures have not been maintained e.g. automatic fire alarm and detection systems or automatic fire suppression systems and have not received their routine servicing or testing. (see advice on Testing and Maintenance below).
- Staff training – if this has not been undertaken for some time or new staff have started, then they should be provided with appropriate fire safety training (see advice on Training in FAQs below).

Once the Fire Safety Management Plan has been reviewed it is important any changes or updates are relayed to staff and occupants to ensure they are aware of any changes and what to do in event of fire.

#### **4. Testing & Maintenance of Fire Precautions**

It is the responsibility of the responsible person and/or duty holder to ensure they are testing and maintaining all fire safety measures to maintain a safe premise. However, you must ensure any fire safety system for the protection of life is fully checked by a competent person as soon as possible when the premises are going to come back into use, ensuring they are all tested before occupation. This includes;

- Fire alarm systems
- Fire extinguishers
- Emergency lighting
- Any fixed installations (sprinklers, drenchers, dry-risers)

If any of the above active fire safety measures become unserviceable or faulty, every effort must be made to contact the relevant servicing agent immediately to provide on-site remedial work to ensure serviceability of the relevant measures.

Emergency call-out of trained competent engineers, to deal with failures of measures that provide life safety, has been deemed 'essential services' by the Government of Jersey.

#### **5. FAQ's**

##### **Means of Escape**

**Q. Can I lock some fire exits as we have a reduced number of occupants and are not using all the premises?**

A. There needs to be a suitable and sufficient number of fire exits for the number of occupants within your premises that are immediately available without the use of a key or code. This should ensure occupants do not have to travel excessive distances or pass through an area of high fire risk or move towards a fire to escape. No exit should be locked or blocked whilst the building is being occupied. Although you may have a designated fire escape in your temporary layout, it's not to say that other exits may be used in the event of an emergency as an alternative means of escape should the designated exit be compromised by fire.

This should be supported with adequate escape signage and emergency lighting to identify the escape routes to be used in event of fire, with any changes being relayed to all occupants in a format they can understand.

**Q. What should I do about my fire escape route as it passes through next door which is closed?**

A. You need to assess and evaluate the impact this has on your ability to escape your

premises in event of fire and the availability of other escape routes. You should liaise with the Responsible Person of the other premises to see if an agreement can be reached.

**Q. What do I do as my premises is a multi-occupied building and some businesses have closed**

A. You need to assess and evaluate the impact this has on all your fire safety measures. It is highly recommended you do this in conjunction with other premises owners and the premises management company.

**Q. Can we wedge open fire doors to stop people from touching handles?**

A. No, fire doors are an important fire safety measure, keep fire doors closed and follow government advice on hand washing and cleansing hard surfaces. Fire doors can only be held open by automatic releasing hold-open devices specifically designed and installed for this purpose.

**Evacuation**

**Q. Should I still be carrying out fire drills in my commercial premises?**

A. Fire drills are an important part of any successful emergency evacuation procedure and can assist in a safe evacuation in event of fire, it is imperative everyone understands what to do in event of fire.

You need to assess the current situation considering the familiarity of your occupants and the last fire drill. If required and depending on your premises, you can familiarise new occupants with the premises and may be able to carry this out via a desktop drill, this is important when staff have been working at a different site previously.

It is also extremely important to take into consideration the need for Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) and how these will be managed and supported as part of your overall Emergency Evacuation Procedures and fire risk assessment.

**Q. Should occupants evacuate a premise if the fire alarm sounds as social distancing may be impacted.**

A. It is essential all occupants leave a premise in event of fire to ensure their safety and go to the pre-determined Assembly Point (see below). Whilst social distancing may be impacted during evacuation, this can be managed and by following government guidelines on maintaining hygiene at the Assembly Point.

**Q. How do I maintain social distancing at the Assembly Point?**

A. You need to review and revise your current emergency plan and Fire Marshall provision, including the Assembly Point, considering the number of occupants and ensure all occupants are issued with revised instructions and are aware of what is expected.

**Training**

**Q. Do I have to provide fire safety training?**

A. Yes, it is important all staff and those who may be working at the premises are given fire safety training relevant to their role, responsibilities and needs in event of fire. You should review the current level of training against each individual and update where required, this is essential for any occupants/staff who may not be familiar with your premises.

**Q. What do I do if people (staff) are unfamiliar with my building fire safety arrangements?**

A. All staff and those working on the premises need to be familiarised with the premises and informed of the arrangements and any specific risks to which they may be exposed and what is expected of them in event of fire.

Your return to business is important and whilst you are considering the Health and Safety of your employees and customers, it is equally as important to remember their safety and escape from fire and associated risks.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R.H.', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Ryan Hall  
Station Commander  
Fire Safety**