

To be sent to:

-all Care Homes in London which can be identified by category MR1 on Farnor;
-or by searching the CQC Database (for the attention of the Registered Care Home Manager).
-they should also be sent to Local Authorities (for the attention of Directors of Adult Social Services).

The London Fire Commissioner is the fire and rescue authority for London

Date 22 December 2021

Dear Sir/Madam

LONDON FIRE BRIGADE - FIRE SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS DURING THE COVID PERIOD

My main purpose for writing is to remind you to consider what additional plans, resources and control measures you might need in your organisation during the CoVid-19 affected period to reduce the risks of fire occurring, maintain safe evacuation routines and limit the generation of false alarm calls to the fire service.

I would first advise that the London Fire Brigade (LFB) continue to provide full emergency fire and rescue service response. Our priorities at this stage are to do all we can to stop the spread of this virus, to protect the public and our staff and safeguard our resilience. We are following the advice from Government and Public Health England, and will do all we can to share important safety messages. The Brigade has contingency plans in place which are constantly being monitored and we're confident that we can maintain a good level of service to London despite the challenges CoVid-19 may present. Reports of alleged fire risks or other dangerous conditions (warranting immediate action by the London Fire Brigade) will also continue to be investigated as a matter of urgency.

During the CoVid-19 affected period there are a number of things you can do to reduce risks which are outlined below.

If your fire alarm operates please react as follows:

- Immediately the fire alarm sounds, put into action your normal evacuation routine.
- Investigate the source of the alarm to establish if it is a fire or a false alarm.
- **If, during the investigation a fire is discovered or there is a smell of burning or smoke that cannot be accounted for then dial 999 and ask for the fire brigade immediately.**
- If, following the investigation, you are certain that there is no fire and no suspicion of a fire then the evacuation routine can be cancelled. Under these circumstances, do not call the fire brigade.
- The fire alarm system should be re-set and your fire alarm engineer contacted if necessary.
- To prevent any unnecessary disruption, please ensure that any known problems resulting in false fire alarms are corrected so that there is a high degree of confidence that fire alarms that do occur are genuine.

Evacuation Routines and staffing levels

Any staged evacuation arrangements such as progressive horizontal evacuation, which are often in place in hospitals and care homes, need to be supported by appropriate levels of staff. Management should consider the need for appropriate staff resources to allow for this. If these staffing levels are affected by CoVid-19 you will need to review your risk assessment

and emergency plan and if you believe that your staffing levels are not sufficient to support your evacuation strategy you should contact the London Fire Brigade on the email address below. If a fire does occur in your premises you must ensure the fire brigade is called at the earliest opportunity and inform the operator that an evacuation is in progress.

Lifts:

If you have lifts in your building you should ensure that, in the event of a lift becoming stuck, clear advice is available on how to contact the responsible maintenance company. Details should be made available in the lift and where lift alarm calls are received in the building.

Fire Safety Arrangements:

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 places a legal requirement upon employers and persons with responsibility for premises. These responsibilities and safety measures are designed to protect life regardless of fire service intervention. It is, therefore, essential to ensure that all existing fire safety provisions are in place and effective. Directors, Senior Managers and Health & Safety Managers will want to ensure the following are being considered:

- Check business continuity plans;
- Check the effectiveness of existing fire precautions;
- Check staff are fully aware of fire and evacuation procedures;
- Take appropriate steps to enhance staff vigilance;
- Review arrangements for calling the emergency services;
- The need for additional staffing or patrols.

Fire Safety Advice:

During the CoVid-19 affected period it should be noted that we may not be able to respond to fire safety enquiries within our normal time-scales.

If you have any queries or concerns further information can be found on the London Fire Brigade website at www.london-fire.gov.uk, or please email our Fire Safety Department on: fsr-adminsupport@london-fire.gov.uk.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Jennings', written over a light grey dotted rectangular background.

**Paul Jennings
Assistant Commissioner
Fire Safety**