Fire Safety Message for Businesses during COVID-19

OFRS is reducing the level its fire protection service, meaning that our inspectors will not be coming out to site to undertake proactive visits. This is as a result of the Covid-19 virus, and is being done to protect both your staff and our staff, to minimise the potential for spread. Our specialist team members will still be available on the phone or by email, and so will be able to give advice. There is a potential that you may find that it takes a bit longer than normal to respond to your contact. In the first instance we would like to direct you to our website, www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/businessfiresafety where you will find a suite of reference material and links to literature (such as the CLG risk assessment guides) that will help you to answer your enquiry. If you are unable to find the answer using the website literature, then you are invited to place it on email to fire.service@oxfordshire.gov.uk, or use the “contact us” area of the Oxfordshire County Council website, and select the “fire and rescue service” for who you want to get in touch with.

Is your Business Remaining Open?

A significant consideration for businesses that are remaining open as a critical service during this time, but using a much-reduced workforce, is “do those staff that remain know what to do in the event of an emergency”? It may be that these people are not your normal team members that undertake a ‘fire marshal’ role. It would therefore be appropriate to consider:

- Do they know what to do when your fire alarm activates?
- Do they know how to use the fire extinguishers in order to tackle a small fire?
- Do they know the evacuation strategy for the building?
- Do they know how the fire alarm system works? Can they silence it and reset it after checking the building for a fire and finding that it is a false alarm?
- Do they know how the Fire and Rescue Service will be called?
  - This may seem like a really obvious one, but we find that it isn’t. Many staff members believe that it happens automatically, but your fire alarm system may not work in that way. Staff should always dial 999 regardless of whether you have an alarm receiving centre monitoring your fire alarm system, when they identify the presence of fire.

Remember, it is your duty to make sure that your staff are instructed on the actions that they must take in the event of a fire.

Recovery:

If your business has been shut and you have not been testing/ inspecting your fire safety systems, such as:-

- Emergency Light,
- Fire Alarm,
- Fire Extinguishers,
- Fire Doors,

then you will need to prioritise these once you have re-opened.

Consider also whether these key maintenance actions are due:

- 6 monthly test on your fire alarm system by a competent engineer
- Annual test of your emergency lighting system by an electrician
- Annual test of your fire extinguishers by a competent engineer
again, if this is the case then you must prioritise as a matter of urgency.