



**DEVON &  
SOMERSET**  
FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

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**Mr B Weeks  
Stowford Rise Community Centre  
Chambers Close  
Sidmouth  
EX10 9YL**

**Protection Delivery  
Glen Road  
Plympton  
Plymouth  
PL7 2XT**

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Our Ref: BL928438/634424/MD  
Website: www.dsfire.gov.uk

Date: 16 February 2021  
Email: firesafetyhelpdesk@dsfire.gov.uk

Telephone: 01392 872567

Dear Mr Weeks

**The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005  
Premises: Stowford Rise Community Centre, Chambers Close, Sidmouth,  
EX10 9YL**

On 11 February 2021 I telephoned your premises and carried out a fire safety check.

I am pleased to advise you that a reasonable standard of fire safety was evident in the areas that were sampled.

You should note that this was not a comprehensive check of all your fire safety arrangements and that you have an on-going responsibility to carry out periodic reviews of your fire risk assessment.

To assist you further, I have attached some additional guidance. You will also find information and advice on our website: [www.dsfire.gov.uk](http://www.dsfire.gov.uk). Please click on the 'Your Safety' tab and then explore the 'Safety at work & other places' link.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ian Prinn'.

**Ian Prinn  
Business Safety Officer**

## Fire Safety Additional Guidance

Listed below are some frequently asked questions (FAQs) which provide generic advice to businesses. For the full list and additional information, read our latest advice on [how to ensure the ongoing safety of your premises during coronavirus](#).

If you require more specific advice, you can contact a fire safety officer via our Fire Safety Helpline 01392 872567 (available Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm).

### FAQs

**Q.** I need to implement a 'one-way' system to maintain social distancing, what do I need to consider?

**A.** If a one-way system or other process is introduced to control the flow of occupants, its impact on the means of escape must be assessed to ensure all occupants can leave the premises quickly and safely in the event of fire. Specifically, they should not have to travel excessive distances to reach the nearest available final exit.

Before you make any changes, you should consider the impact on your evacuation strategy. The outcome of the assessment should be recorded in your fire risk assessment and your emergency evacuation plan should be updated, as necessary.

**Q.** Can we wedge open fire doors to stop people from touching handles and to help keep rooms ventilated?

**A.** Fire doors play a significant part in stopping and limiting the spread of fire and smoke in buildings to provide safe evacuation. There are a number of technological solutions to 'holding fire doors open' that will safely close in the event of the fire alarm activating. This will enable businesses to strike a balance between fire safety and infection control.

An assessment by a competent person should be undertaken before allowing doors to be propped open, to ensure they are not required to support the fire safety strategy of the building.

You should ensure staff understand the importance of fire doors and remain vigilant to emerging new practices which may have an adverse impact on your current fire safety precautions.

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

**A.** You need to assess and evaluate the impact this has on all your fire safety measures. You should do this in conjunction with other premises owners and the premises management company, to assess the risk. Record the findings in your fire risk assessment.

**Q.** My evacuation strategy relies on a specific number of staff but normal staffing levels have not yet resumed. How can I ensure a safe evacuation?

**A.** You need to immediately review your emergency evacuation procedures and assess how your current staffing levels will impact the safety of those staff at work and those people who may need to be assisted during an evacuation.

Particular consideration should be given to PEEPs and those most vulnerable. You should consider, where practical, relocating occupants within the premises and minimising the areas in use; investigating all avenues to provide the required number of staff.

It is important all staff working at the premises are given regular fire safety training relevant to their role and responsibilities. In addition, they should know what is expected of them in the event of fire and the location of all emergency exits.

**Q.** If I have to close my business do I still need to test and maintain the fire alarm and other fire safety systems?

**A.** If the premises are closed, the fire safety systems may not need to be maintained.

However, the testing and maintenance of the fire alarm system should continue where:

- it is still required to protect people who still work or live within your premises;
- it forms part of a communal fire alarm system for the building;
- a fire on your premises would impact other people within the vicinity of your premises;
- not doing so would impact upon the terms of your insurance policy. You should consider contacting your insurance company before taking any action.

If you are not sure of the purpose of any fire safety system please seek further advice from a competent person.

Before your premises come back into use you must ensure any fire safety system, for the protection of life, has been tested and is fully operational. You should arrange for a competent person to check your premises fire safety systems as soon as possible, especially for any premises which provide sleeping accommodation.

Read our latest advice on [how to ensure the ongoing safety of your premises during coronavirus](#).