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Christmas Markets – Fire Safety.

Over the past decade the growth in numbers and popularity of Christmas markets in the UK has increased. These markets are an important part of the winter economy, and they can attract a large footfall. They are also popular in many European cities, but previous events have highlighted potential vulnerability. By working in partnership, Policing, the Licencing authority, Christmas market organisers, the Fire and Rescue service (FRS) and individual stall holders can ensure that the impact of a fire at a market, be it accidental or intentional as the result of a deliberate act, can be minimised.

Permission to stage a Christmas market must be obtained from the local authority by applying for a market licence. If the market event is only to run for a maximum of 7 days, it is possible that the organiser could apply for permission via the use of a temporary event notice (TEN) issued by the local authority. Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) should ensure that regular liaison is maintained with the relevant licencing departments of their respective local authority to maintain up to date information of the location of Christmas markets within their area of control. Existing information sharing agreements can be utilised, and arrangements should include the notification of licence approval, address of market and contact details of the organiser and site manager.

Christmas market organisers and stall holders are required to complete a risk assessment before the event. This will include, but is not limited to;

- Sufficient emergency access for the Police/ Fire/ Ambulance is designated, and maintained at all times, but this should not impeded a safe evacuation for members of the public and staff.
- Provision of adequate exit routes is provided for the numbers of persons expected within the market area.
- Exit routes must remain unobstructed, and final exit gates must remain unlocked at all times when the market is in use.
- Suitable and sufficient directional signage must be provided, indicating the appropriate escape route.
- No part of any stall should obstruct a fire hydrant or the hydrant tablet.
- An adequate supply of fully tested firefighting equipment must be available in prominent and easy to access positions.

- Stall holders and other staff must be trained in how to raise the alarm, how to contact the fire brigade, how to use firefighting equipment, how to safely evacuate members of the public from markets, where to assemble and who to report to
- All ignition sources must have been identified, and measures taken to ensure that they are kept away from all flammable materials
- All electrical and gas equipment must be suitably maintained.
- Electrical supplies should be suitable for external use, multiple adapters should not be used, a test report by a qualified IEE electrician should be supplied where appropriate.
- Gas Safe Certificates and evidence of electrical safety checks (for equipment and any generators) must be available.
- Combustible materials that could promote fire spread beyond the point of ignition, such as paper/cardboard, should be identified and the risk of them being involved in an incident reduced.
- Only sufficient stock needed to facilitate trade should be held on the stall. Stock replenishment should be achieved by restocking with only the amount needed.
- There should be sufficient bins for refuse, stall holder should not allow scraps, waste material, litter or rubbish arising from the course of trading to accumulate and measures should be in place to ensure that refuse is kept away from the stalls or flammable structures.
- The effects of accidental or deliberate fire should be considered, and all proportionate measures taken to reduce risk to the public and staff.

Compressed gas cylinders present a particular fire hazard, both for organisers and the Fire and rescue Service (FRS). Any stall that may be using flammable compressed gas, such as Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG), will place additional requirements on a risk assessment;

- Are only those cylinders in use kept at the stall? (*Spare should be kept to a minimum and in line with any specific conditions for the event*).
- Are all gas cylinders appropriately stored? Gas cylinders should be stored in a compartment completely separate from the rest of the stall. It must be ½ hour fire resistant, sealed, lockable, adequately ventilated and labelled. Excess cylinders should be stored in a locked compound.
- Are the cylinders kept outside, secured in the upright position and out of the reach of the general public?
- Are the cylinders located away from entrances, emergency exits and circulation areas?
- Are the gas cylinders readily accessible to enable easy isolation in case of an emergency?
- Are stall holders trained to ensure that all gas supplies are isolated at the cylinder, as well as the appliance when the apparatus is not in use?
- Is a member of staff, appropriately trained in the safe use of LPG, present at the stall at all times?

Throughout the operation of the market regular checks should be undertaken to ensure that traders are complying with fire safety requirements, and that escape routes are being maintained.

Further advice can be obtained via the local FRS National Inter-agency Liaison Officer (NILO), who can liaise between Protect & Prepare leads, Fire Safety teams and the licencing authority.

Alternatively additional information can be obtained via links below;

Fire Risk Assessment Guidance for Open Air Events and Venues.

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/14891/fsra-open-air.pdf

National Fire Chiefs Council(NFCC) event safety documentation.

<http://www.cfoa.org.uk/11544>