



## Post-coronavirus start-up guidance: Restarting your business after closure - Sprinkler installations

Some businesses may now be permitted to re-open following the enforced coronavirus partial or full shutdowns. In many cases, business owners and employees will be returning to work and their premises for the first time in weeks.

Reopening the business for trading and activating building services, plant and machinery needs to be planned, to resume activities in a controlled and safe manner.

Each business will need to be individually risk assessed to establish specific needs - the guidance given below covers some of the main areas to consider.

**These guidelines would not override any existing policy conditions.**

**All activities must only be undertaken in line with the current guidance issued by HM Government.**

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

Further guidance can also be found at:

<https://www.abi.org.uk/products-and-issues/topics-and-issues/coronavirus-qa>

### Risk management measures

Where it is practical and permitted by Government advice in the current situation, the following best practice Risk Management measures should be taken where possible.





# Coronavirus Response

## Automatic sprinkler installations

Where automatic sprinkler systems are correctly designed, installed, tested and maintained, they provide unrivalled protection to your business, allowing the Fire & Rescue Service to successfully tackle a smaller fire by detecting and controlling it in the early stages of development. The resultant damage and interruption to your business will be minimised, and less resource will be needed from the emergency services to deal with the situation.

If sprinkler systems lack regular testing for even a short period, they are susceptible to component failures such as hardening of alarm valve rubbers, sticking pressure switches and seizing alarm gongs. The usual weekly testing exercises vital components and increases the reliability of your system and its water supply.

If your sprinkler system has been impaired, isolated or not tested during the coronavirus lockdown the following checks should be considered before you restart your business, to ensure the protection is functional. We recommend the checks are undertaken by a competent person, such as the site engineer or person familiar with the system and, where necessary, by your existing approved sprinkler contractor. A full list of acceptable LPS1048 approved sprinkler contractors can be found at: [www.redbooklive.com](http://www.redbooklive.com)

Before undertaking any tests remember to ensure the system is taken 'offline', so alarm signals are not transmitted to an Alarm Receiving Centre, and to reinstate this connection once testing is finalised.

## Sprinkler pipework and sprinkler heads

- We recommend you carry out visual inspections of the sprinkler pipework and sprinkler heads to check for leaks, physical damage or corrosion. Remember water on floors could come from other sources, such as leaking roofs or general water pipes, so the source will need to be investigated and rectified.
- If the sprinkler system has not been drained, check the pressure gauges on the sprinkler valve sets. If there has not been any leakage, these should have consistent pressure readings when checked against previous weekly test records.
- If the sprinkler system had been drained during the lockdown, we recommend the following precautions prior to, and during, filling:
  - » An air pressure test undertaken by your existing approved sprinkler contractor, to find any potential leaks prior to refilling with water.
  - » Refilling should be carried out in a controlled manner to avoid water hammer.
  - » Drain valves should be used, to try to remove any trapped air within the piping system.
  - » Checks should be made for leaks during and after the refilling process.



# Coronavirus Response

## Sprinkler valves and Alarm gongs

- If sprinkler systems are not exercised weekly, components can fail. Sprinkler alarm valves and associated components are critical to the functionality and reliability of the system and we recommend the following:
  - » If the system has not been tested for 4 weeks - sprinkler valves and alarm gongs should be tested and inspected as per the manufacturers' recommendations, as a minimum.
  - » If the system has not been tested for over 8 weeks - a full overhaul of the sprinkler valves and alarm gongs should be carried out by your existing approved sprinkler contractor.
  - » On completion of checks and where necessary any overhaul, the valves should be secured by strap and padlocks in the appropriate position.

## Sprinkler pumps

Sprinkler pumps, where provided, are vital and their drivers have numerous moving parts, such as seals, bearings, couplings, all of which require periodic testing if they are to remain reliable.

Diesel engines are very susceptible to damage if not regularly used or started. The engine goes from standstill to 100% RPM immediately on start-up, and serious damage could occur after a long period without regular testing as lubricants will have drained from cylinders and turbo chargers.

- The following should be checked for diesel engines prior to running;
  - » Fuel level
  - » Oil level
  - » Battery charge (both sets)
  - » Coolant levels, or cooling water pipes, for blockage
  - » Pressure relief valves for blockage
- If the fire pumps and their drivers have not been run for over 8 weeks, it is strongly recommended that they are fully inspected and tested by an LPS 1048 approved contractor and their pump specialist, in accordance with the OEM recommendations, before being brought back into service. This is particularly important for diesel engine driven pumps.

## Sprinkler water tanks

- The sprinkler water tank should be visually inspected externally for general condition and evidence of any leaks.
- The town main infill ball valves should be inspected and tested for correct operation, as these can seize in the closed position thus not replenishing the water levels.
- If the sprinkler water tank or tanks were drained, the structure can be weakened. A specialist sprinkler tank maintenance contractor or sprinkler tank installer should be employed to carry out the necessary checks to ensure the tank is safe and structurally sound prior to refilling.

For AXA customers, if you require any further information or assistance please contact your usual Business Resilience Manager or e-mail [insaxafireprotection@axa-insurance.co.uk](mailto:insaxafireprotection@axa-insurance.co.uk)