Fire Hydrants



WHAT'S AT STAKE?

A fire hydrant is simply a point where people are able to tap into a water supply. The most common use for them is to assist firefighters in putting out fires. By connecting a hose to a hydrant, they gain access to all the water they need to douse a burning building!

How Hydrants Work

Fire hydrants are connected to a large water supply through underground pipes. When firefighters arrive on the scene, they connect a hose to the side of the hydrant. Once the hose is connected, a special wrench with a pentagon-shaped socket is used to turn the nut on the top of the hydrant. This unique tool is not widely available, so only authorized people, like firefighters, can use hydrants.

WHAT'S THE DANGER?

1. **Missing, Damaged Or Covered Fire Hydrant Marker Plates**

Hydrant marker plates are rectangular yellow signs, with a large black H and a pair of numbers, usually attached to a wall, lamp post or a short concrete post. The two numbers on the plate show the size of the water main and the approximate distance of the hydrant from the plate.

As well as marker plates, all hydrants are also shown on the digital maps available in fire engines, so that the nearest one can be found while firefighters are on their way to an incident. This also means that even if marker plates are missing or broken, the fire service will still be able to find them in most cases, and once reported they will be repaired in due course.

2. **Dangerous, Missing or Cracked Hydrant Covers And Frames**

When a fire hydrant cover is missing or cracked, it can expose the hydrant to the elements, which can cause it to freeze and get blocked with mud or silt. This can stop it working when firefighters need it.

3. **Leaks From Fire Hydrants**

Most leaks are below ground and not visible, but even leaks on the surface are often not reported due to people assuming someone else will have already reported a problem. Leaks affect water flow and pressure from a fire hydrant, making it less effective if firefighters need to use it. Please report any leaks as soon as they are discovered.

4. **Leaks From Water Supply Pipes Or Mains**

Leaks from water supply pipes or mains are the responsibility of the water company but can affect the availability of water from a fire hydrant. The sooner leaks are reported to the water company, the sooner they can fix the problem.

5. **Illegal Use Of Fire Hydrants**

Many problems with fire hydrants are caused by illegal use. It is illegal to use a fire hydrant to obtain water for purposes other than firefighting “unless authorized by the water authority or another person to whom the hydrant belongs” (source: Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, section 42, subsection 6).

The public can tell the local water companies or the fire service when they suspect illegal use. Key pieces of information such as the registration number and any company names on a vehicle, along with the date, time and location of the activity will be very helpful, but please avoid confrontation with suspected offenders.

6. **Parking On or Preventing Access To A Fire Hydrant**

It is an offence to be parked over or to prevent access to a fire hydrant when it is required for firefighting (source: Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, section 42, subsection 7). Parking for a short time on a hydrant can occur occasionally, but if this happens repeatedly with the same vehicle it should be reported to the water services team at Kent Fire and Rescue Service.

Please be considerate when parking near a fire hydrant marker post and ask friends, relatives and neighbours to be aware, as this could save time in an emergency.

7. **Alternative Emergency Water Supplies**

As well as fire hydrants, we can use open water sources at incidents, including ponds and swimming pools. Please report these sources – if they are on private land owned or occupied by an individual or company – to the water services team, giving key information including the location and capacity if known.

In the event of a fire, every available water source will be used. After the incident, any water that has been used will be replenished free of charge, at a time agreed by the local water company and the fire service.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Fire Proactive Prevention Measures

1. **Reduce Clutter**

Any fire needs fuel, and a cluttered desk or office is full of the type of fuel

that helps a raging fire spread. Make sure to reduce the amount of clutter in your office. One simple way to do this is to emphasize electronic communications and the reduction of printed pages.

2. **Know Capacities**

How many people are supposed to be in your office or on a particular floor at a given time? These capacities are assigned for several reasons, one being so that a building can be safely and effectively evacuated in the event of a fire.

3. **Mind Your Heat**

Make sure to keep heat-creating equipment away from walls and any flammable materials. Also, discourage or restrict the use of space heaters in your office.

4. **Regularly Test**

Regularly test your fire alarms and smoke detectors. In the case of an emergency, it will be vital that these tools are working at their best if you are to keep everyone in your office safe.

5. **Label Exits**

Most people in your office most likely use an elevator if it has multiple floors, but it is essential that they know where to find the stairs in case of an emergency. Make sure to clearly label your exits to avoid confusion about the quickest path out of your office in the case of a fire.

6. **Drill Your Team**

When was the last time your office conducted a fire drill? If you cannot remember, it has probably been too long. These are the times when you and your office mates can practice getting to the stairs and quickly getting out of the building in case of fire. It can also be a chance for your office to recognize – and fix – any deficiencies in the evacuation process.

7. **Easy on the Outlets**

No one in your office should overload an electrical outlet. Make sure you are using surge protectors and generally limiting how many plugs you are engaging in one outlet at a time.

8. **Check Wiring and Cords**

Frayed wiring and electrical cords can be a significant source of fire. Examine your wires and cords regularly to make sure there are no issues. If you notice fraying or similar damage, replace the cords as quickly as possible.

9. **Assign Smoking Areas**

You never want anyone smoking near your office. Provide designated smoking areas, and make sure those areas are as far away from the building as possible. Make sure these smoking areas have proper receptacles for disposing of cigarette butts.

Overview

Fire safety in the workplace also depends on your having the right fire safety procedures in place and ready to go in case of an emergency. These procedures don’t necessarily need to be complex. First, sound an alarm that everyone can hear. Second, call 9-1-1. Follow the escape route that has been tested through regular drills, and then stay out of the building until it is deemed safe by the fire department. The overall safety of your workplace depends on workplace fire safety plans and procedures.

FINAL WORD

Protecting areas without water supplies or hydrants is multifaceted, especially in a large fire district. There’s a need to plan for firefighting resources, determine where to get water for fighting fires, and work to make buildings as fire-safe as possible.