Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service
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To whom it may concern,

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION – CLUBS, BARS, RESTAURANTS AND OTHER LICENSED VENUES

We have produced this letter to provide clubs, bars, restaurants and other licensed premises with essential information regarding common fire safety concerns identified during audits carried out at similar premises.

Due to their unique nature, many venues may have limited lighting, several changes in level, the presence of bars and alcohol service, and unusual surface linings on the walls and ceilings. In other venues, there may be specific features including stage effects for live music including the use of pyrotechnics, indoor fireworks or other special effects.

Venue owners, managers and staff should be aware of the risks and how to manage them effectively to keep people safe and protect the business. This letter includes information on action that can be taken to address these concerns in order to reduce the risk. Please note that this list is not exhaustive.

What can you do to reduce the risks?

- Ensure that a Fire Risk Assessment is undertaken for the premises.
- Ensure that all evacuation routes are kept clear at all times. Consideration should be given to the number, dimensions and location of emergency exits. Exits should be proportionate to accommodate emergency evacuation of occupants, assuming the venue is at maximum capacity.
- Ensure that the fire alarm system is adequate, functioning correctly and is regularly tested and maintained. The fire alarm warning system must be audible over music and amplified sounds.
- Ensure that the emergency lighting is adequate, functioning correctly and is regularly tested and maintained.
- Ensure that all fire doors are tested and maintained including any hold open or electronic locking devices, any damage identified should be rectified without delay.
- Ensure that a maintenance schedule is implemented for all equipment on the premises including specialist lighting, stage effects and fire safety measures. Maintenance should be carried out by a competent person with records kept, demonstrating that it has been undertaken to a satisfactory standard.
- Ensure that lighting and special effects, such as lasers or strobes, are managed in a way that prevents confusion and disorientation for visitors during an emergency evacuation.
- Ensure that the integrity of any compartmentation included in the design of your premises is checked and confirmed on a routine basis. Any damage identified should be rectified without delay.

- Ensure that surface linings, such as drapes, curtains, artificial flowers or foliage, are made of fire-retardant materials or treated so that they are less likely to ignite in a fire.

- Ensure that the use of pyrotechnics, candles and handheld fireworks are carefully controlled, as their use introduces an additional ignition source to the premises. It is strongly advised that venues consider prohibiting the use of pyrotechnics and handheld fireworks (including sparklers) within the premises and implement further control measures where they are permitted outdoors. Subject to the fire risk assessment, where the use of these items is deemed acceptable, they should only be operated by suitably trained and competent people.

- Provide realistic practical training for all staff. Individuals should be effectively trained in any special effects, systems or equipment used on the premises, as well as what to do in the event of fire.

If you own or manage a commercial premises, such as a bar or restaurant, then you must comply with fire legislation set out in the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Part of this legislation requires the responsible person to carry out a suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment, which will ensure that risks are effectively mitigated, managed or removed to keep people safe.

All of the above areas must be addressed as part of your fire risk assessment including the associated hazards and action must be taken to ensure that adequate control measures have been implemented to manage those risks and reduce the risk from fire.

If you choose to appoint a third-party Fire Risk Assessor to carry out the assessment on your behalf, then you must take steps to ensure that the Fire Risk Assessor is competent. You can view advice on choosing a competent Risk Assessor on the Fire Protection section of our website Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service - Fire Risk Assessment.

If you need further advice, please consult the HM Government Guide to Fire Safety Risk Assessment in Small and Medium Places of Assembly or Fire Safety Risk Assessment in Large Places of Assembly which provide more comprehensive guidance on how to meet the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. These publications can be obtained from the Fire Protection, Free Templates and Tools section of our website - Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service - Free templates and tools.

Further information is available on the Fire Protection section of our website Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service - Clubs, bars, restaurants and other licensed venues.

If you have any queries or questions relating to the letter, then please contact our headquarters fire protection team on 01606 868700 or by email to fireadvice.shq@cheshirefire.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely

Kris Clowes
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