



Kent Fire & Rescue Service

# Fire Hydrant Initiative Project

Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC)



## Background

The fire hydrants used by fire and rescue services to supply water for firefighting are called statutory fire hydrants (as opposed to private fire hydrants found on private water mains). They are owned, installed and maintained by Kent's five water companies.

Fire hydrants access covers are mainly found in pavements and roads, but can also be found in nearby public spaces, such as grass verges.

Currently the KFRS water services department inspects all statutory fire hydrants within Kent and Medway using a rolling four yearly programme. There are currently over 27,000 statutory fire hydrants within Kent. This number is steadily increasing on a monthly basis due to new infrastructure being built throughout the county.

KFRS has been working in partnership with KALC to help increase community resilience within local parish and town councils (PTC) and one of the initiatives put in place is for local residents to help monitor and report fire hydrant defects and water provision issues within their local area, ensuring issues are resolved in a timely manner. The fire hydrant initiative project has been in place for nearly ten years and KFRS is looking at getting as many PTCs involved as possible. Local councils should contact their insurers to let them know that they are looking to be involved in the project.

## Introduction

KFRS will continue to inspect fire hydrants throughout Kent and Medway mainly on a rolling four yearly programme which for some hydrants is actually less due to the perceived risk they might support. Therefore the inspections we are asking local PTCs to undertake are in addition to the ongoing work KFRS undertakes.

- The inspections can be undertaken by anyone within the local council or community.
- The inspections are to be visual inspections only and no risks should be taken at any time.
- All issues reported to KFRS will be rectified based on the severity of the defect.

We are simply asking that... If you see a defect **PLEASE REPORT IT!**

## Reporting process

Problems with a fire hydrant can be reported in several ways:

Direct to KFRS Water Services team:

Email: <a href="mailto:water.services@kent.fireuk.org">water.services@kent.fireuk.org</a>
By phone: <a href="tel:01622692121">01622 692 121</a> - Extension 2391
In writing: Water Services team, Kent Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, The Godlands, Straw Mill Hill, Tovil, Maidstone, ME15 6XB
Kent County Council online reporting tool: <a href="#">Report online to Kent County Council</a>
Smartphone app: <a href="#">Country Eye</a>

Out-of-hours reporting (including emergency issues)

If the problem appears to be dangerous or is a serious leak noticed outside office hours, please report directly to your local water company:

<a href="#">Affinity Water South East</a> : 0800 376 5325
<a href="#">South East Water</a> : 0333 000 0365
<a href="#">Southern Water</a> : 0333 000 0365
<a href="#">SES Water</a> : 01737 772000
<a href="#">Thames Water</a> : 0800 714 614

**Problems that can be reported by PTCs include:**

### **Missing, damaged or covered fire hydrant marker plates**

Missing or damaged hydrant marker plates can usually be fixed by KFRS.

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.

In some areas, thermal H markings are burnt into the roadway, as shown below. These are predominantly used in rural areas where marker plates are at higher risk of being covered over by roadside vegetation or damaged.



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 whilst 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, and once reported they will be repaired in due course.

If the marker plate is covered by overgrown grass or plants, residents can help by cutting back any plants or bushes that are covering the hydrant indicator post.

### **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/or silt up. This can stop it working when firefighters need it.



### **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.

### **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.



## 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 authorised by the Water Authority or another person to whom the hydrant belongs" (Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, section 42, subsection 6).

The public can inform the local water companies or KFRS 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 are very helpful, but please avoid confrontation with suspected offenders.

## 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). If cars are seen to be continually parking over fire hydrants this should be reported to the Water Services Team at Kent Fire and Rescue Service.

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

## Parking too close to fire hydrants can cause us real problems



When you choose where to park, please help your local firefighters by leaving access to hydrants clear. Hydrants provide an important source of water for putting out fires so we need them to be easy to reach in an emergency.



## **Alternative emergency water supplies**

As well as fire hydrants, KFRS can use open water sources at incidents, including ponds and swimming pools. Please suggest 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. *KFRS is already aware of all public water sources such as rivers.*

In the event of a fire, KFRS will use every available water source to tackle it. After the incident, any water that has been used from for instance a private swimming pool or pond will be replenished free of charge by the local water company, in liaison with the fire service.

## **New Development sites**

To ensure we capture all development sites within Kent and Medway, PTCs are encouraged to report any new developments within their area to the KFRS water services team so they can ensure all fire safety aspects of the new infrastructure are in place. Parish and town council fire hydrant maps

Due to their essential role in firefighting operations, the network of fire hydrants across Kent and Medway meet the UK government's definition of 'critical national infrastructure'. This definition is set out below:

'Those critical elements of infrastructure (namely assets, facilities, systems, networks or processes and the essential workers that operate and facilitate them), the loss or compromise of which could result in:

- a) Major detrimental impact on the availability, integrity or delivery of essential services – including those services whose integrity, if compromised, could result in significant loss of life or casualties – taking into account significant economic or social impacts; and/or
- b) Significant impact on national security, national defence, or the functioning of the state.'

<https://www.cpni.gov.uk/critical-national-infrastructure>

Consequently, we will not provide specific technical details about the network of fire hydrants across Kent and Medway as to do so would increase vulnerability to targets and or malicious attacks.

Maps identifying the locations of the fire hydrants within your parish or town are available through KALC or the local water company. Please note that due to data protection, these maps are not to be displayed on public domain websites.

## **Free home safety advice and services**

KFRS offers free '[safe and well](#)' home visits. To request a visit:

- Call **0800 923 7000**
- Email [home@kent.fire-uk.org](mailto:home@kent.fire-uk.org)

**KFRS would like to thank KALC, local councils and their communities for their support and assistance with this initiative.**