



## Press Release

Press release from **Derbyshire Fire & Rescue Service** and **Derbyshire Fire & Rescue Authority**

**Making Derbyshire Safer Together**

**21 MAY 2020**

### **CHIEF FIRE OFFICER CALLS FOR PEOPLE TO STAY ALERT AND STAY SAFE**

Derbyshire's Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive, Gavin Tomlinson is calling for people to act sensibly, stay alert and to stay safe during the warmer weather as we head into another bank holiday weekend.

Speaking on one of the hottest days of the year, CFO Tomlinson made his plea amid fears that the warmer weather could cause a surge in emergency incidents across Derbyshire and a rise in the number of people travelling into the county.

He said: "The government is calling for people to Stay Alert and I wholeheartedly support that message. This is an unprecedented time for our country as we find ways of keeping safe, preventing the spread of the virus and also working together to save our NHS, but there are other risks that we need to ensure our communities are aware of to keep them safe from the risk of fire and other emergencies.

"With any period of warm weather comes the tradition of dusting off the barbecue and enjoying a burger or two, but that doesn't come without risk. Only last weekend firefighters attended a fire where hot barbecue coals had been emptied into a waste bin at the end of the evening – and yes, the bin caught fire. If that had been a wheelie bin next to a fence, or house, we would have been dealing with a far more serious fire than we did on this occasion.

"Another risk that has increased during lockdown comes from people burning garden and household waste. While people may think they are in control of these fires, things can quickly get out of hand with overhanging trees, shrubs and the ground being so dry due to a lack of rain. It only takes a minute for things to get out of control, therefore I am appealing to people to sign our pledge not to have a garden fire. Be kind to your neighbours who would have to cope with the smoke, and be sensible, find an alternative way of disposing of your waste. Recycling centres are now reopening and you can find out details on both the city and county councils websites.

email: [enquiries@derbys-fire.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@derbys-fire.gov.uk)  
[www.derbys-fire.gov.uk](http://www.derbys-fire.gov.uk)

Gavin Tomlinson MBA MIFireE  
Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive



CFO Tomlinson went onto express concerns that venturing out into the county may also cause problems with wildfires, he said:

“The government has eased the lockdown restrictions to allow people to head out for exercise and with the soaring temperatures we are experiencing, I am concerned that following weeks of dry weather, we could quickly find ourselves dealing with another large moorland fire and a surge in fires in the open.

“The ground is so dry that a discarded cigarette, portable barbecue and even a glass bottle can quickly lead to a grass fire than can spread rapidly causing untold damage. Earlier this month firefighters spent several days dealing with a large moorland fire at Rakes Moss, underlining the resources and time it takes to deal with such a fire. As I speak, our colleagues over the border in South Yorkshire are also dealing with a similar fire on Hatfield Moor. Whether you are out walking near moorland, or walking in open parks near to areas of grassland, please take extra care and discard your rubbish responsibly.”

Derbyshire has many open water sources across the county and a further concern relates to water safety and the temptation to take a dip in lakes, rivers, quarries and reservoirs.

“Cold water shock, hidden currents and debris can cause even the strongest swimmer to get into difficulty. Derbyshire has many open water ways and I find myself bewildered hearing that only last month, during the height of the lockdown, firefighters carrying out water rescue training at Milford Weir came across several families enjoying a picnic while their small children were playing in the river next to the weir.

“Not only is the water a dangerous place to be, but weirs are incredibly dangerous. The force of the water can quickly lead to trouble. In July 2018 a 25 year old man tragically died when he became trapped in the weir at a well-known spot on the River Derwent, known locally as Pebble Beach.

“It seems every way we turn at the moment, we are being given advice, but I make no apologies for calling for people to be sensible and to stay safe. Taking a few precautions and following some simple advice can really make the difference, preventing an emergency occurring.

“Please take a minute to read our advice and ensure, you and your family stay safe.”

## **Barbecue Safety**

- Make sure your barbecue is well away from sheds, fences, shrubs or garden waste.
- Only use enough charcoal to cover the base of the barbecue.
- Ensure the barbecue is cool before moving it.
- Empty the ashes onto bare garden soil and not into wheelie bins as burning embers could cause a fire.

- Don't drink if you are in charge of the barbecue.
- Never use petrol or paraffin to start or revive your barbecue; use only recognised lighters or starter fuels on cold coals.

### **Wildfire Prevention**

- Discard rubbish responsibly – take it home, or put it in a bin.
- Discard used cigarettes responsibly.
- Do not have a barbecue in the open – save them for home, in the garden and follow our safety advice.

### **Controlled Burn/Say No to a Garden Fire Pledge**

Make a pledge not to have a garden fire during the [pandemic here](#). You will be supporting your firefighters across Derbyshire, and people with respiratory illnesses.

### **Water Safety - 263 people accidentally drowned in the UK in 2018**

- Keep out of the water – no matter how strong a swimmer you are.
- Water temperatures remain low, even when it's hot.
- Cold water will cause your body to go into shock, causing your heart rate to rise, your muscles to cramp and it makes you gasp for breath. This quickly leads to panic and disorientation.

Derbyshire's Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive, Gavin Tomlinson is one of many Derbyshire leaders who is supporting a call to visitors to respect local communities this coming weekend and consider coming to the county later in the year. Read the full statement [here](#).

For further information about keeping safe, visit [www.derbys-fire.gov.uk](http://www.derbys-fire.gov.uk) alternatively follow or like @DerbyshireFRS on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

**ENDS**