What is a fire hydrant?

As you go about your daily life you probably pass at least one fire hydrant as there are over 11,000 in Bedfordshire alone.

Contrary to popular belief they are not the above ground pillar type hydrants as seen in American films, but are underground. You may be familiar with above ground yellow marker posts, used to identify the location of the fire hydrant and the size of the water main, however the fire hydrant itself is actually in a chamber under the surface of the road or path. The chamber is covered by a lid that is usually marked with the letters “FH” although some lids may have other markings. In Bedfordshire we also use yellow paint to help us identify a fire hydrant cover. The hydrant requires a standpipe to access the water supply and a specially designed key to turn the water on.

Please take care not to park your car above or too close to a fire hydrant as it could be needed in an emergency at any time.

Fire hydrant covers may be found in the footpath, the roadway, or in the verge.

Marker plates can be seen fixed to a post (as in the picture) or to a wall or lamp post.
What are they used for?

Fire hydrants are used to either supplement the water supply for fire fighting or to supply/refill the water tank in a fire appliance.

The Fire and Rescue Service has a statutory duty to ensure that all reasonable measures are taken to ensure there is an adequate supply of water and to ensure its availability for use in case of a fire. Therefore ensuring fire hydrants are in good working order is very important.

Fire Hydrant Maintenance

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service has approximately 11,000 fire hydrants within our area. It is our responsibility to ensure that these hydrants are kept serviceable and available for use in the event of fire.

Routine Testing

Fire hydrants are tested at regular intervals. The test includes the following areas:

1. Above ground inspection

The hydrant frame and cover and the surrounding surface is checked for damage and to ensure that it does not pose a hazard to the public. Any overgrowth is cut back and any faults are made as safe as possible. If remedial work is required this is reported to the local Water Company, who carry out repairs on our behalf. The hydrant marker post is checked to confirm that the information shown is correct and is clearly visible. The marker post and hydrant lid may require re-painting. If the marker plate is missing or damaged it is replaced with a new one.

2. Below ground inspection and test

This involves checking the chamber in which the hydrant is located and the fire hydrant itself. The hydrant is checked for leakage, the chamber may require clearing of silt or debris which may affect the delivery of water for fire fighting purposes. A standpipe and key are then fitted to the hydrant, allowing it to be turned on and ‘wet tested’ to ensure that it is working properly and that the flow and pressure of water obtained are sufficient for fire fighting.

More information about fire hydrants

- Reporting a hydrant defect
- Know the law and don’t break it!
- Think before you park
- Routine testing
- Relocating fire hydrant marker posts
- New developments in Bedfordshire
- Private fire hydrants
**Help us - reporting a hydrant defect**

Hydrant marker posts or plates help firefighters to quickly identify the location of fire hydrants. Sadly these occasionally get vandalised or damaged and, when missing or obscured this can waste valuable minutes in locating a hydrant, which can potentially cost lives or increase the amount of damage in a fire.

We encourage contact from the general public in relation to problems or enquiries about fire hydrants. Reports of any damaged or leaking fire hydrants or related equipment are inspected and repaired as soon as possible.

A fire hydrant marker post and plate are yellow and the lid of the chamber is usually painted yellow as well, although the paint can wear off with time. White or grey posts with a blue identification plate are the responsibility of the Water Company (in Bedfordshire this will be either Anglian Water or Affinity Water). If you spot a problem please contact us either by e-mail contact@bedsfire.com or contact 01234 845000 and ask for the Water Supplies section.

When reporting a defect to a Hydrant please provide address/location of Hydrant including postcode if possible and what damage you noticed ie plate broken, post broken, lid broken, leaking or any other damage.

**Know the law and don’t break it!**

It is illegal to use a fire hydrant to obtain water for purposes other than fire fighting, unless authorised by the Water Authority or other person to whom the hydrant belongs. Unauthorised access to the hydrant chamber is not allowed. Anyone found to be using fire hydrants without the appropriate authorisation may be prosecuted.

A person commits an offence if he/she damages or obstructs a fire hydrant and is liable to prosecution (Fire and Rescue Services Act Section 42). Please contact the Service Water Supplies Section on 01234 845000 or email us on contact@bedsfire.com if you are concerned that a hydrant is being used illegally.

**Think before you park**

In the event of fire, it can be of paramount importance that firefighters have access to water supplies quickly and every second counts! Obstruction of fire hydrants, particularly through inconsiderate parking, could place the lives of you, your family and your neighbours at risk.

A person commits an offence if he / she damages or obstructs a fire hydrant, and is liable to prosecution (Fire and Rescue Services Act Section 42).
Relocating fire hydrant marker posts

On occasions, fire hydrant marker posts may need to be relocated, for example when a property owner wishes to remove a boundary wall. If you wish to relocate a hydrant marker post, please contact the Service Water Supplies Section on 01234 845000 or email us on contact@bedsfire.com

New Developments in Bedfordshire

When a new development within the county is planned, Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service will make an assessment of the associated risks and recommend the number and position of any fire hydrants required. Each hydrant is strategically placed, to ensure the minimum provision is made, whilst delivering the optimum supply of fire fighting water delivered from a mains system. Please contact us by email on contact@bedsfire.com or on 01234 845000 for information, for developments affecting or requiring fire hydrants in Bedfordshire.

Private Fire Hydrants

Private fire hydrants are located on private water mains that are not the responsibility of the local Water Company or the Fire and Rescue Service. These are generally located on large sites such as hospitals, military establishments, and industrial estates, but may also be installed to provide cover for specific properties. Private hydrants are the responsibility of the owners/occupiers on whose land they are installed.

Private hydrants should be installed in accordance with the appropriate British Standards and should be compatible with Fire and Rescue Service equipment.

Where private hydrants are installed they should be tested and maintained in good working order by the owner/occupier.

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service offer a service to maintain and test private hydrants. Please contact the Service Water Supplies Section on 01234 845000 or email us on contact@bedsfire.com to arrange for private hydrants to be tested – please note, this service is chargeable as follows:

1 hydrant = £45 + VAT
2 hydrants = £86 + VAT
3 hydrants = £128 + VAT
4 hydrants = £171 + VAT
5 hydrants = £214 + VAT
6 hydrants = £256 + VAT

For any further information – contact@bedsfire.com