

Emergency service workers brace themselves for over 12,000 calls tonight



Emergency service workers are bracing themselves for over 12,000 calls over one night – many from Christmas revellers who've abused alcohol.

Police, paramedics and firefighters are gearing up for the deluge as people hit pubs, clubs and house parties on Friday, 23 December to celebrate the festive break.

Excessive drinking whilst still under the influence can result in serious violence or injury which places pressure on police, ambulance crews and hospital resources.

It can also see communities put at risk of fire by those who try to cook after a party night out – while under the influence.

And all three emergency services can find it difficult to respond quickly and effectively – because the person seeking help is heavily intoxicated.

Today, all three emergency services have united to remind people to act responsibly and prevent Scotland's front line from being stretched to breaking point.

Mark Williams is Assistant Chief Constable for Police Scotland.

He said: "Undoubtedly this is one of the busiest times of the year for all three emergency services. In fact throughout December last year, Police Scotland handled nearly 277,000 calls to the 999 and 101 numbers from members of the public.

“Of that number, many will be alcohol-related, tying up vital time for police and the other emergency services who could be dealing with those people who really need our help.

“Every unnecessary incident impacts on our ability to help those who are vulnerable at this time of year. By all means go out and have a great time but drink responsibly, look after yourself but know your limits.”

David McGown is Assistant Chief Officer for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. He said: “The use of alcohol continues to play a major part in contributing to fire deaths in the home. The Fire Service urges people to avoid cooking at all when under the influence of alcohol.

“Officers answering 999 calls from intoxicated people often struggle to get details of where the incident is and what is involved, which makes it much harder for them to know what resources to send.

“Being unable to get reliable, accurate information also means that firefighters can be sent to incidents without vital information regarding people involved and the risks they may face.

“When someone is trapped in a fire this could mean our teams may not know where to focus their search, which therefore exposes them to dangerous environments for longer as they attempt to locate the person.”

Daren Mochrie, is the Scottish Ambulance Service Director of Service Delivery.

He said: “This time of year is incredibly busy for us, and we do see an increase in the number of calls we get as a result of increased alcohol consumption. Some calls can be difficult to deal with when the caller is heavily intoxicated and we can’t make out what they are saying.

“Some staff in our Control Centres and out on the road end up being verbally and even physically abused by patients or callers under the influence of alcohol.

“We want everyone to have a great festive period, but our message is simple – make the right call. Please think hard before you call us, do everything you can to make it as easy as possible for us to determine the nature of your call and if we do we need to send a response, then allow us to do our job when we arrive as unhindered as possible”.

Emergency services are joining forces to appeal to the public to stay safe as they expect to receive on average around 15,000 calls daily on Friday 23 December – one of its three busiest days over the festive period (23, 31 December and 1 January).

The three 999 services also revealed their Christmas wishes for people to have an enjoyable, safe time:

Scottish Ambulance Service – Make the Right Call

Police Scotland – Know Your Limits

Scottish Fire & Rescue Service – Think Fire Safe

They are appealing to the public to take on board these messages to keep safe during this festive season.

- Plan your Christmas night out – stick with friends, charge your mobile and remember to take it with you.
- Drink responsibly and don't leave drinks unattended. Avoid drugs and new psychoactive substances – there is no safe way to take them.
- Think about how you'll get home. Book a taxi from a licensed company or arrange for family or a friend to pick you up. Let people know where you are.
- Cooking is the biggest cause of house fires in Scotland. If you're tired, have been drinking, or taking drugs,

you will be less alert to the signs of fire.

- If you're out at a Christmas party or if you're just having a night out down the pub, it's best to buy food on the way home, rather than attempting to cook when you get back.

ACO David McGown, added: "It is vital that your home has working smoke alarms, enough so that everyone in your home will be alerted in the event of fire. You should also consider fitting a heat alarm in your kitchen."

If you or someone you know is vulnerable or may be at risk from fire please get in touch and arrange a FREE home fire safety visit with local firefighters by calling 0800 0731 999 or visit www.firescotland.gov.uk.

A wide range of tips on how to keep yourself and your home safe from fire are available on the SFRS website: www.firescotland.gov.uk/winter.

For more festive safety information visit our [Festive Safety section](#), and you can also find a host of different Christmas safety information in our [advent calendar](#).