

## Website review

**Organisation:** East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service

**Website:** <https://www.esfrs.org/>

**Date:** 06 August 2020

Explanation of priority issues, and how they affect eligibility for the Internet Crystal Mark.

- **Priority 1** This is an issue that must be resolved before we can judge the site eligible for an Internet Crystal Mark.
- **Priority 2** As long as all Priority 1 issues are resolved, we would be willing to accept a commitment to deal with these problems within six months of certification.
- **Priority 3** Included for advice, but optional
- **No priority given** You are already up to Internet Crystal Mark standard on this point.

## General

- A random test of your pages showed a small number of errors when tested against the W3C validator You may wish to check this further for yourself. (<http://validator.w3.org/>.) **Priority 3**
- The site loads quickly.
- We are pleased to see that you do not use captcha anti-spam technology on your site. We do not regard this technology as accessible.

## Navigation

- Your main navigation links appear consistently on every page, and in the same position.
- You provide a site map but not an A-Z (only one is usually necessary, although large, complex sites often have both), which we recommend, as this helps visitors to navigate your site.
- You provide a search facility, which we would normally expect to see.

When a user is searching for something there are two types of problem they can come up against.

User error – the correct search term is entered incorrectly because the user does not know how to spell it, or they have

made a typing error. There are many people who can't spell very well: a 2011 survey of literacy estimated that there were 15% of English adults (aged 16-65 years) had literacy levels no higher than those expected of a 9-11 year old (The Skills for Life Survey). Also, many people make typing errors, and not only those who are dyslexic. (British Dyslexia Association's survey found that around 4% of the population are severely dyslexic, and a further 6% have mild to moderate dyslexia problems.) This can be remedied in part by making a list of all the spelling errors, typing errors and alternative search terms that you think could possibly be relevant to your site, and checking your search engine logs.

Search-engine error – the wrong search term is entered. When people enter the wrong item into a search engine, it is only wrong because you have not anticipated it. You should aim to cover as many bases and anticipate as many different search terms as possible.

- Your pages all have a link to the homepage, which we recommend. Being able to navigate back to the start point is a useful feature for site users who become lost.
- You have a breadcrumb trail that helps users know where they are within your site. This is a useful feature to aid users in site navigation.
- You mostly (but not always) indicate application type and filesize for downloadable documents (as mouseover text). **Priority 2**
- Link colours do not change colour once they have been followed. Links that change colour after they have been followed provide a useful aid to let users know where they have been. (Applies to inline links, not menu item links.) **Priority 3**
- You do not warn users when a link will open in a new window. (This is confusing and/or irritating to most site users, as it makes it difficult for a user to keep track of where they are, where they've been and where they're going.).

You should either open links in the same window/tab (especially on your own site)(preferable) or warn users that the link will open in a new window or tab (acceptable). **Priority 2**

## Design

- You do not have a “print friendly” version of your pages, which prints without menus, logos etc. We recommend the use of a print CSS (Cascading Style Sheet) for this purpose. **Priority 2**
- Main content images are relevant to pages, and have ‘alt’ text. However, not all of your alt text is doing the job it should. One particularly problematic example is the beach flags alt text found on this page:  
<https://www.esfrs.org/your-safety/water-safety-drowning-prevention/>  
The basic rule for all text is that it should convey the same information to a person with a visual impairment as a sighted person takes from the image. This is clearly not so here. In general, text should never be presented in an image, but as HTML text. So, in this example, what should have been done is to have a separate image for each flag, followed by HTML text describing the flag (so an image of a red flag, followed by text stating:  
“Red Flag  
Never go into the water when the red flag is flying”  
And so on for the other flags.  
(This is an interesting case, as you might argue that a someone who needs alt text would not be able to see the flag anyway. However, it is possible that a partially sighted person cannot see your small web image, but would be able to see a full size beach flag.)  
Another problematic example where the alt text is completely inadequate is the “Burning Issue Infogram” on this page:  
<https://www.esfrs.org/business-safety/sprinklers/>  
(You should check for other, similar examples where alt text is inadequate.) **Priority 2** (but approaches Priority 1)

Other (less serious) alt text issues include stating that an image is in image, for instance:

alt="Picture - Stay out of the mud"

alt="Sprinkler logo"

which should just read:

alt="Stay out of the mud"

alt="Sprinkler"

Also, for images which are purely decorative, the null alt text is a better choice, so instead of alt="spacer.png", use alt=""

### **Priority 2**

We recommend that whoever writes your alt text studies this page:

<http://webaim.org/techniques/alttext/>

It is worth observing that alt text is one of the most important accessibility features on the internet, whilst at the same time being one of the most poorly implemented. Please note that writing alt text is not really an IT task, though it is usually performed by IT staff.

- There is good contrast between text and background.

- We are pleased to see that you avoid underlined text, which should not be used as it can be confused with links.
- You make occasional use of block capitals (mainly in top level menu items). Many of these seem to be as a result of using text-transform: uppercase; in your style sheet. We strongly suggest removing all of these from your style sheet. (We advise against use of block capitals as it can make text difficult to read for some site users.) See also:- <http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/services/internet-crystal-mark/website-design-thoughts-on-best-practice/1227-should-you-use-text-transform-uppercase-in-your-style-sheet.html>

### **Priority 3**

- We are pleased to see that you avoid italics, which we advise against as it can make text difficult to read for some site users.
- The pages have a consistent design and layout, with consistent colours.
- You use a good default font size.
- Headings and subheadings are clear.

## **Language**

- The language used is mostly in plain English, appropriate to your audience.
- Grammar and spelling are good throughout the site. Though we did find this typo:  
Rubbish is a ready sources of fuel  
<https://www.esfrs.org/your-safety/arson-reduction/>  
Ensure all text is proofread, preferably by someone other than the author. **Priority 2**

- Be careful that you define all abbreviations **on each page** that uses them. An example of a page with unexplained abbreviations is found here:  
<https://www.esfrs.org/about-us/groups-community-fire-stations/jesip/>  
They are - ACPO, CFOA and AACE

You should define an abbreviation at its first use on the page. We then recommend the use of abbreviation tags for subsequent uses (on that page) of the abbreviation. **Priority 2**

(Incidentally, we recommend abbreviation tags rather than acronym tags for future proofing, as the acronym tag is deprecated in HTML 5.)

- You have a tendency to Capitalise For Importance. Capitalisation should be reserved for the start of sentences and proper nouns only. Several examples of spurious capitalisation can be seen on this page: <https://www.esfrs.org/about-us/publication-of-information/strategies-plans-and-performance-information/medium-term-plan/>

For instance:

“...latest Medium-Term Plan.”

“...a Service”

“...version of this Plan”

“...these Budget pressures”

(This is not an exhaustive list of spurious capitalisations.)

## **Priority 2**

- You make good use of personal pronouns.
- Your pages benefit from use of shorter paragraphs and increased use of white space, which makes it easier for site users to find the information they are looking for.
- You make good use of bulleted lists.
- Links are descriptive – that is, they describe what you are about to do or see, rather than saying ‘click here’.

In the same way that bold text stands out to screen-scanning web users, so does link text. Link text such as ‘click here’ makes no sense out of context, so is useless to users scanning the page. So, make sure the link-text flows seamlessly with the body of the text.

## **Content**

- There is a “News” section.
- Your privacy page is reasonably clear.
- You do not tell the visitor when a page was last updated, except for the News pages, where it is most important. **Priority 3**
- You have good contact information.
- The homepage is clear about whose site it is and who the site is for.

- You provide an 'About us' section giving more details about East Sussex Fire Authority and what it does, which we recommend.

### **Technical**

- Your site is usable with images disabled (but see comments on alt text above).
- Site navigation is usable with CSS disabled.
- The site displayed well in the three main browsers that we tested (Internet Explorer, Chrome and Mozilla Firefox).
- `Site navigation works if JavaScript is disabled.

### **General comments**

A well laid out site, whose options are clear. We have noted a few issues, but most of these are fairly minor. As there are no Priority 1 issues, we can judge the site eligible to apply to display the Internet Crystal Mark, and ask you to give a commitment to deal with the priority 2 issues within six months (probably the most important of these are the alt text issues).