

FIRE & SAFETY BULLETIN

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FIRE SAFETY BILL ANNOUNCED

The proposed Fire Safety Bill builds on action already taken to ensure that people feel safe in their homes, and a tragedy like the Grenfell Tower fire never happens again.

Announced on 19th March 2020, the bill will amend the Fire Safety Order 2005 to clarify that the responsible person or duty-holder for multi-occupied, residential buildings must manage and reduce the risk of fire for:

- ▶ the structure and external walls of the building, including cladding, balconies and windows
- ▶ entrance doors to individual flats that open into common parts

This clarification will empower fire and rescue services to take enforcement action and hold building owners to account if they are not compliant.

Minister for Security James Brokenshire said: "We remain committed to implementing the recommendations made following phase one of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry, and the government has already made major reforms to building safety. Today's bill will help bring about meaningful change to improving building safety."

Chair of the National Fire Chiefs Council Roy Wilsher said: "I am pleased to see the announcement of the new Fire



Safety Bill. We have been calling for additional powers since 2017 and these changes should contribute to the public feeling safer in their homes.

"We look forward to seeing additional supportive measures to assist fire and rescue services, identify different types of cladding and take appropriate measures."

The bill will provide a foundation for secondary legislation to take forward recommendations from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry phase one report. See article 3 below. *(Continued p2)*

Too much complexity

The Fire Industry Association (FIA) has warned that there is too much complexity in fire safety legislation as part of its submission to the review of the Building Regulations.

BUSINESSES ADVISED TO REVIEW FIRE RISK ASSESSMENTS

Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service is advising businesses to review fire risk assessments following the Prime Minister's announcement to restrict movement and close businesses.

Matt White, Staffordshire Fire and Rescue fire safety lead, said: "Under the current Covid-19 guidance, we continue to respond to serious fire safety concerns, however we are calling on business owners to assist in ensuring fire safety standards are maintained while businesses are not operating as they normally would."



FIRE SAFETY BILL ANNOUNCED

(Continued from p1)

Building owners and managers of high-rise and multi-occupied residential buildings should be responsible for a number of areas including:

- ▶ regular inspections of lifts and the reporting of results to the local fire and rescue services
- ▶ ensuring evacuation plans are reviewed and regularly updated and personal evacuation plans are in place for residents whose ability to evacuate may be compromised
- ▶ ensuring fire safety instructions are provided to residents in a form that they can reasonably be expected to understand
- ▶ ensuring individual flat entrance doors, where the external walls of the building have unsafe cladding, comply with current standards

The bill will also give the Secretary of State the powers to amend the list of qualifying premises that fall within

the scope of the Fire Safety Order by way of secondary legislation, enabling the government to respond quickly to developments in the design and construction of buildings.

Alongside the bill, a number of actions are being taken across government to improve building and fire safety including:

- ▶ the announcement by the Secretary of State on 20 January 2020 of a new Building Safety Regulator
- ▶ introduction of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's Building Safety Bill, which will provide clearer accountability and stronger duties on those responsible for high rise buildings
- ▶ £1 billion of grant funding to tackle unsafe cladding systems on high-rise residential buildings over 18 metres in both the private and social sectors
- ▶ the relaunch of the government's **Fire Kills** campaign

GOVERNMENT PROPOSES FIRE DOOR CHECKS EVERY QUARTER



The upcoming fire safety bill is set to stipulate that fire doors in all blocks of flats will need to be checked every three months. Before this is legislated into law the 'Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local

Government (MHCLG) is understood to be asking building owners whether quarterly fire door inspections are feasible, with the aim of making it part of their wide-ranging fire safety reforms'.

This proposed change comes from phase one of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry where Sir Martin Moor-Bick recommended that 'building owners or managers of every residential building containing separate dwellings should "be required by law to carry out checks at not less than three-monthly intervals to ensure that all fire doors are fitted with effective self-closing devices in working order."

LANDLORD FOUND GUILTY OF SIX HOUSING OFFENCES

The landlord of a House in Multiple Occupancy (HMO) in West Watford has been found guilty of six offences under the Housing Act 2004, including fire safety issues.

The offences relate to a property owned by Mr Mohammed Khaliq on Durban Road West in which up to ten people were living in very poor conditions.

Mr Khaliq failed to licence the property and breached regulations by operating a HMO that was unsafe, in a poor state of repair and dirty. The property did not have adequate fire safety arrangements, the kitchen was in poor condition, there was inadequate drainage to a shower and the garden was full of rubbish.

MAN BADLY BURNT BY EXPLODING VAPE

A man was badly burnt and left with scars on his leg after a vape exploded in his pocket when it came into contact with his keys.

Fortunately for contractor Richard Bingham, he was at Whittington Hospital in Upper Holloway, London working when the accident happened and was immediately rushed to A&E for treatment. Richard suffered third degree burns on his left leg.

Now the 37-year-old has joined London Fire Brigade in supporting an Office for Product and Safety Standards campaign which launched on Monday 17th February 2020 to highlight the potential dangers of using vapes.



FIRE SAFETY WARNING AS MILLIONS WORK FROM HOME



A lot of us have now stopped commuting following Government advice to avoid all but essential travel in a bid to try and contain the spread of Covid-19.

With the increased numbers of people at home during the day, London Fire Brigade (LFB) is warning of the potential for more fires as people adapt their daily routines and others are in isolation, and calling for people to think, take action and avoid becoming a further casualty for the NHS.

Firefighters are usually called to a larger number of domestic fires between 6pm and 8pm and there has traditionally been an increase in cooking fires during the weekend

when people are at home for longer periods of time.

However in 2020 the LFB saw an increase in weekday fires and fires earlier in the day so firefighters are warning that common causes of fires in the home such as cooking, smoking, electrical items and heating sources could become even more prevalent as people are spending more time indoors than usual.

The Brigade's Assistant Commissioner for Fire Safety, Dan Daly, said: "It's absolutely vital that in these uncertain and unprecedented times people don't forget about basic fire safety in the home. We can't not inadvertently add pressure to our already challenged NHS."

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19): WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

Stay at home

- ▶ Only go outside for food, health reasons or work (but only if you cannot work from home)
- ▶ If you go out, stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people at all times
- ▶ Wash your hands as soon as you get home

Do not meet others, even friends or family. You can spread the virus even if you don't have symptoms.



Advice for student accommodation residents

If you live in a student accommodation block and you are concerned about your safety from fire, the Fire & Rescue services recommends:

- ▶ Contact your landlord, building owner or university to raise this concern.
- ▶ Should you still be unsatisfied with the response, you can report the building to your local Fire & Rescue Services

To reduce the risk of a fire happening in the first place, the Fire and Rescue Service would like to remind students of important safety tips:

- ▶ Always watch your cooking and don't cook if you have been drinking alcohol
- ▶ Keep candles away from flammable surfaces or textiles
- ▶ Don't overload plug sockets
- ▶ Switch off electrical equipment such as hair straighteners and mobile phone chargers when not in use
- ▶ Know your escape route - the quickest way out and have an alternative
- ▶ If a fire starts, get out, stay out and call 999.

We would like to remind landlords and building owners that they have certain legal obligations when it comes to fire safety and protection of their properties and the safety of people who reside in their premises.



CORONAVIRUS: A JOINT STATEMENT BETWEEN HEALTH & SAFETY EXECUTIVE, THE TRADES UNION CONGRESS AND THE CONFEDERATION OF BRITISH INDUSTRY

This is an extremely worrying time for firms and workers. We know many workers, union representatives and employers have questions and concerns about safe working – especially for those continuing to work away from home.



COVID-19 Coronavirus

This joint statement between the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), the Trades Union Congress (TUC) and the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) is intended to clarify the position. The health and safety of workers remains paramount. Employers are and must continue to provide workers with information about risks to their health and the actions their employers must take.

Social distancing is a key public health measure introduced by Public Health England to reduce the spread of infection. Most employers are going to great lengths to

ensure social distancing wherever possible. The HSE, CBI and TUC wish to publicly support these efforts.

Firms that can safely stay open and support livelihoods should not be forced to close by misunderstandings about government guidance.

But if it comes to the HSE's attention that employers are not complying with the relevant Public Health England guidance (including enabling social distancing where it is practical to do so), HSE will consider a range of actions ranging from providing specific advice to employers through to issuing enforcement notices, including prohibition notices.

Where a worker has a genuine concern about health and safety which cannot be resolved through speaking with their employer or trade union, they should contact the relevant enforcement agency – either their local authority, or the HSE through www.hse.gov.uk/contact/concerns.htm

For firms who are unsure about the guidance, visit www.hse.gov.uk/news/social-distancing-coronavirus.htm

RIDDOR REPORTING OF COVID-19

You must only make a report under RIDDOR (The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013) when:

- ▶ an unintended incident at work has led to someone's possible or actual exposure to coronavirus. This must be reported as a dangerous occurrence, **or**
- ▶ a worker has been diagnosed as having COVID 19 and there is reasonable evidence that it was caused by exposure at work. This must be reported as a case of disease.

More information can be found at: www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/reportable-incidents.htm