

6 August 2009

Letter to LA Chief Executives
Heads of Housing all Local authorities.

Our Ref:
Your Ref:

UPDATE ON FIRE AT LAKANAL HOUSE, CAMBERWELL, LONDON

I wrote to you on 10 July about the Fire at Lakanal House in Camberwell, London and drew your attention to a feature in the building that could undermine the fire protection of the common escape corridors. The purpose of my letter then was to ask that you consider the emerging fire safety issues in the context of the risk assessments that are in place for these or similar types of building.

As we now know, the cause of the fire in Lakanal House has been identified as a faulty television set. Investigations into the reasons behind the rapid spread of the fire are still on-going, and they may take some time to complete. However, we feel that housing providers may benefit from some further advice on scope of the risk assessments that are necessary to ensure an adequate level of fire protection is in place both in the common parts of the building and in the individual dwellings themselves.

One of the areas likely to be subject to investigation is the integrity of the passive fire protection measures following major refurbishment or alterations. With this in mind, you should clearly specify passive fire protection measures when undertaking major refurbishment or alteration works. It is important to ensure these are understood by both the main contractor of the work as well as those contracted to install or alter the protection.

Attached in Annex A is detailed advice on risk assessments, taking fire safety in the common parts of the building under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. It is taken from a recent letter London Fire Brigade have made available to Chief Fire Officers and reflects their knowledge of the incident and of other fires in blocks of flats. This may be of use to you in understanding risk assessments in your stock.

Finally, you may wish to be aware that Sir Ken Knight's Report into the Camberwell fire has been published today and can be found on the Communities website at

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/fire/resilienceresponse/camberwellfire/>

I have asked the Tenant Service Authority to write separately to Registered Social Landlords.

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Yours sincerely

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