

10 July 2009

ALL CHIEF FIRE OFFICERS AND CHAIRS OF FIRE AUTHORITIES**Camberwell Fire, South London – Latest Developments**

Further to my e-mail of 7 July, I am writing to draw your attention to a letter which has been sent today by Terrie Alafat, Director of Housing Delivery and Homelessness in CLG, to all Local Authorities concerning further information that has become available in relation to the fire last Friday at Lakanal House in Camberwell. A copy of this letter is attached. A similar letter is also being sent by the TSA to all Registered Social Landlords.

These letters remind Local Authorities and all social landlords of their existing legal obligations in respect of the fire safety procedures for their housing stock and suggest that landlords may wish to be aware of a particular feature of Lakanal House – a 'scissor style' – block, which may require further consideration of the existing fire safety risk assessments that are in place for these type of premises.

The London Fire Commissioner, Ron Dobson, has also written to all social landlords in London reminding them of their responsibilities under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. A copy of this letter is also attached for information.

You will wish to note that in CLG's letter, social landlords are advised that should they require assistance in reaching appropriate judgements in respect of these specific types of properties, that they may like to contact their local FRA for further information.

Clearly you will wish to have first hand knowledge of the specific fire safety issues which have emerged from the Camberwell incident and LFEPA stand ready to share their working knowledge as far as they are able to should you have any properties of this type in your area. Should you need further information, please contact Assistant Commissioner Steve Turek, Head of Fire Safety Regulation at steve.turek@london-fire.gov.uk

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As you know, the Secretary of State has asked the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser, Sir Ken Knight, to provide an independent overview of progress with the investigations into the fire, and draw out any national implications. He has asked Sir Ken to report back on progress and emerging findings as a matter of urgency.

Guidance on operational procedures remains extant. FRS Circular 54/2008 draws attention to the Generic Risk Assessment on high rise firefighting and includes reference to the need for operational pre-planning under Section 7(2)d of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. If during Sir Ken's ongoing work, any urgent issues arise in relation to current national guidance on operational procedures or firefighter safety, these will be communicated to Fire and Rescue Authorities.

Finally, you will wish to be aware that fire safety advice to residents in these blocks remains unaltered. The Fire Kills website – www.direct.gov.uk/firekills - has further information.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shona Dunn', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Shona Dunn