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To:

The Chief Executive

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GUIDANCE FOLLOWING THE FIRE CASE AT CAMBERWELL LONDON

You will have heard about the tragic accident on Friday 3 July at Lakanal House in Camberwell, London, where 6 people lost their lives as a result of a fire. I wish to reassure all of you that speedy investigations are taking place which will determine the cause and extent of the fire.

The Secretary of State has asked the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser, Sir Ken Knight, to provide an independent overview of progress with the fire investigations at Lakanal House, Havil Street, Camberwell on Friday 3 July. Sir Ken will report back to the Secretary of State on progress and emerging findings as a matter of urgency.

Sir Ken's Terms of Reference for his report include the fire safety matters applicable to this building and operational procedures and practices undertaken by London Fire Brigade at this incident.

Until this work is complete I would appreciate your authority offering some reassurance to tenants.

There are practical measures that you could take such as reminding tenants how to protect themselves from fire, this includes having a working smoke alarm and regularly testing it. If tenants are concerned they can contact their local FRA and the Fire Kills website www.firekills.directgov.co.uk has plenty of up to date fire safety information.

Additional reassurance could be based on your local authority's operation of Part 1 of the Housing Act 2004. It provides for local housing authorities to keep housing conditions across all tenures in their area under review with a view to identifying any action that may need to be taken. The action is taken under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) which is used in evaluating the potential risks to health and safety from any deficiencies identified in dwellings. One of the risks identified is that caused by fire.

The Department provided the HHSRS Operating Guidance in February 2006 to assist you in your role as the enforcing authority for Part 1 of the Act and the Housing Health and Safety System (England) Regulations 2005. The guidance can be found at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/rentingandletting/housinghealth/>

In addition to this, LACORS launched a national fire safety protocol on 23 May 2007 which was developed by the Fire Safety Housing Working Group. The protocol contains guidance on which authority should normally take the lead inspection and enforcement role in different types of properties.

This protocol should form the basis for local strategic level discussions between local authorities and fire authorities. Following such discussions, there is scope to make local adjustments to the protocol to ensure it properly reflects local priorities and reflects the type of housing stock in the locality.

LACORS, CIEH and CFOA launched the guidance in July 2008 which adopts a risk based approach to fire safety that will satisfy both the Housing Act 2004 and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. It includes guidance to landlords on how to carry out a fire risk assessment.

Copies of the guidance can be found at
<http://www.lacors.gov.uk/lacors/ContentDetails.aspx?id=21329>

The need to take action and the nature of the action is a matter for judgement depending on the particular circumstances. However, I wanted to bring this information to your attention so that it can be taken into consideration, where appropriate, in HHSRS assessments that your authority is undertaking.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Healey', with a horizontal line underneath.

JOHN HEALEY MP