

From: Janice Wray
Sent: 05 May 2010 16:48
To: 'COLLETTE.O'HARA@london-fire.gov.uk'
Cc: Tony Ohara; Robert Black; Lornette Pemberton; Alasdair Manson; Sacha Jevans
Subject: Fire at Grenfell Tower - Friday 30th April

Importance: High

Collette

Further to our telephone conversations yesterday about this fire I would advise as follows –

1. It is suspected that the fire on the sixth floor of Grenfell Tower was started deliberately by acquaintances of the resident of flat 64. They allegedly propped bags with recycling (due for collection on Saturday at 8am) against the front door of his flat and set them alight. The communal detection system was triggered and the fire alarm sounded. On hearing the alarm a neighbour came out of her property and used a garden hose to extinguish the fire. The flat entrance door withstood the fire but will be replaced asap.
2. The communal fire detection system is linked to an extraction system and this did operate removing the smoke from the lift lobby. Unfortunately, it appears that there was spillage / leakage of smoke from the extraction system into the lobbies of floors 7, 12, 13, 15, 17, 18, 19 and 20 and this led a number of residents to believe that their lift lobby was smoke logged and they were trapped in their home and as such they telephoned the FB raising their concern .
3. The smoke extraction system is maintained under our fire safety planned preventative maintenance contract with RGE Services. This requires maintenance as per the requirements of the British Standards and as such these vents are subject to quarterly inspection and maintenance. I am advised that the incomplete sealing of a number of the vents had been identified on the most recent inspection visit. The contractors had been asked to submit a quotation for the necessary remedial works to address this problem and this was received on 20th April. I can confirm that a works order was raised the same day for the works to be progressed. Unfortunately, the contractors had some difficulty which they had not foreseen sourcing the required parts and the works were scheduled to start on site yesterday (Tuesday 4th May). As discussed, in retrospect the delay should have caused us to consider what, if any, interim measures were required until repairs were completed and the system was fully operational again. I have spoken to the TMO Senior Engineer and advised that I believe, as a minimum, we should have advised the local Area Housing Team and the local Fire Station Manager of the defect and kept them apprised of progress and completion target for remedial works etc.
4. I can confirm that our engineers and the planned maintenance contractors inspected the system yesterday to identify any damage caused by the fire and none was found. Additionally, the planned remedial works commenced on site yesterday and will take three days to complete. It is therefore, anticipated that the ventilation system will be fully operational again by Friday 7th May.
5. In discussion with the engineers yesterday the issue of the operation of the mechanical fan on the ventilation system came up. I am advised that it is n operated automatically but can be turned on manually by FB personnel or TMO staff once the fire is safely extinguished. I believe that there is signage to advise FB personnel of the existence and operation of this fan, however, our Senior Electrical Engineer will be visiting the block this pm and will investigate what additional signage etc. could be installed to alert operational firefighters to this.
6. The Police arrested an individual yesterday on suspicion of starting the fire maliciously and they were interrogating CCTV footage of the area, however, they have not yet confirmed if this individual is to be charged.
7. You mentioned that there may have been a problem with the lifts at the time of the fire and that specifically they may not have returned to ground lev when called by the FB. ILS our lift maintenance contractors tested the fire fighters override switches etc. on both lifts yesterday and confirmed that both were operating perfectly and lifts had both returned to ground when called as required. Therefore, there does not appear to have been a problem but if further information comes to light then I would be grateful if you could please advise.
8. RBKC have confirmed that they collect recycling from outside flat entrance doors at 8am on Saturday mornings. It is our intention to engage with the residents and RBKC to see if an alternative arrangement for recycling can be introduced.
9. Once permission given by Police that cleaning works could be progressed in the lift lobbies this works were initiated. (yesterday afternoon)
10. I believe there would be some value in our Senior Electrical Engineer meeting with some FB officers at Grenfell Tower to better explore how this syster operates – perhaps within the next few weeks. Presumably it would be most appropriate for my colleagues to meet with some of the operational staff from the local Fire Station. However, we would be grateful for your view on this and your advice on who we should contact.

I hope this is helpful. Please advise if you require anything further.

Janice
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