



News and views from Fire & Security Consultancy Limited

Low income - high risk

People on the lowest incomes tend to be the most vulnerable to the risk of residential fires, research launched during Fire Door Safety Week has revealed.

Just a third (35%) of the lowest income households who rent flats say they have been given information about an emergency fire plan for the building in which they live, compared to 88% of tenants whose incomes exceed £100,000 a year.

The research, which surveyed 1,001 tenants living in flats, also identified an income-related gulf in terms of perception of risk. Only 27% of those with incomes of £25,000 or less feeling safe from fire, compared to 44% of those earning above £80,000.

Twenty-two percent of rented households in the lowest income bracket who expressed fire safety concerns felt unable to move for financial reasons.

A majority of tenants of all incomes (58%) were unaware of the identity of their building's 'responsible person' – the person responsible for fire safety in a given building under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. This figure rises above 70% for lower income tenants.

In more heartening news, 85% of all tenants living in blocks of flats with fire safety concerns have reported their concerns about fire safety.

"If you see a problem, don't walk past – that goes for doors that are wedged open, damaged or badly fitted. Report it to your building manager or landlord or to your local fire and rescue service."

Peter Holland CBE, Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser

"Fire safety in private and public sector rented housing, especially Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and older, less well maintained blocks of flats, continues to be a serious challenge," says Hannah Mansell. "Yet these are often homes for the people with the fewest choices about where they live and the least opportunity to move.

"We frequently see fire doors in blocks of flats in a poor state of repair; fire doors that won't close; fire doors that have been wedged open. This is, of course, just one aspect of fire safety in these buildings, but good fire doors are often a sign of good fire safety generally. We are urging all tenants to carry out a simple 5-step fire door check as a matter of urgency, and to report any concerns to the responsible person, most

likely their landlord, straightaway."

Fire Door Safety Week, which runs from 26 September to 2 October 2016, sets out to raise awareness of the critical role that fire doors play in protecting property and saving lives and to stamp out bad practice. The campaign is organised by the British Woodworking Federation, the BWF-Certifire Scheme and the Fire Door Inspection Scheme, in partnership with the Government's Fire Kills safety campaign.

Says Peter Holland CBE, the Government's Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser: "Fire doors perform a vital role, but only if they are properly specified, installed, managed and maintained.

London Fire Brigade is seeking to redress this lack of awareness about the emergency plan through the Know The Plan campaign which targets tenants in high rise or purpose built blocks of flats.

Dan Daly, Assistant Commissioner for Fire Safety at London Fire Brigade, says: "Living

in a high rise or purpose built block of flats is no more dangerous than living in a house, but it's important to know that your fire plan should be different.

"If there is a fire elsewhere in the building but not inside your home you're safer staying in your flat unless the flames, heat or smoke are affecting you.

"Flats and maisonettes are built to give you some protection from fire: a minimum of 30 minutes and up to 60. Walls, floors and well maintained fire doors will hold back flames and smoke for a time. If you leave your flat you could be rushing into choking smoke, the fire itself or firefighters using equipment to bring the fire under control in another part of the building."

The survey was conducted by Atomik Research on behalf of Fire Door Safety Week.

Are you a tenant or a landlord? Find out more about fire doors and fire safety in residential buildings tenants on the Fire Door Safety Week website.

Time for a change?

Fire and Security Consultancy Ltd are now supplying the **Britannia P50 maintenance free fire extinguisher.**

- No extinguisher engineer visits for 10 years.
- No refill required after 5 years.
- Kitemarked to BS EN3 and CE marked.
- 100% corrosion proof and supplied with a 10 year manufacturer's warranty.

The P50 is simply visually inspected by your own staff once a year - we show them how to do this!

Save up to £350 per fire extinguisher.

Call us now to find out more about the supply and installation of these units

01634 260702



We need your help

The Association for Specialist Fire Protection (ASFP) is seeking assistance from individuals, manufacturers or installers involved in the manufacture and installation of operable fire and smoke curtains to assist it in developing independent guidance on the use and specification of operable curtains.

Having recognised that there is no independent guidance on the use and specification of operable curtains, with currently available guidance limited to manufacturers' literature and short guides on particular end-use applications, the ASFP seeks to address this shortcoming with the production of a 'Colour Book' for operable curtains.

The new document will form part of the ASFP's popular Colour Books range, which contains detailed information on the use, specification, fire testing and certification of various passive fire protection products, together with information on legislation relevant to the product concerned, such as Building Regulations and Risk Assessment legislation. Documents in the range include the ASFP 'Yellow Book' – Fire protection for structural steel in buildings; the ASFP 'Red Book' – Fire-stopping: Linear joint seals, penetration seals and small cavity barriers and the ASFP 'Grey Book' – Fire dampers (European standards).

The 'Colour Books' are referenced as suitable guidance in Building Regulations statutory documents such as Approved Document B and are available for free download from the ASFP website at <http://is.gd/IZRRLz>. Each contains lists of products whose fire performance has been independently verified. Manufacturing members of the ASFP can – after completing the applicable verification process – list their products in the appropriate Colour Book, thus creating a link between their products and the Building Regulations.

The recent inclusion in the ASFP's membership of one of the major UK manufacturers of operable curtains – Coopers Fire – has provided the technical impetus needed to commence work on 'Colour Book' for operable curtains. However, in order to ensure the widest acceptance by the market, the ASFP is additionally seeking selected organisations and individuals outside of its current membership to assist with the production of the guidance.

Participation will normally comprise a small number of half day meetings to work on a draft document. There will be no reimbursement for time or expenses incurred in attending meetings, but all contributors will get an acknowledgment in the document's Foreword. Any interested organisations should contact the ASFP Technical Officer Niall Rowan for further information ; email: niall.rowan@asfp.org.uk

The ASFP represents manufacturers and installers of passive fire protection products. It promotes excellence in the design and installation of passive fire protection through high quality technical expertise and by educating and training all those involved in the development, specification and use of 'Built-In' passive fire protection. For further information about the ASFP, visit www.asfp.org.uk

Based in County Durham, the manufacturers of the Agrippa fire door holder and closer launched the wire-free range at the International Trade Show, Firex.

Three years on, sales of the Agrippa devices have gone from strength to strength. Here we look at what makes them stand out from the rest.

Until now, the reliability of wire-free fire door holding and closing devices has been questioned by fire safety professionals due to false activations and damage caused to soft furnishings and the fire door itself. It was in response to these concerns that innovators of fire safety products, Geofire developed its unique 'listen and learn' technology. This advanced pre-programming means that the devices pre-record the sound of the building's specific fire alarm and only release the fire door should they hear this particular sound.

Geofire's Agrippa range of wire-free fire door holders and closers have been very popular in environments where minimal disruption is desired such as care homes, schools and hotels. The cleverly designed battery-powered units mean that there is no need to re-wire a building's current fire door activation system. The devices can be fitted in a matter of minutes and are even complete with a handy, step-by-step installation video.

Both products are hygienically installed at the top of the door, ensuring there is no damage to floors/carpets or any warping of the fire door. It is often beneficial in such environments to hold open fire doors to ease access and increase ventilation during busy periods, where as many building facilities managers fall into the trap of wedging open fire doors without realising they could be prosecuted for doing so.



The Agrippa fire door holder is a simple solution to holding open internal fire doors. It is competitively priced and easy to install. The holder is particularly useful for holding open fire doors in corridors and there are many accessories available including chain keepers and extension brackets for non-standard installations.

The Agrippa fire door closer is a swing-free device which allows the fire door to be held open in any position. It will make the door resistance-free and so it will feel light and easy to move. The closer has been installed into care homes in the UK to reduce isolation for residents in their rooms.

Last but by no means least, the devices comes supplied with two C-cell batteries, can be programmed for daily release, have a battery life indicator and both products are approved to EN1155 and CE marked. For more information go to www.geofire.co.uk or call 01388 770 360.

GEOFIRE
INNOVATORS OF FIRE TECHNOLOGY

Design measures taken to optimise energy efficiency in residential developments are potentially making balconies a greater fire risk, a report from BRE Global has concluded.

Read the full details on the next page.



Conducted for the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG), 'Fire safety issues with balconies' found that methods deployed to meet Part L of the building regulations – such as improving insulation and preventing thermal bridging – may be compromising fire safety as stipulated by Part B.

This unforeseen trade-off between compliance with Part L and Part B was evident in several case studies cited in the report.

Fire damage to 16-storey block of flats caused by holes in compartmentation on balconies. In one case a fire began on a concrete balcony with timber decking and timber battens, which were underlain by polyethylene spacer rings and foam insulation covered by a woven plastic sheet. Insulation behind cladding systems on external walls and expanded polystyrene insulation behind a render on the balcony ceiling played a role in the fire's spread, which ultimately encompassed the decking of an adjacent flat's balcony.

The provision of outside space has been central to the rehabilitation of high-rise living, while the housing crisis has made the economic case for building multi-storey apartment blocks irresistible

Too wide open to interpretation

The report also found that Part B fails to provide specific fire design guidance for balconies, except where they can provide a means of escape. Lacking statutory requirements that account for the role of balconies in the external spread of fire, the building regulations are too wide open to interpretation, the report concludes.

BRE also found that fires that start on a balcony can spread, via windows, to the balcony and flat above, while inappropriate cladding material can promote the spread of fire up the building's entire façade. This can result in falling, burning debris, potentially spreading the fire to adjacent buildings.

As yet, no fatalities have been attributed to a balcony fire. However, BRE Global urges designers, specifiers, property developers, managers, risk assessors and firefighters to give heed the lessons of their investigations.

BRE Global reported on six fire incidents involving balconies in 2015 compared with just one in 2005. This number is sure to grow with high-rise living undergoing a renaissance.

Once synonymous with deprivation and social isolation – a legacy of the profusion of ugly 1960s tower blocks – many new developments are now pitched at the top end of the market.

The provision of outside space has been central to the rehabilitation of high-rise living, while the housing crisis and high land prices have made the economic case for building multi-storey apartment blocks irresistible.

Three quarters of the 436 towers scheduled for construction in London will be used at least partially for residential purposes, according to think-tank New London Architecture (NLA).

Last month an Enfield based care home was criticised for fire-safety negligence after a surprise visit by the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

While the subsequent report was not entirely negative – the home was praised for improvements “in identifying and assessing risks to people” – it's a salutary reminder of the importance of maintaining high standards when it comes to fire safety in accommodation housing vulnerable residents with limited mobility.

The report on Elmhurst Residential Home, which is home to 14 residents with dementia, concluded that: “Most staff had not received training in fire safety and staff were not aware on how to evacuate people that lacked in mobility living in the upper floors.

“We found a person was high risk of causing fire; risk assessment had not been completed to mitigate this risk. Fire evacuation equipment had not been installed to evacuate people in the event of a fire.”

“If you are opening a new care home, install a life safety sprinkler system. Without or without sprinklers, if you already have a care home, carry out fire drills twice a year. The residents' safety comes first, but make fire drills as realistic for the staff as possible and learn lessons so that every fire drill goes better than the last one.” Dave Sibert, IRMP advisor at the Fire Brigades' Union

A number of punitive fines handed down since the Regulatory Reform Fire Safety Order came into force in 2005 have shown that neglecting fire safety can be expensive as well as potentially fatal to residents. The costs of complying with the RRO pale in comparison to the size of the fines – which range from tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands.

5 care home case studies that show the enormous costs of fire-safety negligence

Rosepark care home, 2004 – 14 dead, no prosecutions

Fourteen elderly residents lost their lives in 31 January 2004 after an earth fault in a cable passing through an electrical distribution board caused a fire in Rosepark Care Home in Uddingston, South Lanarkshire.

Occurring shortly before the RRO came into force the case has been a cause celebre in the fire safety industry.

A damning 2011 inquiry into the blaze concluded that: “The management of fire safety at Rosepark was systematically and seriously defective. The deficiencies in the management of fire safety at Rosepark contributed to the deaths. Management did not have a proper appreciation of its role and responsibilities in relation to issues of fire safety.”

Although the 141-day probe into the tragedy found that “some or all” of the deaths could have been prevented if the home had a “suitable and sufficient” fire-safety plan, two prosecutions of the home's owners were dismissed in 2007 and 2008. Specific failings included a lack of fire dampeners, “inadequate arrangements” for calling the fire brigade and “limited attention” paid to evacuation procedure.

“While Scotland has clearly responded well to the Rosepark fire by requiring that all new care homes are provided with sprinkler systems, England has behaved as if the Rosepark care home was located in Papua New Guinea and the fire there had no relevance to the safety of some of the most vulnerable people in the country.

There has been piecemeal implementation of some measures, but there was no coherent common response by government, fire and rescue services or

the wider fire sector.” Dave Sibert, IRMP advisor, Fire Brigades' Union

DM Care Ltd, 2012 – £35,000 fine

Fire broke out at the The Ambassador Care Home in Blackpool in January 2012. Forty residents and staff were evacuated and fortunately there were no injuries or fatalities.

But that didn't mean the care home's owner – DM Care Limited – were off the hook. They were fined £35,000 for fire-safety breaches including an absence of approved fire protection systems and alarms.

“The sentencing of DM Care is the culmination of a fire safety inspection in the aftermath of a fire which disclosed significant breaches of fire safety regulations that the prosecuting magistrate said could so easily have resulted in the loss of life,” said Paul Ratcliffe, protection support manager for Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service, after the fine was handed down.

Morven Healthcare Limited, 2014 – £45,000 fine

The London Fire Brigade (LFB) prosecuted Morven Healthcare Ltd for multiple fire safety failings at Morven House in Kenley, Surrey. Pleading guilty to of five offences under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order in May 2014 the care home company was slapped with a 45,000 fine.

Problems identified by the LFB at the home, which housed 17 residents including elderly people with dementia and disabilities, included: blocked fire exits, an out-of-date fire risk assessment, an inadequate fire detection system and an absence of an emergency plan in the event of fire.

Commenting on the case LFB's Deputy Commissioner Rita Dexter said: “Families entrust the care of their loved ones to homes such as this one and to find people being put at risk from fire in this way, in

places where they should be safe, is truly shocking.”

“We’re looking at the management of fire risk and it’s proven that if they’re poorly managing their fire risk then they might be poorly managing some of their other services. So we share data with the CQC about where we’ve found poor management.” Nick Coombe, who provides fire-safety management support, audit and performance at the London Fire Brigade

Donwell House Care Home, 2014 – £380,000 fine

Five breaches of fire safety rules landed the operators of Donwell House Care Home in Wearside with a £380,000 fine at Newcastle Crown Court in 2014.

Following a fire that broke out in the bedroom of one of the residents, Tyne & Wear Fire and Rescue Service discovered that fire doors in the property had been wedged open, allowing smoke and heat to escape the bedroom and fill the adjacent corridor. Firefighters rescued the resident via a first-floor window.

Inspectors discovered the operator – Shaftesbury Care Group Ltd – had failed to act on recommendations made in its fire risk assessment, including installing electronic devices to operate the opening and closing of fire doors.

They had also failed to replace fire extinguishers condemned by a contractor – nearly half of the extinguishers in the building.

Shaftesbury Care Group pleaded guilty and was ordered to pay a £380,000 fine plus £29,222 in costs.

Bowland Lodge, 2011 – £18,750 fine

Tirsul Ltd was ordered by Newcastle Magistrates Court to pay £18,750 in fines and £1,600 in costs for five contraventions of fire safety law at Bowland Lodge in 2011.

Following a fire at the property on 18 August 2009, fire safety officers reported a failure to conduct a suitable risk assessment, a lack of compartmentation to prevent fire spread and an unsafe external escape route because of building work. They also found that floors, walls and ceilings were inadequately maintained.

Linda Parkin, manager of the care home, was also fined £2,000 plus £400 costs after pleading guilty to one charge relating to a locked fire exit – showing that individuals as well as companies can be held culpable for failings. Officers found the fire exit nailed shut with a padlock fitted.

From exploding e-cigarettes to hoverboards, the crisis surrounding Samsung’s latest smartphone is just the latest in a long line of faulty electrical goods that put consumers at risk.

The Samsung Galaxy Note 7 recall shows that even the biggest reputations can’t guarantee that products meet basic safety standards.

Samsung has had such a successful few years that – at least until this PR disaster – it was widely seen as edging out Apple in the smartphone war.

But its reputation has taken a major hit after reports emerged that its latest model, the Samsung Galaxy Note 7, was prone to catching fire.

However, buying recognised brands is still generally the best way of protecting yourself – not least because any problems, which are incredibly rare, will be quickly spotted and recalls announced. Electrical appliances that cause fires are often cheap, shoddy imports, as seen with the recent spate of e-cigarette fires.

The Samsung and e-cigarette cases are two of the five examples outlined below where electrical products caused fires or were recalled because they were identified as a fire hazard.

Samsung Galaxy Note 7

Lauded in previews as a game-changing model Samsung’s Galaxy Note 7 hit the headlines for rather different reasons when it was launched in September: its batteries were prone to overheating. The South Korean electronics giant issued a mass recall, but even replacement handsets sent out by the company, which has barely put a foot wrong in the mobile market in recent years, failed to resolve the problems.

One replacement Galaxy Note 7 caught fire on a Southwest Airlines plane due to fly from Kentucky to Maryland. “A customer reported smoke emitting from an electronic device,” a Southwest Airlines spokesperson told the BBC. “All customers and crew deplaned safely via the main cabin door.”

Even a second replacement device sent out by the company encountered similar problems. A man in Kentucky said he was “scared to death” when he woke to a bedroom full of smoke, local media said.

E-cigarettes

Cigarettes were always an obvious fire hazard, but their electronic successors are also a growing cause for concern.

Burns surgeons, fire chiefs and trading standards officers have warned consumers to be careful after a spate of incidents where vaporisers – the chamber in which e-cigarette liquids are turned into vapour – have exploded. Plastic surgeons at Morriston Hospital’s Welsh Centre for Burns and Plastic Surgery in Swansea said they had treated five patients for burns after e-cigarette batteries exploded.

“Before this year we hadn’t seen any injuries like this,” consultant plastic surgeon Dai Nguyen told Sky News. Three of the patients had their devices in their trouser pockets when they exploded.

IFSEC Global reported on the problem back in 2014. In once incident a man in Florida lost part of his tongue and several teeth when an e-cigarette exploded in his mouth. E-cigarettes were also implicated in the death of a woman at a Derbyshire care home in 2013.

West Yorkshire FRS issued the following guidance to users of e-cigarettes in 2014:

- Only use the charger supplied with your kit
- Do not mix and match components from different e-cigarette manufacturers
- Never over-tighten a battery on to the charger – plug the charger in first, then gently screw the battery in until the light on the charger flashes, and then stop
- Never leave e-cigarettes unattended whilst charging
- Clean the battery centre pin and charger contact at least once a week with tissue or alcohol wipes.
- Remove the battery from charger when fully charged

Hoverboards

More than 500,000 hoverboards have been recalled in the US after multiple reports of the products catching fire.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has received 99 reports of hoverboard battery packs exploding or catching fire. Several people sustained burns to the neck, legs or arms, according to the CPSC.

Search ‘hoverboard fire’ on YouTube and you’ll find numerous videos showing the curiously named (they don’t hover), two-wheeled motorised scooters emitting smoke and catching fire.

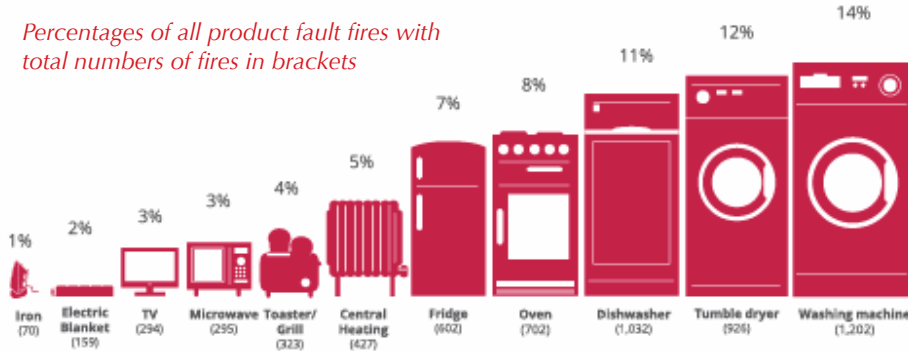
The gadgets have already been banned in several airports, rail stations and college campuses because of safety fears.

Totalling 267,000, a company called Swagway had the most recalled hoverboards, with Keenford’s iMoto hoverboards, Hoverboard LLC’s Powerboard and Razor USA’s Hovertrax also prominent in the list of recalls.

Washing machines

Washing machines account for more house fires than any other electrical appliance. Of all fires caused by product faults washing machines made up 14%, tumble dryers 12% and dishwashers 11%, according to figures from Which Magazine.

Percentages of all product fault fires with total numbers of fires in brackets



The Electrical Safety Council found that the average level of success was only 10 to 20% for product recalls in the UK.

Alarming, Which also discovered that 5% of consumers who knew about a product recall decided to continue using the product anyway. Two-thirds contacted the company for a repair or a refund, while a quarter said they stopped using the product or threw it away.

As well as through media reports, consumers can find out about recalls if they've registered their purchase. However, consumers are wary of doing so lest they sign themselves up to an influx of "extended warranty" offers.

In March we reported that faulty tumble dryers that were found to be a fire risk could be in use for another nine months

after Whirlpool said some repairs might have to wait until January 2017. It had already been five months since the firm revealed that two types of driers – condensed and vented dryers made by Indesit between April 2004 and September 2015 – had allowed dangerous levels of lint to build up against the heating element in tests.

Whirlpool risked further anger by advising consumers that they could continue to use the machines so long as they cleaned the lint filter after every cycle and didn't leave their dryers unattended during operation.

Laptops

"If you've bought an HP or Compaq laptop in the last three years, its battery could be a fire risk," Which Magazine reported in July.

HP confirmed that batteries supplied over this period have "the potential to overheat, posing a fire and burn hazard to customers." Owners of affected ProBook, Envy, Presario, Pavilion Notebook and other HP and Compaq models were encouraged to stop using their laptops immediately.



You could be at risk, said Which, if you bought an HP or Compaq laptop between March 2013 and August 2015. Which urged consumers to check the barcode on the battery itself (but only after turning off your laptop and disconnecting it from the mains).

If the barcode starts with any combinations listed on the image on the right, then you are advised to visit the HP website to confirm whether your laptop is afflicted with the overheating problem. Batteries validated as faulty will be replaced free of charge by the company.

HP insists, however, that less than 1% of all laptops sold in the above time period are affected.

'tis the season...

As another year draws to a close, I'd like to wish you a very merry Christmas and a safe and prosperous new year. I, and the team here at Fire and Security Consultancy Ltd, very much look forward to working with you in 2017.

I'll leave you with this little festive story which I hope will warm your heart, raise a smile, and make you think a little harder about that gift you intend to buy for your loved one!

Richard Burfoot-Reed

After being away on business for a couple of weeks before Christmas, Tom thought it would be nice to bring his wife a little gift.

"How about some perfume?" he asked the girl on the cosmetics counter.

She showed him a bottle costing £50.

"Mmmm....that's a bit much," said Tom, "have you anything else?"

She returned with a smaller bottle for £30.

"That's still quite a lot." Tom whined.

Growing disgusted, the girl brought out a tiny £10 bottle.

Tom frowned, "What I mean," he said, "is I'd like to see something really cheap."

So the girl handed him a mirror.

