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PFPF calls for action following Lakanal House fire report

The Passive Fire Protection Federation (PFPF) is calling for prompt action to improve public safety in all types of buildings following the report on the Lakanal House fire.

David Sugden, Chairman of the PFPF believes two areas urgently need to be addressed: "How to reduce risk to levels that are "suitable and sufficient" and how to bring older properties up to modern standards, without knocking down and starting again, are fundamental issues that the government must look at in detail. We may not solve these problems straight away but it is essential that they are on the agenda. The PFPF is available to assist the Regulators in any way at this time."

Released on Friday by John Denham, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, the report acknowledges the fundamental roles that built-in or "passive" fire protection and compartmentation play in the Fire Strategy of buildings (Section 5.4). David Sugden adds: "These have been required by the Building Regulations for many years and the industry produces comprehensive guidance. This includes a programme of Third Party Certification schemes that enable regulators, the client and any contractors working for a client, to ensure that the correct products are installed by suitably qualified people. The fire protection industry has long promoted this but the wider construction trades must also come on board."

Sir Ken Knight, London Fire Commissioner and the author of the Lakanal House report also stresses the importance of the Risk Assessment that is required by the Fire Safety Order. "On completion and handover of a new building it is assumed that all built-in fire safety measures, including Compartmentation are in place," explains David. "The

first Risk Assessment must be done on occupation: there is no period of grace. The owner and occupiers will, over time, make changes to services and other areas that may compromise compartmentation by creating breaches. It is the role of the Risk Assessment to examine changes to the building and ensure that suitable mitigation is in place. This must be done as and when ANY changes are made. It could be a criminal offence for the Risk Assessment to be inadequate in this respect.

“Above all, Risk Assessments needs specialist knowledge and expertise, and it takes a competent risk assessor to recognise that and to know where to get that guidance. The benchmark on all matters concerning built-in or passive fire precautions in buildings should be Approved Document B of the Building Regulations.”

Extensive guidance on best practice when designing with and using passive fire protection systems is also available from www.pfpf.org and from each of its member associations.

END

432 words

Image attached: David Sugden, Chairman of the Passive Fire Protection Federation

Issued on behalf of:
David Sugden, **Passive Fire Protection Federation**, Kingsley House, Ganders Business Park, Kingsley, Bordon, Hampshire GU35 9LU Tel: 01420 471621
Email: pfpf@associationhouse.org.uk
Press enquiries to:
Jane Rigby, MRA Marketing, 15 Market Street, Wotton-under-Edge, GL12 7AE
Tel: 01453 521621 Email: jane@521621.com

Editors’ notes: The Passive Fire Protection Federation (PFPF - www.pfpf.org) is dedicated to growing awareness and giving advice on fire protection, and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (RRO). The Federation brings together the collective expertise of the passive fire protection industry and provides a central forum so that the Industry speaks with one voice to articulate the benefits and value of passive fire protection in the achievement of fire safe building design and construction.

Passive fire protection is the primary measure integrated within the constructional fabric of a building to provide inherent fire safety and protection by responding against flame, heat and smoke to maintain the fundamental requirements of building compartmentation, structural stability, fire separation and safe means of escape.

Passive fire protection measures achieve their intended purpose by raising the fire resistance of the structure, protecting the structure against the effects of fire, reducing fire spread through secondary ignition, limiting the movement of flame and smoke, and minimising the danger of fire-induced collapse or structural distortion.

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