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Fire Service review must include building safety check

“Ignorance of fire safety is endangering lives”

Any restructuring of the way the Fire Service works must include a ‘health check’ of the buildings they protect, according to the Passive Fire Protection Federation (PFPF). David Sugden, Chairman of the PFPF, said that inadequate risk assessments and poorly installed and maintained fire protection pose a growing risk to fire fighters and to the public.

“Fire fighters are naturally concerned that their job is made more hazardous and the public put in danger because our built environment is not up to standard,” commented David Sugden “But while the existing regulations and guidance are robust, compliance is poor. Built-in or ‘passive’ fire protection such as fire doors, fire-resistant glazing and fire-resistant insulation and basic principles such as compartmentation are compromised from initial construction to ongoing maintenance. Certified products are substituted for cheaper, non-certified versions in construction while many Risk Assessors don’t know what to look for, or how to maintain fire protection measures so they remain resistant to fires. Simply put, ignorance of fire safety is endangering lives.”

Nick Coombe, speaking on behalf of the Chief Fire Officers Association at the exhibition Firex North, said that one of the main problems with Risk Assessors was their failure to understand passive fire protection and that they often mistakenly thought that putting in a fire alarm compensated.

David Sugden added: “The construction industry and any business owner must take responsibility for fire safety. Specifiers and developers must insist on using products

and installers who are certified by independent, third party schemes. Meanwhile existing buildings can be brought up to modern safety standards by ongoing and thorough Risk Assessment using qualified and experienced assessors. Six people died in last year's tragic fire at Lakanal House, very likely because the built-in fire protection of the building had been destroyed over the years thanks to routine refurbishment. We can't allow this to happen again."

For more information and guidance on fire protection and Risk Assessments visit www.pfpp.org.

END

337 words

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

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Editors' notes: The PFPF (www.pfpp.org) is the body for the built-in fire protection industry, and is dedicated to growing awareness on fire protection, and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Membership includes the Chief Fire Officers Association, the DCLG, Local Authority Building Control and the Fire Test Study Group (UK) Ltd.

The PFPF Strategy Group includes members who were involved professionally in previous disasters such as the Summerlands Leisure Centre, Kings Cross, write for the trade and fire service media and recently appeared on television commenting on the Channel Tunnel fire and the tragic fire at Lakanal House. **For informed, unbiased and professional comment please contact Jane Rigby at MRA Marketing on jane@521621.com who will put you in touch with the relevant person.**

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