

20

1988 > 1989 > 1990 > 1991 > 1992 > 1993 > 1994 > 1995 > 1996 > 1997 > 1998 > 1999 > 2000 >

SAFER HOUSES

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF FIRE PREVENTION IN THE HOME

Department for Communities and Local Government
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London
SW1E 5DU
Telephone: 020 7944 4400

Website: www.communities.gov.uk

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PO Box 236
Wetherby
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Tel: 0300 123 1124

Fax: 0300 123 1125

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SAFER HOUSES – 20 YEARS OF FIRE PREVENTION IN THE HOME

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Note: The name 'fire and rescue services' came into use as part of the Fire and Rescue Services Act in 2004, before which they were known as 'fire services'. Some of the extracts and quotes in this document that pre-date this name change refer to the service by its old name.



Sadiq Khan

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
Communities and Local Government

“...FIRE-RELATED DEATHS IN THE HOME ARE AT THEIR LOWEST SINCE THE 1950s.”

02

Maintaining the safety and well-being of the general public sits at the very heart of responsible government and we work tirelessly to ensure communities are safe. Protecting people from the dangers of fire is a vital part of that work.

Therefore I'm delighted to provide a foreword for this document, which sets out how we have significantly improved fire safety in the home over the last 20 years.

In the UK we have a strong record in fire prevention. Four out of five people now have a smoke alarm in their home, and the latest statistics show that fire-related deaths in the home are at their lowest since the 1950s.

This is a terrific achievement, especially as the population is much larger now than it

was in the 1950s. It's even more impressive when you consider that we're an ageing population, with many more people at higher risk from fire due to age and infirmity.

Our success has not gone unnoticed outside the UK, with the Japanese and US Governments knocking on our door to find out more about our approach to fire prevention. With recognition at home and now abroad, it's particularly timely that we celebrate our collective successes and achievements in improving fire safety, and reducing preventable deaths. We have a strong story to tell; we should tell it and celebrate it.

This document highlights how the partnership between central government and fire and rescue services has played

a vital part in our achievements so far. But we must not be complacent; there is still much work to be done, and this unique partnership must continue to thrive if we're going to build on our success.



Gareth Thomas

Minister for Trade, Investment and Consumer Affairs
Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform

"I'M PARTICULARLY PROUD OF THE PART OUR DOMESTIC FURNITURE FIRE REGULATIONS HAVE PLAYED IN DRIVING DOWN INJURIES AND DEATHS FROM HOUSE FIRES."

We have been very successful in improving fire safety in UK homes over the past 20 years, and I'm particularly proud of the part our domestic furniture fire regulations have played in driving down injuries and deaths from house fires.

The 1980s saw a worrying increase in the number of tragic deaths and serious injuries caused by furniture filled with highly combustible foam catching light. In response, the Government and industry worked together with fire and rescue services, enforcement authorities and consumer groups to quickly draw up regulations which to date have saved hundreds of lives and prevented thousands of injuries.

I would like to take this opportunity to further thank the fire and rescue services

for their courageous work in saving lives in household fires. Without their dedication and bravery, the extra escape time bought by the furniture regulations would mean nothing.

I'd also like to thank Trading Standards, who have done a great job in enforcing the regulations for the past 20 years. The latest Government report shows that in a five-year period they successfully secured nearly 100 convictions against suppliers selling illegal and dangerously inflammable furniture to the UK public. Also, because the regulations cover second hand furniture in rented accommodation, and nursery items including prams and pushchairs, Trading Standards have been able to provide greater protection to some of our more vulnerable citizens.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the important contribution made by the furniture industry, the BSI, test laboratories, consumer groups, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents and individual experts. All of these groups have helped ensure the life-saving furniture regulations continue to be effective.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gareth Thomas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The background of the slide is a dark, almost black, space filled with wisps of bright yellow and orange smoke. The smoke rises from the bottom right, swirling and billowing upwards and to the left, creating a sense of movement and heat. The smoke is semi-transparent, allowing the dark background to show through.

**WE'VE COME A VERY LONG WAY AND SEEN
A SIGNIFICANT DROP IN THE NUMBER OF
FIRE-RELATED DEATHS IN THE HOME**

1988 > 1989 > 1990 > 1991 > 1992 > 1993 > 1994 > 1995 > 1996 > 1997 > 1998 > 1999

INTRODUCTION

This document celebrates 20 years of hard work to improve fire safety in the home. It sets out a chronology illustrating the wide range of activity that has taken place – from government reports and regulations, to nationwide advertising campaigns.

We have taken 1988 as a starting point, as it marks the introduction of the groundbreaking fire safety regulations for furniture and furnishings, and the beginning of a national media campaign to promote key fire safety messages.

Since then we've come a very long way and seen a significant drop in the number of fire-related deaths in the home.

Of course fire safety in the home didn't start in 1988, and we briefly look back

at some of the activity that took place in previous years. But we have focused on the last 20 years, as much has been achieved in that time – in so many areas.

Past successes, future ambitions

The following pages highlight some of the key milestones, and the impact they've had on fire safety between 1988 and 2008. We will begin, however, with a look back at the work before 1988.

Our main focus is on the work government has done by collaborating with fire and rescue services and other stakeholders in this area. Communities and Local Government is now only responsible for the safety in England. However, before devolution, the predecessor departments have also had responsibility for fire safety in Wales.

And, as we reflect on what has already been achieved, we set out our ambitions for the future and look forward to another 20 years of safer houses.

We hope you'll find this an interesting read, perhaps reminding you of successful work you've been involved in yourself.



**FIRE-RELATED DEATHS IN THE HOME HAVE
REDUCED BY AROUND 400 SINCE 1988**

1988 > 1989 > 1990 > 1991 > 1992 > 1993 > 1994 > 1995 > 1996 > 1997 > 1998 > 1999

A HISTORY OF FIRE PREVENTION



Before 1988, government published regular material about fire safety, but it didn't have the same impact as the work done since.

1960s

During the 1960s, for example, the number of domestic fire-related deaths in the UK rose from around 400 at the start of the decade to almost 700 by the end. The numbers continued to rise over the following two decades, despite a greater focus on fire safety from government.

1970s

During the 1970s, messages around fire safety were very similar. The language and graphics changed slightly to reflect new styles, but broadly the material was the same. Interestingly, there was no mention of smoke alarms, which



became a prominent feature of more recent publications.

One significant change during those 10 years was the increased focus on cigarettes. A 1970 government leaflet only mentions cigarettes when warning the elderly not to smoke in bed. By 1980, the message was directed at a broader audience, and covered other areas of the home – the living room, garages and workshops.

Yet despite improvements to the material being produced, the number of deaths continued to rise, passing 800 by the end of the 1970s.

1980s

In 1985, the style of the material changed to a very stark black and white cover,

with the equally stark message that the reader will not be equipped to deal with a fire. A new logo also appeared during this year, moving away from the 'Danger From Fire' approach of earlier leaflets.

In the early 1980s the number of fire-related deaths in the home gradually fell back below 800, but was still worryingly high. By 1988, the year that marks the starting point for this document, there were 731 deaths in the UK. Since then numbers in the UK have fallen below 400 – the lowest for 40 years. The fire statistics for England alone also show a downward trend: the number of lives lost to fire deaths in 2006 was down to 287.

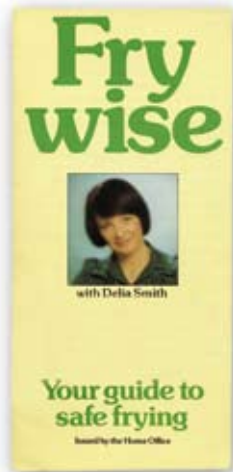


IN 2003, CHIP PAN FIRES FELL BY 23 PER CENT ON THE 1998-2002 AVERAGE

1988 > 1989 > 1990 > 1991 > 1992 > 1993 > 1994 > 1995 > 1996 > 1997 > 1998 > 1999

A HISTORY OF FIRE PREVENTION

(cont)



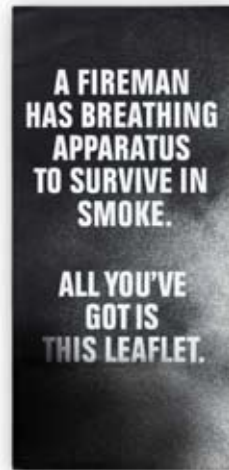
Fry safely

One specific message that has changed since the 1970s is what to do if a chip pan catches fire.

Advice stayed the same during the 1970s and 1980s, when people were encouraged to place a wet tea towel over the flames – as demonstrated by Delia Smith in 1983's *Your Guide to Safe Frying*.

But in the 1990s, fire and rescue services began to recommend that the public should not try to tackle chip fires at all, which was consistent with advice on other fires in the home.

When the kitchen fire safety campaign, *Fire Starts when your Attention Stops*, was last run in 2003, chip pan fires fell by 23 per cent on the 1998-2002 average.



Most recently, in 2008, official government advice was updated, based on these new recommendations. The new version of the Fire Safety in the Home leaflet – the lead piece of literature in the Fire Kills campaign range – now contains these key messages:

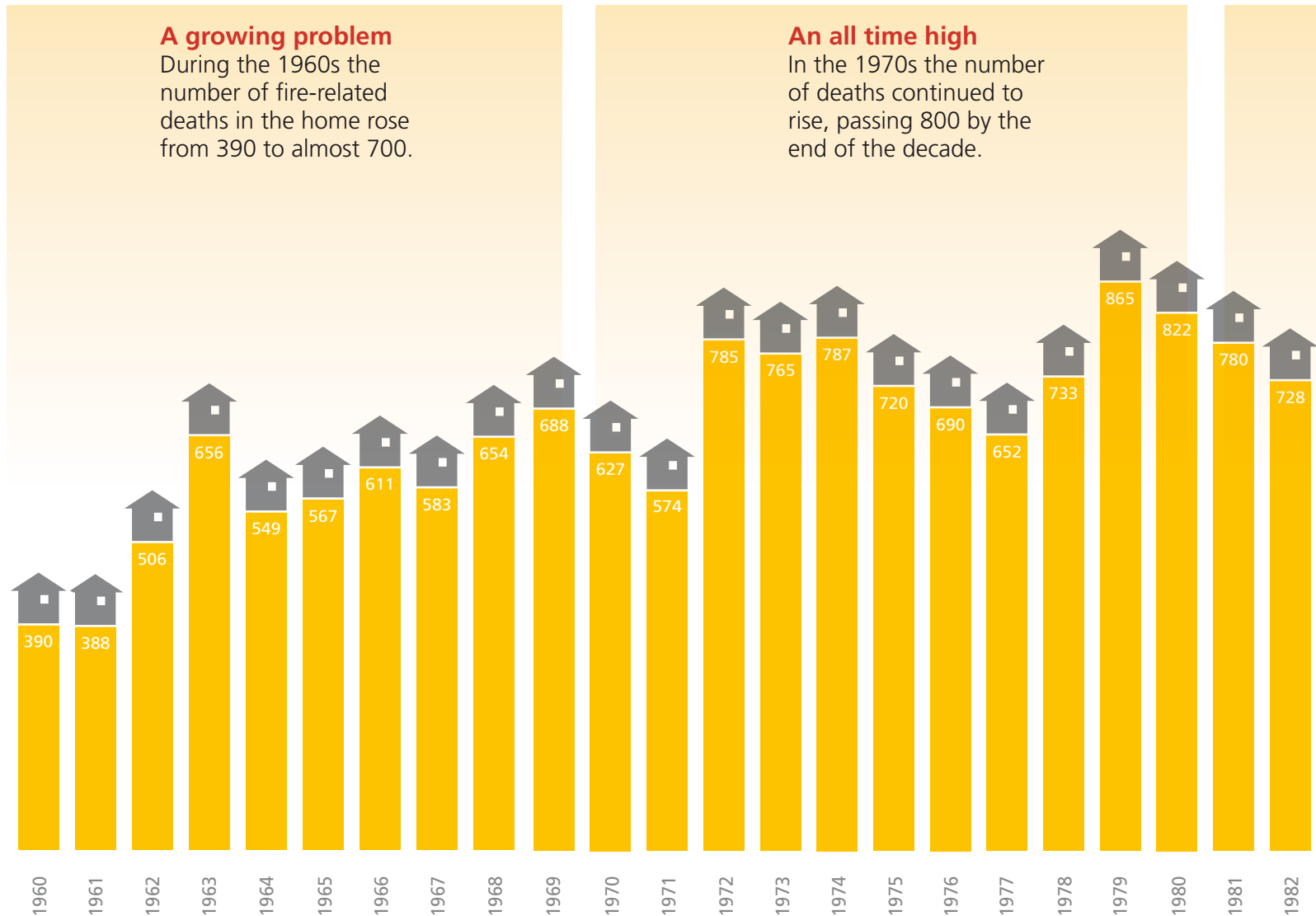
- Don't take any risks. Turn off the heat if it's safe to do so. Never throw water over it
- Don't tackle the fire yourself
- Get out, stay out, and call 999.

THE BIG PICTURE

The graph below shows how many domestic fire-related deaths there have been each year in the UK since 1960.

As you can see, the annual total has fallen by over 50 per cent since 1988 – showing just how effective the work carried out in that period has been.

10



A gradual reduction

The 1980s saw a slight improvement, but there were still 731 deaths in 1988.

The downward trend

The numbers since 1988 have shown a real downward trend, thanks to the work outlined in this document.

Fireproofing furniture

The Furniture and Furnishing Regulations saved at least 710 lives between 1988 and 1997.

Butts out

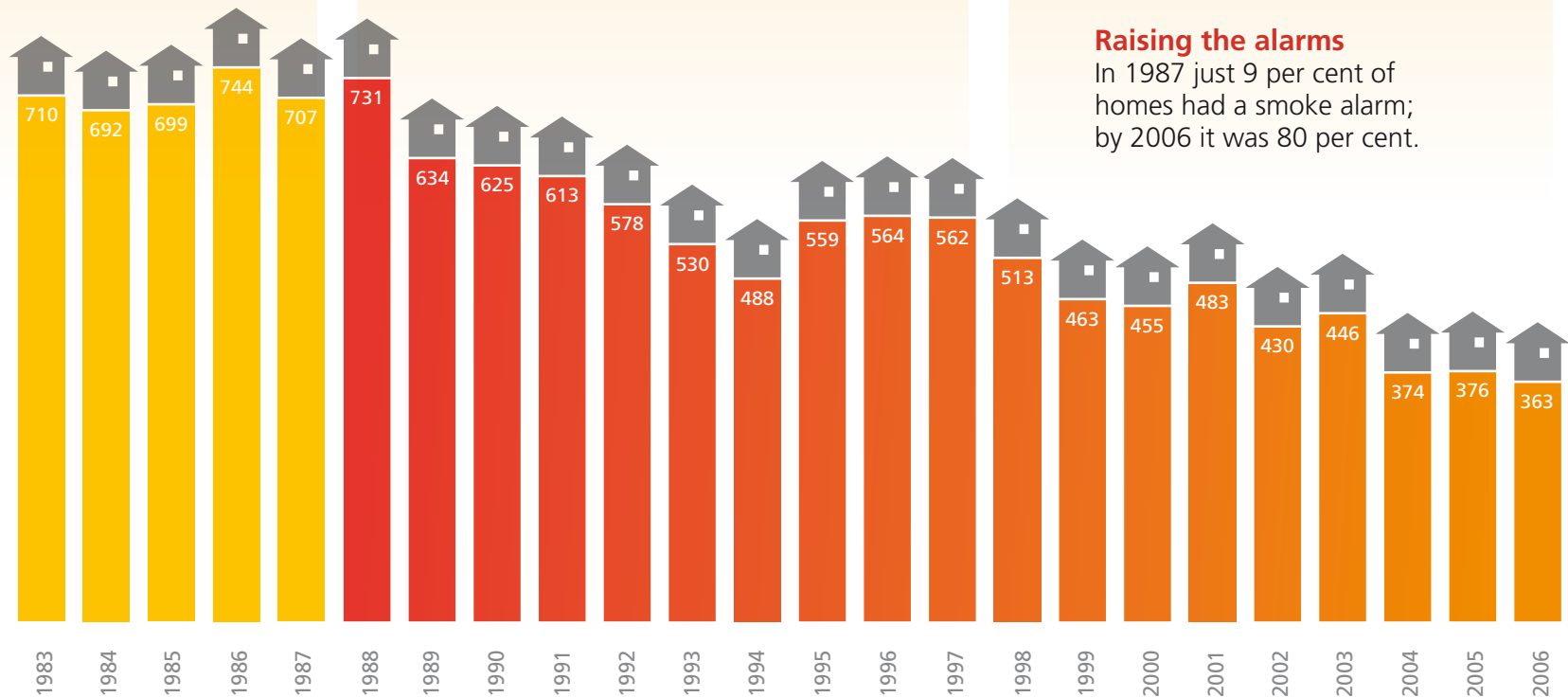
Deaths from smoking-related fires fell by 25 per cent after the first national campaign to tackle them in 2002.

Home help

Fire and rescue services have carried out nearly 2 million home fire risk checks since 2004.

Raising the alarms

In 1987 just 9 per cent of homes had a smoke alarm; by 2006 it was 80 per cent.



Fatal casualties in dwelling fires, UK, 1983 - 2006. Taken from Table 26 of Fire Statistics, United Kingdom, 2006.



**THE FURNITURE AND FURNISHING
REGULATIONS SAVED AT LEAST 710 LIVES
BETWEEN 1988 AND 1997**

1988 > 1989 > 1990 > 1991 > 1992 > 1993 > 1994 > 1995 > 1996 > 1997 > 1998 > 1999

**1988 >
FURNITURE
REGULATIONS**



In 1988 the number of fire-related deaths in the home continued to be worryingly high.

One of the main culprits was furniture containing polyurethane (PU) foam, responsible for one in every 13 house fires and 35 per cent of all deaths from fire.

Government responded to this alarming trend by introducing the *Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations (FFRs)*, which first came into force on 1 November 1988.

Since that date, all fabric and PU foams used in the making of upholstered furniture must be fire resistant. As of 1 March 1989, other filling materials also had to meet the same requirements. Finally, on 1 March 1993, second hand furniture was covered by the new regulations.

A swift response

Thankfully, designers and manufacturers were well-placed to respond quickly to the new regulations. This was largely due to the development and testing work carried out in the previous decade, and the willingness of the industry collectively to make furniture safer.

As the FFRs are performance-based, and don't stipulate how the new standards should be met, manufacturers can meet the requirements in the way they think most appropriate for their own products. It appears that the majority use chemical flame retardants in combustion modified foams and the back-coating of covering fabrics. But with growing consumer concern about their use, it's likely that more furniture materials with natural fire resistance will appear on the market.

Continued success

Government commissioned research¹ shows that the FFRs were responsible for saving at least 710 lives between 1988 and 1997, rising to 1,860 if other factors are taken into account. The Government's annual fire statistics show this downward trend has continued.

Effective enforcement

Enforcing the FFRs is a high priority for Trading Standards. Their experience and expertise over the past 20 years allows them to focus on key areas of prevention, such as nursery furniture, including prams and pushchairs, and the second hand market. They also contribute greatly to the effective interpretation of the FFRs, and to integrating them with other relevant and over-lapping legislation such as the General Product Safety Regulations.

¹ Effectiveness of the Furniture and Furnishings – see Bibliography, p44



**BY 2006, 80 PER CENT OF PEOPLE IN THE UK
OWNED A SMOKE ALARM**

1988 > 1989 > 1990 > 1991 > 1992 > 1993 > 1994 > 1995 > 1996 > 1997 > 1998 > 1999

**1988 >
NATIONAL SMOKE
ALARM CAMPAIGN**



In 1987, half of the deaths caused by house fires occurred because people were already trapped by the time they knew there was a fire. Only 9 per cent of homes had a smoke alarm, because homeowners saw them as too expensive and only for commercial premises.

A new emphasis

Recognising the need to take action, government began to promote the use of smoke alarms in homes through a national campaign, which began in 1988. This new emphasis also coincided with advances in technology that made the alarms cheaper to produce and advertise, and more affordable for people to buy.

After a successful pilot, which doubled ownership of smoke alarms in the

selected region, the campaign was rolled out nationally with equally positive results.

The second phase of the campaign targeted older age groups that had been less receptive to the initial messages. For example, only 20 per cent of over 55s in social groups D and E owned an alarm. Ownership was also low among the elderly, who still saw smoke alarms as expensive, unnecessary and difficult to install.

Results of this follow-up were again very positive, with ownership increasing from 24 per cent to 40 per cent in the over 65 age bracket.

Keeping up the good work

The Government has continued to run regular advertising campaigns, reminding

homeowners how important it is to install a working smoke alarm.

In 2006 it commissioned research² to look at the effectiveness of its work. It showed that ownership was as high as 80 per cent across the UK, demonstrating the difference that well-researched, clearly-targeted and impactful communications can make.

² Evidence base for evaluation of Community Fire Safety – see Bibliography, p44



**OVER 2.25 MILLION HOMES IN ENGLAND
AND WALES NOW HAVE MAINS WIRED
SMOKE ALARMS**

> 1989 > 1990 > 1991 > **1992** > 1993 > 1994 > 1995 > 1996 > 1997 > 1998 > 1999 > 2000

**1992 >
HARD WIRED SMOKE
ALARMS IN NEW BUILD
PROPERTIES**



Work to promote the use of smoke alarms continued in the early 1990s, with a change in the building regulations for new properties.

In 1992, the guidance on fire safety (in Approved Document B) was amended to say that every new build must allow for mains wired, interconnected smoke alarms to be installed. These are thought to be even more reliable and effective than the self-contained alternative that tends to be used in older homes.

The Smoke Detectors Act

The amendment to the building regulations was made following a private members bill being passed in 1991. The Smoke Detectors Act, which would have required every newly built

home to be fitted with a smoke alarm, never came into force.

The legislation had first been proposed in 1988 by Alistair Burt, the Conservative MP for Bury (North). In his initial speech to the house, he quoted US and Canadian statistics, taken from a Child Accident Prevention Trust paper, estimating that smoke alarms could reduce the number of lives lost in house fires by 40-50 per cent.

Mr Burt also pre-empted concerns that smoke alarms might lead to people being less careful about preventing fires themselves:

"I do not believe that the more widespread use of smoke detectors will encourage a lazier attitude

towards fire safety; quite the opposite. No one would emphasise more strongly than I that the detector prevents no fire. What it does is give the vital few extra seconds of warning – which, as we have seen all too recently, can mean the difference between life and death."

A world leader

The eventual 1992 amendment to the regulations was one of the first national requirements of its type in the world and has resulted in mains wired smoke alarms being fitted in over 2.25 million homes in England and Wales since 1992.



**FIRE AUTHORITIES SHOULD BE GIVEN
STATUTORY RESPONSIBILITY TO
PROMOTE FIRE SAFETY**

> 1991 > 1992 > 1993 > 1994 > **1995** > 1996 > 1997 > 1998 > 1999 > 2000 > 2001 > 2002

**1995 >
IN THE LINE OF FIRE**

me of fire



Following the new regulations on smoke alarms, the focus shifted to what else could be done to help prevent fires.

In October 1993, the Audit Commission began a study to reconsider issues it had identified in an earlier 1986 report on fire safety – covering the funding and overall approach of fire and rescue services. They published the results two years later, in 1995, in a report called *In the Line of Fire*.

Shifting the emphasis

Looking at all aspects of fire operations, the report concluded there was not enough emphasis on fire prevention work – and that this was hampering a more effective response to fire safety. It went on to promote a shift

from cure toward prevention, recommending that:

“...fire authorities should be given statutory responsibility to promote fire safety – to educate the public about fire, its causes, its dangers and ways to combat it”.

The rationale behind this change was simple. However quickly firefighters reach a fire, there will always be a limit to the number of deaths they can prevent, because it also depends on how quickly the fire was detected.

Smoke alarms and sprinklers can play a vital role here, but ultimately a focus on preventing fires in the first place is the most effective way to further reduce deaths. Giving examples of

where this approach had already made a huge impact at local level, the report recommended that it become mandatory for the whole service.

The financial disincentive

While advocating this new emphasis on prevention, the report also highlighted a problem with the Government spending formula. As fire authorities received more funding, the more fires they dealt with, there was no financial incentive to carry out fire safety work. In fact, it was a disincentive, as they would receive less funding for reducing the number of fires in their community.

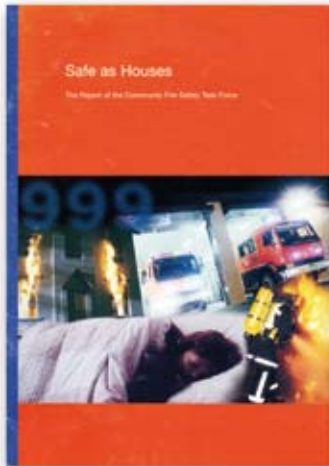


**WE BELIEVE THAT INVESTING IN COMMUNITY
FIRE SAFETY WILL SAVE LIVES**

Community Fire Safety Task Force

> 1992 > 1993 > 1994 > 1995 > 1996 > **1997** > 1998 > 1999 > 2000 > 2001 > 2002 > 2003

**1997 >
SAFE AS HOUSES**



Following the Audit Commission's report, the Home Secretary established a Community Fire Safety Task Force, in 1996, to review community fire safety and recommend a five-year strategy to reduce fires and deaths in the home.

In its 1997 report, *Safe as Houses*, the Task Force identified four main barriers to reducing the number of fatalities and injuries from fire:

- questionable leadership and direction
- resource issues
- duplication of effort
- lack of effective communication with those most at risk.

The Task Force also quantified the financial benefits of investing in prevention work for the first time – estimating them at £300m per year.

A new vision for fire prevention


Despite the strong recommendations from the Audit Commission in 1995, community fire safety remained at the periphery of fire and rescue service activity. Fire prevention had still not become a statutory duty and authorities received no funding for it. What's more, there was no national strategy to reduce fatalities, which meant there was no clear focus on achieving this objective.

The vision set out in *Safe as Houses* was to see the reduction of fires and casualties at the centre of fire and rescue service policy and activity. This was at a time when there were no national or local targets for reducing the number of fires, injuries from fires or fire-related deaths.

National and local action

As part of its strategy, the Task Force recommended the establishment of a National Community Fire Safety Centre (see page 23). The Task Force also concluded that high profile media campaigns were the most cost effective way to get across key fire safety messages to the greatest number of people. To support the national strategy, the Task Force recommended that fire and rescue services produce annual Community Fire Safety Plans, setting out objectives at a local level.

Safe as Houses also suggested more targeted programmes of work to improve the public's response to fire safety messages and to change behaviour. Finally, it stressed the importance of evaluating any initiatives, which again was not something that had been done before.



**MUCH OF THE NATIONAL COMMUNITY FIRE
SAFETY CENTRE'S WORK WAS CONSIDERED
MAINSTREAM ACTIVITY BY 2007**

1993 > 1994 > 1995 > 1996 > 1997 > **1998** > 1999 > 2000 > 2001 > 2002 > 2003 > 2004 >

**1998 >
NATIONAL COMMUNITY
FIRE SAFETY CENTRE**

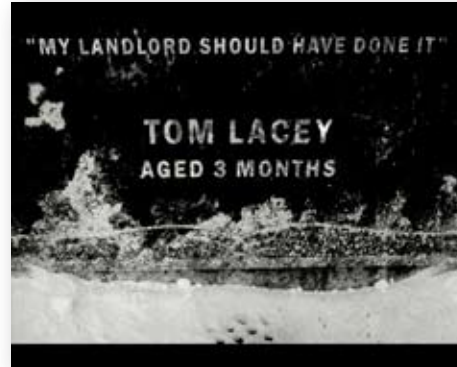


Ministers established the National Community Fire Safety Centre (NCFSC) in 1998, in response to the Community Fire Safety Task Force's recommendations.

Its aim was to provide a focus for the leadership, development and implementation of an evidence-based community fire safety strategy, including national campaigns and sustainable partnerships.

A broad remit

The NCFSC's work was particularly broad, drawing on techniques, interventions and outreach strategies that ranged from award-winning, high profile media campaigns, to initiatives based on community development and health promotion models.



In particular, it helped develop local links between fire and rescue services and One Stop Shops, as well as links with the Sure Start network, Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders and Government Offices.

Other key achievements included the development of:

- national branding for community fire safety (Fire Kills – You can prevent it)
- a suite of fire prevention literature, produced to Plain English standards
- a community fire safety "toolbox" of guidance information and resources for local fire and rescue services
- a comprehensive fire safety education programme for primary and secondary children.

Excuses Kill

1998 also introduced the hard-hitting 'Excuses Kill' campaign. This featured two 20-second adverts, portraying the devastating impact of what can happen to families and households who fail to maintain their smoke alarm. Backed by haunting music, the adverts showed gravestones and flowers, with epitaphs of fictional people and their dates of birth and deaths. It was underpinned with the simple, emotive strapline 'Excuses Kill - Test Your Smoke Alarm'.

A successful outcome

By 2007, much of the NCFSC's work was regarded as mainstream activity by fire and rescue services, and it was closed down by the Government – who acknowledged that it had more than served its purpose.

The NCFSC also proved the value of high profile media campaigns in helping reduce accidental fire deaths. The Government has announced its ongoing commitment to support the community fire safety agenda by continuing the national Fire Kills media campaign.



**FIRE KILLS HAS BEEN A PIVOTAL PART
OF THE GOVERNMENT'S SUCCESS IN
REDUCING FIRE DEATHS**

3 > 1994 > 1995 > 1996 > 1997 > 1998 > **1999** > 2000 > 2001 > 2002 > 2003 > 2004 > 20

**1999 >
FIRE KILLS
CAMPAIGN BEGINS**



Fire kills.
Think about it.

The Fire Kills campaign has been running for the last 10 years and has been a pivotal part of the Government's success in reducing domestic fire deaths by 50 per cent since 1988.

The campaign, which was originally launched after the publication of *Safe as Houses*, aims to raise awareness and encourage the public to change their behaviour and attitudes to fire safety.

Success on a national scale

The success of Fire Kills has been largely due to a series of national advertising campaigns, focused on the use and maintenance of smoke alarms.

There is strong evidence that the public responded positively to the campaign's



Fire. Don't give it
a chance

messages, and bought alarms as a result of them.

The most recent, *Pull Your Finger Out*, featured the actress Julie Walters and first ran from January to March 2008. The smoke alarm industry reported a significant increase in sales – as much as 73 per cent – during this period, while the percentage of people who could recall fire safety advertising without being prompted rose from 46 to 64 per cent. Further runs of the adverts are due later in 2008 and are scheduled for early 2009.

Other campaigns, which focused on different elements of fire safety, have also had a very positive impact. For example, *Put it Out. Right Out* was the first national campaign to tackle



smoking-related fires. When it was run in 2002, deaths from smoking-related fires fell by 25 per cent on the previous year. It enjoyed the same success when it was run again in 2004.

The successful kitchen fire safety campaign *Fire Starts when your Attention Stops*, (see page 9) was also part of the wider Fire Kills campaign.

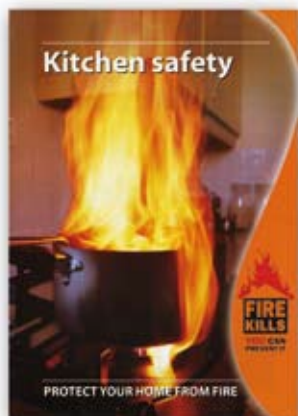
The Fire Kills logo and strapline have changed over the course of the campaign, as illustrated above, and now focus on the role the public can play in preventing it.



**FIRE KILLS HAS HELPED RAISE AWARENESS
AMONG HARD TO REACH AUDIENCES**

3 > 1994 > 1995 > 1996 > 1997 > 1998 > **1999** > 2000 > 2001 > 2002 > 2003 > 2004 > 20

**1999 >
FIRE KILLS
CAMPAIGN BEGINS
(cont)**



Targeting high-risk groups

Fire Kills also aims to engage high-risk groups in deprived areas, who don't respond to conventional advertising. Targeted campaigns, PR and partnership working (with RNID, the Child Accident Prevention Trust and others) have helped raise awareness among these hard to reach audiences.

In particular, Fire Kills has made an effort to raise awareness within black and minority ethnic communities, many of who still feel fire safety is not their responsibility and that smoke alarms are too expensive.

We have used specialist publications and TV channels, alongside outreach, training and community programmes, to tackle and change these perceptions.



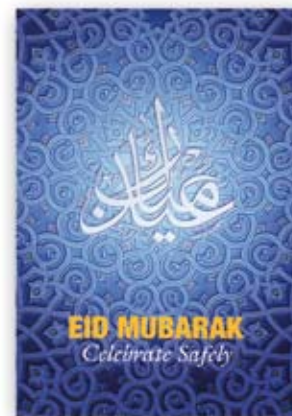
This work was recognised by the Commission for Racial Equality in 2004, who highlighted Fire Kills as an example of good practice for black and minority ethnic community engagement.

Feedback from the communities themselves has also been extremely positive:

"It is the first time that our communities felt that their celebration and festival (Eid ul Fitr) was recognised from a wider community"
– Merseyside FRS Somali Advocate."

A winning combination

Close collaboration with fire and rescue services has been instrumental to the campaign's success, and given them real focus for their regional activity.



They have been able to plan their own work, at a local level, around the national awareness campaign running at any particular time.

Moving forward

The campaign continues to build relationships with key partners at the national level to target fire safety messages at the most vulnerable.

The campaign also supports activity at the local level. The vulnerable and harder to reach communities are targeted through a comprehensive – and ever-evolving – programme of PR, partnership and sponsorship work. Existing trusted communication channels with these groups are used to help raise awareness, ranging from charities through to public houses.



**THE PREVENTION OF DEATH FROM FIRE
THROUGH INCREASED COMMUNITY FIRE
SAFETY MEASURES MUST BE AMONG THE
HIGHEST PRIORITIES OF THE FIRE SERVICE**

95 > 1996 > 1997 > 1998 > 1999 > 2000 > 2001 > **2002** > 2003 > 2004 > 2005 > 2006 > 20

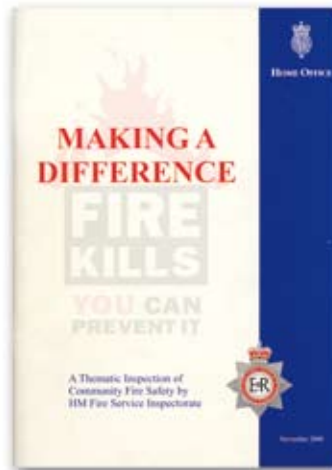
**2002 >
BAIN REVIEW**



The Future of the Fire Service: reducing risk, saving lives. The Independent review of the fire Service (known as the Bain Review) was published in December 2002. It was the result of a three-month review by Sir George Bain (Chairman), Professor Sir Michael Lyons and Sir Anthony Young.

The review built on a thematic inspection report, published in 2000 by Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate, which looked at how central government, the fire and rescue service and its partners could shift from response to prevention.

This earlier report, *Making a Difference*, echoed the recommendation from *In the Line of Fire* that this new focus on prevention be made a statutory duty as soon as possible:



“the Government should urgently bring forward legislation to create a statutory duty upon fire authorities to deliver Community Fire Safety in order for the service to underpin the changing role of the fire service.”

Getting access to the front line

Bain's review took place against a backdrop of industrial action by the members of the Fire Brigades Union.

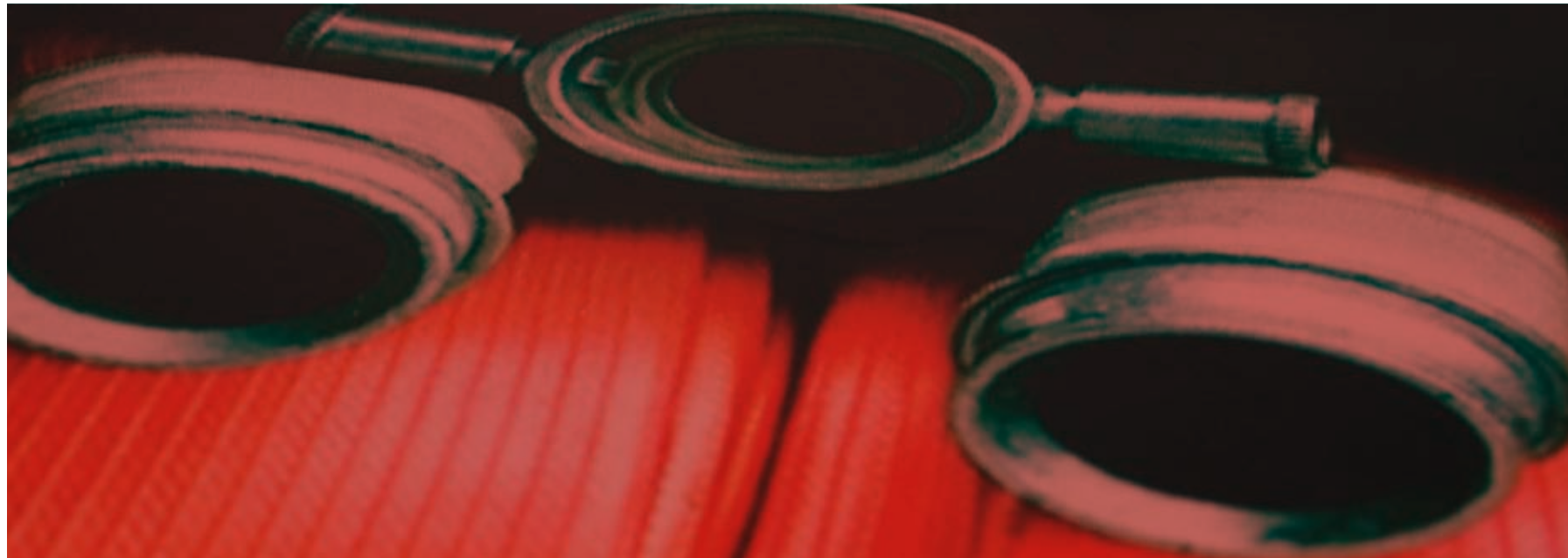
However, the team did visit a range of fire and rescue services around the country to get the views of those on the front line. Nine were chosen, from large metropolitan services such as West Midlands, through to the small regional team in Strathclyde. This was to give “a good cross-section of the

service, in terms of size, location and the nature of the communities they serve.”

All those interviewed highlighted the great work being done by the service. They also raised very similar concerns about what was preventing the service from having more of an impact, despite the different profiles and challenges they faced. These issues – including problems with funding and the lack of legislation – were then explored in more detail by Bain and his team.

Springboard for reform

In a wide-ranging report, Bain stated that fire and rescue services needed to be changed to bring them into line with best practice. Perhaps most significantly, he provided a springboard for the



95 > 1996 > 1997 > 1998 > 1999 > 2000 > 2001 > **2002** > 2003 > 2004 > 2005 > 2006 > 20

2002 > BAIN REVIEW (cont)

legislative reforms that gave fire prevention a statutory footing:

“While it may be an unachievable aspiration that no one should die from fire in the future, we believe there is plenty of scope to drive down fatalities, injuries, loss of property and damage to the environment to negligible levels. This requires the combination of a focus on fire prevention rather than incident response, different working practices and a modern flexible risk based approach to allocating resources.”
(ref: Foreword)

A flawed formula

Echoing *In the Line of Fire* and *Safe as Houses*, Bain pointed out the perverse funding incentive that saw the fire

authorities dealing with the most fires get the most money. This, along with the tiny amount of funding allocated to fire safety work, did little to raise the profile of community fire safety at a local level.

In parallel with Bain’s report, work was being done to change the funding model, and from April 2003 the number of fires, false alarms and special calls was removed from the formula. This abolished the perverse incentive that had discouraged a greater focus on fire prevention.

Risk based approach

The Bain report also introduced integrated risk management for fire safety – using risk to determine what resources are allocated for prevention, protection and

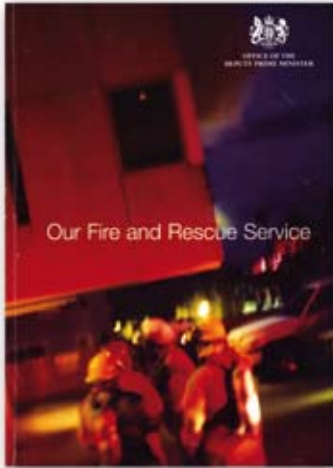
response. This marked a major departure from the previous, highly prescriptive, approach to fire cover.



**WE NEED TO REFOCUS THE FIRE SERVICE TO
CONCENTRATE ON PREVENTING FIRES IN THE
FIRST PLACE**

1996 > 1997 > 1998 > 1999 > 2000 > 2001 > 2002 > **2003** > 2004 > 2005 > 2006 > 2007 >

**2003 >
OUR FIRE AND
RESCUE SERVICE**



The Government took the recommendations from the Bain Review seriously, publishing a white paper, *Our Fire and Rescue Service*, the following June.

This highlighted the large number of reports on the fire and rescue service, but criticised the lack of action. It committed the Government to a programme of change, which included preparing legislation to update and modernise fire safety law.

The Rt Hon John Prescott MP, Deputy Prime Minister, whose department had taken on responsibility for the fire and rescue service in 2001, accepted that it was in need of reform:

“We need to refocus the fire service to concentrate on preventing fires in the first place”

A three-strand approach

The white paper said that fire and rescue services should take a broader role in preventing fire and creating safer communities. It set out a three-strand strategy to prevent fires in communities:

1. Building Regulations – to ensure fire safety is designed into new or materially altered homes and other buildings
2. Fire safety legislation for non-domestic buildings
3. Community fire safety – local activity to promote a safe environment for those most at risk of fire.

New targets

At the same time as the white paper came out, the Government was working up new Public Service Agreements (PSAs) for the 2004 Spending Review period, which set the following targets:

- To reduce the number of fire-related deaths in the home by 20 per cent averaged over the 11-year period to 2010 compared with the average recorded in the fire-year period to 1999 – with no local authority fire brigade having a fatality rate more than 1.25 times the national average by 2010.
- To reduce by 10 per cent the number of deliberate fires by 31 March 2010 from the 2001/02 baseline.

Although this target did not transfer into the PSA targets for the 2007 spending period (so-called CSR07), the Government will continue to track progress against it until March 2010.



**SINCE 2004 FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITIES
HAVE HAD A DUTY TO PROMOTE FIRE SAFETY
IN THEIR AREA**

1998 > 1999 > 2000 > 2001 > 2002 > 2003 > **2004** > 2005 > 2006 > 2007 > 2008 >

**2004 >
FIRE AND RESCUE
SERVICES ACT**



After years of discussion and recommendations from various quarters, fire prevention was finally made a statutory duty in the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.

Since the Act came into force, all fire and rescue authorities have had to promote fire safety in their area and make it a mainstream activity.

The Act also introduced a change of name for fire services, which have since been called fire and rescue services – the addition of ‘rescue’ emphasising a key part of their role.

Prevention better than the cure

Research in the years running up to the new Act supported Bain and the Audit Commission’s recommendations that

prevention was the most effective model for fire safety. For example, figures showed that over half of all fatalities from fire were happening before fire and rescue services are called out. So stopping fires starting in the first place will save more lives and make communities safer, particularly amongst the most vulnerable groups.

Of course the speed and efficiency with which fire and rescue services respond to incidents remains vital, so their work needs to find the right balance between prevention, protection and response.

A new duty on fire prevention

In article 6 on Fire Safety, the Act states:

(1) A fire and rescue authority must make provision for the purpose of promoting fire safety in its area.

- (2) In making provision under subsection (1) a fire and rescue authority must in particular, to the extent that it considers it reasonable to do so, make arrangements for –
- (a) the provision of information, publicity and encouragement in respect of the steps to be taken to prevent fires and death or injury by fire;
 - (b) the giving of advice, on request, about –
 - (i) how to prevent fires and restrict their spread in buildings and other property;
 - (ii) the means of escape from buildings and other property in case of fire.

This represents a major milestone for fire prevention.



**FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES HAVE
CARRIED OUT NEARLY 2 MILLION
HOME FIRE RISK CHECKS**

1998 > 1999 > 2000 > 2001 > 2002 > 2003 > **2004** > 2005 > 2006 > 2007 > 2008 >

**2004 >
HOME FIRE RISK
CHECK INITIATIVE**

Government signalled its strong support for the fire and rescue services moving to a prevention-based approach by investing £25m pump priming capital into the Home Fire Risk Check (HFRC) initiative.

It aimed to deliver free smoke alarms to 1.25 million vulnerable households, as part of a home visit that provided personalised fire safety advice to householders. Fire and rescue services could also use the funding to install sprinklers where the risk merited such an approach.

The main target group for this initiative was the over 65 age group, but other high-risk groups were also covered, including people living with disabilities, black and minority ethnic households and

people living alone with young families. Two years into the grant, the Government commissioned initial evaluation of the work at a local level. The key findings were as follows:

- The reduction in fires and non-fatal casualties was greater where HFRC/ alarm installation was more targeted
- Fire and rescue services recognised that partnering with other agencies was vital for reaching vulnerable people, securing referrals and gaining assistance in carrying out HFRCs
- The estimated benefits of the initiative to date (2004-2006) far outweigh the revenue and capital costs, even allowing for uncertainties in the analysis.

A full evaluation

Pleased with these initial findings, Government then commissioned a full

evaluation to assess the impact of the investment, and understand how the distribution of grant funding over a four-year period contributed to:

1. meeting the PSA target on accidental and deliberate fires
2. the development of partnership working by fire and rescue services to deliver fire prevention programmes
3. targeting activity by fire and rescue services at deprived communities
4. the development of plans for fire prevention work from 2008/9 onwards.

At the time of writing, the evaluation is not complete. However, we do know that fire and rescue services in England carried out nearly 2 million HFRCs and fitted 2.4 million smoke alarms using the funds – an incredible achievement in increasing home smoke alarm ownership.



**2007 WAS THE FIRST TIME DOMESTIC
SPRINKLERS HAD BEEN MENTIONED
IN THE BUILDING REGULATIONS**

1998 > 1999 > 2000 > 2001 > 2002 > 2003 > 2004 > 2005 > 2006 > **2007** > 2008 >

**2007 >
REVISION OF THE
BUILDING REGULATIONS**



In 2007 there were further changes to the building regulations, covering the use of sprinklers in domestic properties.

Ten years earlier, *Safe as Houses* had first looked at the potential of installing sprinklers in homes, referencing data from the US that suggested this could reduce the number of deaths from fire by up to 63 per cent. The report also looked at a study by ENTEC which concluded that the universal installation of domestic sprinklers was not cost effective.

Setting new standards for flats

Then, in January 2005, BSI published *BS 9251:2005 Sprinkler systems for residential and domestic occupancies*. In July that same year the Government

published a consultation paper on revisions to Part B (Fire safety) of the Building Regulations, which included a number of proposals for including sprinkler protection in domestic and residential premises. This followed a study by BRE that showed a targeted approach would be cost effective.

By the end of 2006, the Government had published a revised *Approved Document B* stating that any new blocks of flats over 30m in height must have the capacity for sprinkler protection to be built in. This came into effect in April 2007, and was in line with BS 9251. The final regulatory impact assessments estimated that this change could save 18 lives and prevent 280 injuries over 25 years.

The revisions also offered a range of alternative design solutions for how to include sprinkler protection in other types of property.

A firefighter in full gear, including a helmet and jacket, is holding a young child. The firefighter is looking upwards and to the right with a slight smile. The child is looking towards the camera. The background is a blurred outdoor setting, possibly a fire scene or a training area. The overall tone is warm and hopeful.

**WE MUST NOT BE COMPLACENT:
WE MUST CONTINUE TO DRIVE
DOWN FIRE DEATHS**

2000 > 2001 > 2002 > 2003 > 2004 > 2005 > 2006 > 2007 > **2008** >

**2008 >
THE FUTURE OF FIRE
PREVENTION**



Looking back at the milestones in fire prevention since 1988, there can be no doubt that the fire and rescue service has come a very long way in the field of fire prevention, in partnership with government.

The Government remains committed to the fire safety agenda and has developed a new Departmental Strategic Objective (DSO) to continue reducing the numbers of fatalities and casualties.

But where else will our focus lie?

Fire Kills continues to thrive

Fire Kills has proved highly effective in getting across important messages about fire safety to a large audience, and will remain a priority for the Government.



In particular, the campaign will target groups that research has shown are most vulnerable to fire, including single parents, older and disabled people, students and those who frequently drink and smoke at home. Plus it will specifically try and engage the Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Somali and Polish communities, where smoke alarm ownership remains very low.

Overall, Fire Kills will continue emphasising the importance of owning and maintaining a working smoke alarm, which is proven to be the most cost effective way of giving an early warning and enabling householders to escape.

Future of furniture regulations

The Government is also committed to continue making upholstered furniture



as safe as possible. We're currently looking into options for improving the effectiveness of the consumer product safety framework.

Sharing success across the world

A recent report, commissioned by the US Government and discussed in a recent edition of Fire Chief magazine, advised that their fire chiefs and departments seriously consider following the UK model for delivering fire safety strategies and programmes.

We were also delighted to be able to share our experience with colleagues from Japan and we will continue to share our experience and learn from others as we develop our work in the future.



2000 > 2001 > 2002 > 2003 > 2004 > 2005 > 2006 > 2007 > **2008** >

2008 > THE FUTURE OF FIRE PREVENTION (cont)



The future is local

Fire and rescue services now carry out a wide range of fire prevention activity and will continue to do so. As statutory partners in Local Strategic Partnerships, fire safety – and prevention in particular – are now key considerations when assessing risks and setting priorities.

We know many fire and rescue services have successfully negotiated a fire indicator against which local targets are set, and will monitor how fire prevention develops against this new landscape.

Cigarettes getting safer

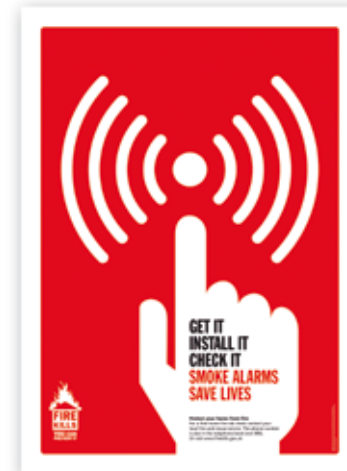
Centrally, government has a role to play in influencing the development of fire safer cigarettes. One-third of fatal house fires are caused by cigarettes – an average of 100 lives per year.



By changing the way cigarettes are manufactured, so they are less likely to burn to the filter if left unsmoked or discarded, we can reduce the risk that they will result in fires. At the time of writing, the UK is leading the development of a European Standard on safer cigarettes, which will take at least two years to finalise. We are arguing for it to be based on the one already in use in the US.

Protecting life, protecting property

We are also carrying out a wider piece of work, looking at the different types of protection available, to help us develop more effective policy. For example, we've commissioned new research around the use of sprinklers, which we recognise have a valuable role to play in fire protection. Meanwhile, we continue to encourage



their use in properties not covered by existing regulations.

Looking ahead

These are some of the key areas we will focus on over the next few years, but we know there's more to do. Moving forward, we will stay responsive and open to change – making sure safer houses remain a priority.

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1996 > 1997 > 1998 > 1999 > 2000 > 2001 > 2002 > 2003 > 2004 > 2005 > 2006 > 2007 > 2008 >



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