



South East Fire Improvement Partnership

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Domestic Sprinklers

You will be aware that the Welsh Assembly Government looks set to be given powers which will require builders to install sprinkler systems in all new homes in Wales. The decision by the Welsh Affairs Select Committee to support the Assembly being enabled to introduce legislation will make the installation of sprinklers in new homes mandatory.

The proposed National Assembly for Wales (Legislative Competence) (Housing) Order 2009, relating to Domestic Fire Safety - seeks to confer legislative competence on the National Assembly for Wales so that an Assembly Measure may be brought forward requiring all new build housing in Wales to be fitted with a fire sprinkler system.

The Legislative Competence Order (LCO) would enable the National Assembly for Wales to legislate in this area of policy. A Measure would then be brought forward making it a requirement for fire sprinklers to be fitted in new residential premises. This issue will be considered by the Privy Council early 2010.

This is seen across the fire and rescue sector as a very innovative and positive step in terms of community safety and community risk reduction. It is strongly supported by the Chief Fire Officer's Association.

The South East Regional Management Board wishes to formally seek a similar legislative outcome for England to ensure a continued reduction of risk of fire within the home.

It is considered that a mandatory requirement would save lives, improve firefighter safety, reduce damage to property and mitigate damage to the environment. It would also enable a less prescriptive and a more flexible approach to fire safety provisions at both the planning stage of new buildings and during their life-cycle. Additionally, it is considered that a change in legislation would provide a significant community safety "invest to save" opportunity that would quickly show positive results.

It is considered that statutory arrangements are necessary rather than voluntary measures and recommendations within codes of practice. This move would significantly increase public and firefighter safety during the life-cycle of the building stock.

The Second Report of Session 2009-10 to the House of Commons Welsh Affairs Committee - "Proposed National Assembly for Wales (Legislative Competence) (Housing) Order 2009, relating to Domestic Fire Safety" concludes that:

"A code of practice or guidance in relation to automatic fire suppression systems would not be guaranteed to achieve the aims proposed by the Member in charge of the Order. We therefore consider that the proposal to use a legislative route is appropriate"

It is therefore considered that an identical need exists within England and that a legislative outcome is necessary to ensure public safety.

Sprinklers save lives, improve firefighter safety, reduce damage to property and mitigate damage to the environment. The financial impact of fire losses will consequently be reduced significantly. A legislative framework conferring a statutory requirement to install sprinklers in all new homes within England will enable the fire and rescue service to continue to reduce community risk.

The South East Fire & Rescue Services' Regional Management Board therefore requests that you commit CLG to working towards a similar positive legislative outcome to that achieved by the Welsh Assembly Government within the English legislative framework.

Bryan Cope

Chairman - South East Fire & Rescue Services' Regional Management Board