**Fire door safety concerns raised in Parliamentary debate**

The British Woodworking Federation (BWF) campaign to improve fire door safety in buildings, [Fire Door Safety Week](http://www.firedoorsafetyweek.co.uk/), received further support in Parliament yesterday (3 March 2015) in a [Westminster Hall debate](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmhansrd/cm150303/hallindx/150303-x.htm) prompted by the [tragic death of young architect Sophie Rosser in 2012](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-south-east-wales-29213648).

Jonathan Evans MP (Cardiff North) secured the debate to highlight the issues arising from Sophie’s death and the coroner’s indictment of fire safety at Meridian Place in London’s Docklands which included untested fire alarms and problems with self-closing fire doors.

Sophie had become national news, he said, “when, faced with a building that was ablaze, (she) entered the building to save the life of her boyfriend – a decision that cost her life.”

He continued: “The primary concern that has been expressed by Sophie’s parents, as well as by many professionals who deal with fire safety, is the lack of clarity about who is accountable for the implementation of fire safety laws. In large-scale developments, who has that responsibility? Is it the owner, the property management company, the residents’ association or the individual tenant? Responsibilities sometimes seem to overlap to such an extent that each party comes to believe that it is someone else’s job to ensure that fire safety rules are followed.”

Sophie’s father, Julian Rosser, is campaigning for a review of the law governing the regular inspection and maintenance of fire doors in multi-occupancy residential buildings. He wants to see closer definition of who the ‘responsible person’ is in Houses in Multiple Occupancy (HMOs) and legislation requiring annual fire risk assessments by property qualified inspectors. Mr Rosser was a vocal supporter of Fire Door Safety Week in 2014.

In yesterday’s debate, MPs heard the results of a [survey](http://releasd.com/c787) commissioned last year by the BWF-CERTFIRE Fire Door and Doorset Scheme and the Fire Door Inspection Scheme (FDIS) which revealed that 37% of those responsible for fire safety were not clear on their legal obligations in relation to fire safety, as well as shocking statistics about the percentage of fire doors obstructed, wedged open or tampered with.

Additional facts that came from this survey last year included:

* 47% of those questioned said they had never been shown the fire safety procedure at their place of work - this increased to 52% of people aged 18-24
* Only 51% of people staying in hotels or B&B guest-houses read safety procedures on the back of the bedroom door. 13% never think about it
* 35% of people said they wouldn't be able to tell the difference between a fire door and an ordinary door. 44% thought a fire door would be thicker than a normal door
* 45% of business owners said they wouldn't be able to tell if a fire door was 'dodgy'

In reply for the Government, Stephen Williams MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, congratulated Jonathan Evans for securing the debate, adding:

“The Government fully supports the British Woodworking Federation’s annual campaign to raise public awareness of the importance of fire doors. The campaign draws attention to issues of poor installation and maintenance, and encourages building owners and users to check their self-closing doors and, where necessary, take action so that those that are not satisfactory can be brought back into good working order.”

Referring to the support given to Fire Door Safety Week last year from the Fire Minister, Penny Mordaunt MP, he added: “The campaign should go some way to press home the message that the maintenance of fire precautions is a duty that should not be ignored.”

[Fire Door Safety Week is running again this year from 14-20 September 2015](http://www.firedoorsafetyweek.co.uk/).

Supported by the Government’s Fire Kills campaign, Fire Door Safety Week promotes the need for safe specification, supply, installation, use and maintenance of fire doors. Open to all building owners, landlords and organisations with an interest in fire safety in property, participants can pledge their support by running events and promotions, and by communicating the fire safety messages via posters, leaflet drops, newsletters, social media and their websites. A [multi-media toolkit of resources](http://firedoorsafetyweek.co.uk/tool-kit/) is also available on the Fire Door Safety Week website, and the campaign is supported by extensive PR activities integrating press, broadcast, online and social media.

Iain McIlwee, chief executive of the BWF, said:

“There are some 3 million new fire doors sold in the UK each year. There is industry concern that a number are not fit for purpose or installed correctly, and there is no legislation yet which requires a third-party certificated product, installation or maintenance of fire doors.  These products have the potential to save lives, but only if correctly specified, manufactured, installed and maintained.

“That’s why we welcome this debate, and applaud the tireless efforts of Julian Rosser and the Minister to encourage Government to look at these regulations and to improve the law around fire safety, particularly in HMOs.

“What matters most now is that everyone works together through campaigns like Fire Door Safety Week, through better regulation and through improved advice to building owners, to ensure we provide safer HMOs, schools, hotels, offices and all sorts of public buildings where we know fire door safety could be improved.”

Neil Ashdown, FDIS manager, noted that it was good to hear the Communities Minister Stephen Williams now knew about the requirement for entrance doors of flats (where these open onto common areas and escape routes) to be fitted with self-closing devices – an area of particularly poor compliance, according to [FDIS Certificated Inspectors](http://fdis.co.uk/qualify-with-fdis/become-a-certificated-inspector) who are reporting the results of their fire door inspections into the FDIS central database.

He said:

“FDIS has helped Mr Rosser to bring about this debate and will continue to work to highlight the serious safety issues that poorly specified, installed and maintained fire doors present. FDIS Certificated Fire Door Inspectors are helping building operators comply with the [Fire Safety Order](http://fdis.co.uk/fire-door-law), and increased clarity about the role of the ‘responsible person’ in HMOs would be most welcome.”

The [Fire Door Inspection Scheme](http://fdis.co.uk/about-fdis) was established by the BWF-CERTIFIRE Scheme and the Guild of Architectural Ironmongers (GAI). In response to the increasing demand for training to increase knowledge about the legal and practical issues relating to fire doors, FDIS has recently introduced a [half day fire door awareness course](http://fdis.co.uk/latest-news/bite-size-fire-door-training-launched) for fire door installers, joiners and building maintenance teams.

The [BWF-CERTIFIRE Fire Door and Doorset Scheme](http://www.bwfcertifire.org.uk/) was established to raise the standard of fire doors across the supply chain and has expanded to include not just the market leaders in fire door manufacturing, but also in converting fire doors, ironmongery, intumescent seals and glazing systems, and, more recently, merchants and installers. It is a partnership, combining the membership, lobbying and promotion skills of the BWF with the technical and certification skills of Exova Warringtonfire.

**ENDS**