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SOCIAL HOUSING SECTOR TAKES A LEAD IN UK'S FIRST FIRE DOOR SAFETY WEEK

In the wake of the Lakanal House tragedy and more recent reports of serious fire safety issues at Stoke-on-Trent council housing blocks, housing associations and social housing groups around the country are pushing strong fire safety messages to their tenants and their property maintenance teams during Fire Door Safety Week which starts today.

CityWest Homes is distributing advice to residents of its 22,000 council homes in Westminster, telling them about fire door safety.

Wolverhampton Homes which manages more than 23,000 properties in the city is also running an information and awareness campaign, urging residents to keep fire doors closed. Sue Roberts MBE, Chair of Wolverhampton Homes, says: "Fire doors save lives. It's as simple as that."

Independent fire safety consultants Fire Safety Solutions South West is providing training on fire doors and passive fire protection to Phoenix Community Housing in South-East London.

The National Social Housing Fire Strategy Group is also reminding its members to carry out vital fire door checks.

Peter Gannaway, Chairman of the SHFSG, says:

"We fully support Fire Door Safety Week as we are aware that inadequately specified and poorly fitted and maintained fire doors cost lives. Our members recognise the importance of correctly specified fire doors. And with the emphasis on defend in place, ensuring the correct doors are in place and maintained by competent operatives is an essential element of any fire strategy. However, we also recognise that residents have an important role to play. Despite the advanced design of modern fire doors, simple things like wedges or removed closers can have terrible consequences. We recognise that to maintain the safety of our communities all our teams in housing – specifiers, maintenance and housing officers – have a vital role to play."

Fire Door Safety Week is all about raising awareness of this critical element of fire safety in every commercial, public and multiple occupancy building.

The brainchild of the BWF-CERTIFIRE Scheme, the initiative aims to raise awareness of the critical role of fire doors, drawing attention to specific issues such as poor installation and maintenance, and encouraging building owners and users to check the operation and condition of their fire doors and to report those that aren't satisfactory.

In the process, the campaign hopes to engage and educate people, helping the whole building industry and every property owner to understand the correct specification, supply, installation, operation, inspection and maintenance of fire doors.

Fire Door Safety Week supporters include the Government's Fire Kills campaign, the Association for Specialist Fire Protection, the Passive Fire Protection Association, the Institute of Fire Prevention Officers, and major property and construction groups such as the National Landlords Association, the Federation of Private Residents' Associations, the Federation of Master Builders and UK Contractors Group.

Brandon Lewis MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, says:

"I am pleased that the BWF is proactively working to raise awareness of an important area of fire safety through non-regulatory routes. We welcome all positive interventions that promote particular fire safety messages with relevant audiences to help reduce the devastating impact that fire can cause."

There about 3 million new fire doors are bought and installed every year in the UK, the vast majority made from timber. However, in a recent review of 100 cases prosecuted under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, fire doors were the second highest reason for prosecutions. In many cases, incorrect doors and components are specified or brought onto site. And even when fire doors are correctly specified and installed, a recent survey among fire risk assessors revealed that 80% of the escape routes they saw were obstructed, 65% of fire doors were wedged open and 85% had door closers disconnected.

For updates on the campaign and the many events scheduled throughout the week, follow Fire Door Safety Week on Twitter @FDSafetyWeek or search for tweets with hashtag #firedoorsafetyweek.

www.firedoorsafetyweek.co.uk

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