

NEWS RELEASE

Fire Door Safety Week 2014 Press Office:

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MAJOR SAFETY CAMPAIGN TARGETS DODGY FIRE DOORS

- **New research reveals alarming levels of ignorance and complacency about fire safety at work and play**
- **Multi-occupancy buildings such as apartment blocks are a higher risk for dodgy fire doors – a bereaved father calls for changes to fire safety law**

Despite an average of 174 building fires every day¹, more than 9,500 fatalities or casualties from those fires in 2012-13², and an estimated billion pound bill for fire-related property insurance claims last year³, it seems we are still shockingly complacent about fire safety.

New research published today⁴ to coincide with the start of [Fire Door Safety Week](#) (15-21 September 2014) reveals that almost half of us (47%) have never been shown or told about the fire safety procedures where we work.

If a fire alarm was to sound, 14% of people say they would see what everyone else was doing and 'go with the flow' – this rises to almost 23% of workers aged 25-44. One in 10 people (11%) would go into the corridor and investigate, and one in 20 admit they would simply ignore it, assuming there must be a fault on the alarm system.

When respondents with formal responsibility for fire safety in their organisations were asked if they were fully aware of their legal obligations, almost half (46.5%) said they either did not know what they were or admitted they were unclear.

¹ Latest Government statistics, published May 2014: [Fire Statistics: Great Britain April 2012 to March 2013](#). Department for Communities and Local Government. 63,500 building fires in 2012-13: 41,000 fires recorded in dwellings and 22,500 in other buildings.

² DCLG fire statistics (see above). 266 fatalities in dwelling fires in 2012-13, plus 17 fatalities in other building fires. 8,300 casualties recorded from dwelling fires, and 1,013 in other building fires.

³ Association of British Insurers property claims statistics: <https://www.abi.org.uk/News/Industry-data-updates/2013/11/Property-claims-statistics-update-Q3-2013>

⁴ Survey carried out 27-29 August 2014 by Atomik Research on behalf of the BWF-CERTIFIRE Scheme. The sample consisted of two groups: a 500 individuals group responsible for fire safety in a variety of organisations, and a 500 consumers group aged 18-65 and nationally representative.

A similar proportion (45%) say they really would not know how to spot a dodgy fire door – one of the most critical passive fire protection features in the buildings we use every day.

The complacency also continues when we are staying away from home. In the Fire Door Safety Week poll, only 51% of respondents said they would look at the fire safety procedures on the back of a hotel bedroom door and familiarise themselves with the exit route. 13% said they never do this and hadn't even thought about it.

Websites like TripAdvisor receive millions of reviews and opinions from guests about their hotel experiences, but it is clear that going public on fire safety concerns is not yet something everyone would consider. When asked whether they would report their concerns about dodgy fire doors in a building they were using, only 70% of respondents said they always would. When asked if they would post pictures of dodgy fire doors in hotels and B&Bs onto TripAdvisor or social media to warn others, a third (32%) of respondents said they probably would not.

John Fletcher, manager of the British Woodworking Federation's [BWF-CERTIFIRE Scheme](#) which, together with the UK's [Fire Door Inspection Scheme \(FDIS\)](#), is behind the organisation of Fire Door Safety Week, says that we all need to open our eyes to fire safety:

"Dodgy fire doors are usually just one of many signs of fire safety negligence, but actually they're a relatively easy one to spot and do something about. We provide extensive support and guidance for any building owner or manager, including [free seminars](#), [training presentations](#), [fire door fact cards](#) and [advice videos](#).

"Look out for these three things to start with:

1. Make sure any door marked 'Fire Door' closes correctly around all parts of the frame, and that it's not blocked or wedged open.
2. Check the gap between the door and the frame. No more than 3-4mm is what we want to see.
3. Check for damage on the door and all its edges, hinges, handles and windows. If it's looking battered, chipped or tatty, it's time for a proper inspection by a qualified fire door inspector.

"We are calling on everyone to look again at the buildings you live, stay and work in, and to report dodgy fire doors to the landlord, building manager or owner.

"The same principle applies to all commercial buildings, non-domestic and multi-occupancy premises, including offices, restaurants, shops, hotels, care homes, public buildings, high rise flats and privately rented apartments. All of these buildings should have properly installed and maintained fire doors to help save lives and property."

The father of a young woman tragically killed while trying to save her boyfriend in a burning apartment block has also made a heartfelt plea for better maintenance of fire doors, especially in flats and other multi-occupancy buildings.

Julian Rosser said:

"Since my daughter Sophie died at the age of 23 in a fire at Meridian Point, Canary Wharf in 2012, I've been campaigning for a review of the law governing the regular inspection and maintenance of fire doors in multi-occupancy residential buildings.

“In Sophie's case her death was directly caused by the fire door leading from the lobby area to the apartment in which the fire started being jammed open against a warped wooden veneer floor.

“The problem with the law at the moment is that it does not make any single entity responsible for the regular inspection and maintenance of fire doors in communal areas, so everybody can pass the buck as happened in Sophie's case.

“What I believe should happen is that the property management company should be made solely responsible for this for fire doors leading onto communal areas, or if there is no management company appointed then the freeholder if it's a freehold property or the leaseholder if a leasehold. The inspection of fire doors should include their closing properly on the automatic closers fitted and that the gap all around the door meets the required specification. If this had been done on the door that led to Sophie's death then her tragic loss would never have happened.

“If such accidents can happen in high grade apartments such as those at Meridian Point which was built just 17 years ago, then this could happen all over again to other properties built to the same or lower standards.

“We need two things to happen: closer definition of who the ‘responsible person’ is in multi-occupancy lettings, and legislation requiring annual fire risk assessments by properly certified people.”

[Fire Door Safety Week](#) is all about raising awareness of this critical element of fire safety in every commercial, public and multiple occupancy building. Organised by the BWF-CERTIFIRE Scheme and FDIS, 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 every property owner to understand the correct specification, supply, installation, operation, inspection and maintenance of fire doors.

Among almost [100 Fire Door Safety Week supporting organisations](#) this year are the Government's Fire Kills campaign, the Association for Specialist Fire Protection, the Fire Brigades Union, Chief Fire Officers Association and the Fire Industry Association.

There are about 3 million new fire doors bought and installed every year in the UK, the vast majority made from timber. Fire doors are often the first line of defence in a fire and their correct specification, maintenance and management can be the difference between life and death for building occupants.

However, they remain a significant area of neglect, often the first thing to be downgraded on a specification and mismanaged throughout their service life, propped open, damaged and badly maintained. And [analysis by FDIS \(Fire Door Inspection Scheme\) of the Fire Safety Order prosecutions last year](#) suggests that ill-informed or negligent property owners are more likely than ever to receive large fines or even significant prison sentences.

Fire Door Safety Week is starting today with a seminar for building managers and surveyors at the Building Centre in London. Delivered by fire door industry, regulatory and inspection professionals, including the London Fire Brigade, BWF-CERTIFIRE and leading fire door industry professionals, [the seminar](#) will focus on the safe use of fire doors in buildings and highlight some of the common issues and misconceptions surrounding fire

door safety. To set the scene the event will begin with an online webcast of a fire door test by BM TRADA, a dramatic introduction to what can happen if we 'get it wrong'.

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

Following on from Fire Door Safety Week, FDIS is also running [free seminars for building owners and property managers around the country](#), including in Newton Abbott and Lincoln this month, Coventry and Tamworth in October, West Drayton in November and Cardiff in December.

www.firedoorsafetyweek.co.uk

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Issued on behalf of the BWF-CERTIFIRE Scheme and FDIS by Liz Male Consulting Ltd.

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Also see the online media pack at: <http://releasd.com/c787>

Notes to Editors

1. The BWF-CERTIFIRE Fire Door and Doorset Scheme is part of the British Woodworking Federation. It was established by a group of prime fire door manufacturers to increase the standard of timber fire doors in the UK. Its membership consists of fire door manufacturers including manufacturers of ironmongery, intumescent seals, glazing systems, merchants and installers, all promoting the specification of third-party certificated products. About 2 million fire doors are tested and certified in the UK each year, approximately 70% of the market.
www.bwfcertifire.org.uk
2. The Fire Door Inspection Scheme (FDIS) provides online learning education modules leading to a diploma and independent assessment and certification for fire door inspectors. FDIS was Europe's first qualification specifically aimed at transforming people's knowledge about fire doors. It currently has over 500 people registered.
www.fdis.co.uk