

## **REPORT TO THE SOUTH EAST FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES REGIONAL MANAGEMENT BOARD**

### **SPRINKLER CAMPAIGNS UPDATE OCTOBER 2007**

#### **KEY ISSUE/DECISION**

The Regional Management Board is asked to note a recent piece of work conducted by Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority designed to understand negative perceptions towards the installation of domestic sprinklers. It is also asked to note work conducted by Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority on how it promotes sprinklers in its area.

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The South East Fire and Rescue Services' Business Plan 2007/10 included a project on promoting the installation of sprinklers wherever they may help to save lives and reduce injuries. This paper gives Members of the Board information on recent work undertaken by Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority to understand barriers to the uptake of sprinkler systems, and a related media campaign designed to overcome negative perceptions. It also provide information on work conducted by Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority to promote the installation of sprinklers.

#### **CONSULTATION**

Consultation has taken place with the constituent FRAs in the South East Region to develop the report.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members are asked to

- i. Note the contents of this report and the Members' briefing pack.

## REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Promoting sprinklers is a key objective for the Community Safety work area. This report provides Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) considering promoting sprinklers within their own areas a good starting point from which to develop their own local solutions.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: None

## **INTRODUCTION**

The South East Fire and Rescue Services' Business Plan 2007/10 included a project on promoting the installation of sprinklers wherever they may help to save lives and reduce injuries. This paper gives Members of the Board some information on work undertaken by Kent & Medway Fire & Rescue Authority (KMFRA) to understand barriers to the uptake of sprinkler systems, and a related media campaign to overcome these perceptions. It provides Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) considering promoting sprinklers within their own areas a good starting point from which to develop their own local solutions, drawing on the experience of KMFRA.

The paper also give Members some information on who sprinklers are promoted by Hampshire Fire & Rescue Authority (HFRA).

## **ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY**

### **KKMFRA work on perceptions towards Sprinklers**

In January 2006, the Government announced £11.4m grant funding for fire and rescue authorities in England from April 2006 to March 2008, to support fire prevention work, including community fire safety, arson reduction and work with children and young people. The funds were designed to support the achievement of the national PSA targets on accidental fire deaths in the home and on arson reduction, with a particular focus on reducing inequality in the impact of fire and meeting the floor target. Kent & Medway Fire & Rescue Authority was allocated a total of £256k for 2006/08 and used a proportion of this funding on the promotion of domestic sprinklers.

In January 2007, a specialist marketing company was appointed to develop and deliver a campaign to raise awareness and promote the installation of sprinkler systems in high risk homes. To help co-ordinate work taking place across Kent and Medway, a Sprinkler Working Group was set up in January 2007. It is made up of technical fire safety officers, partnership managers, media & communications and community safety officers from Kent Fire and Rescue Service, as well a representative from the marketing company.

The marketing company carried out research which will now be used to develop a marketing and public relations campaign intended to change attitudes towards sprinklers. The research was based on a database of contacts which targeted the following groups:

- Constructors (building construction companies);
- Influencers (MPs / MEPs, Councillors, Non-Government Organisation Heads etc); and
- Specifiers (Architects, Registered Social Landlords, NHS Trusts, Council Planners etc).

This research has been successful in identifying the level of knowledge of sprinkler systems - in particular, the benefits and misconceptions. The findings will help construct the campaign and identify key messages to be delivered via an awareness campaign. A briefing pack on the outcomes will be provided for Members at the meeting.

It is apparent that many developers do not see sprinkler systems as a 'selling point' for their customers. The awareness campaign will promote sprinklers so that they are offered at the design stage and considered as a positive selling point to the home owner. It is anticipated that this will go some way to dispelling myths such as; "they go off accidentally"; "they are too expensive" or "they flood the whole premises".

The awareness campaign is due to be launched later this year and regional partners will be invited to attend the event.

In raising awareness it is considered important to give recognition to supporters of the campaign. With this in mind a 'Safer Homes Award' is being developed by KMFRA to

recognise those partners and agencies that have worked with the Authority to promote or install sprinklers.

In order to support the campaign a range of promotional materials are being produced, such as:

- A campaign logo to identify and strengthen any marketing material that is developed;
- An information leaflet which gives important facts intended to dispel common misconceptions;
- A DVD to be used at campaign events illustrating the effectiveness of sprinklers;
- A series of case studies citing where sprinklers have been installed or could have made a difference.
- A comprehensive pack, which includes questions and answers and useful facts.

### **HFRA's approach to Sprinklers**

HFRA is able to provide professional assistance when organisations wish to install sprinklers. For example it has developed a sprinkler strategy that focuses on three key areas of application, [community assets (including schools), residential/domestic premises and large single story buildings]. This strategy has resulted in a range of working relationships being developed and formalised into partnership working activities with other agencies. Results have included the installation of more than 25 sprinkler systems in new or refurbished schools and residential care homes, installation of domestic sprinkler systems in a range of high risk properties, and the installation of sprinklers in new residential developments.

These experiences and case studies will be made available within the region as part of the commitment to sharing learning and will be useful for FRA's when considering working with other organisations to secure the installation of sprinklers. In particular the practical experience in overcoming design and installation problems will be of use.

HFRA also have a comprehensive practical sprinkler demonstration unit that will compliment any promotion campaign that a FRS chooses to use.

### **Next steps**

The work to promote sprinklers by FRAs in the region will continue and is likely to be featured in the business plan for 2008/11.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

Promoting the installation of sprinklers has a number of benefits. Sprinklers not only save lives but can reduce damage to property in the event of fire and help reduce the overall cost of fire to the owner. Sprinklers use between 1/25th and 1/100th of the water compared to normal fire fighting tactics - so in the event of fire, sprinklers will minimise damage by water and help protect the environment. Operation of a sprinkler system will also rapidly control a fire and reduce the rate of production of heat and smoke, allowing time for occupants to escape.

## **CONCLUSION**

Members are asked to

- i. Note the contents of this report and the Members' briefing pack;