

Lakanal fire inquests – coroner recommendations

Since the Lakanal fire we have learnt immediate and enduring lessons and are working to improve what we do to make residents and homes safe.

The inquests into the Lakanal fire concluded on 28 March 2013 with narrative verdicts recorded for each of the deceased. The inquests provided information on the many different factors that contributed to the fire as well as providing the families affected with answers to their questions about the fire.

Following the inquests, Coroner Frances Kirkham wrote to Southwark Council, the London Fire Brigade and the Department for Communities and Local Government with a list of recommendations. The recommendations include a review of the policies and procedures concerning fire risk assessments, training of staff, access for emergency services, information and guidance to occupiers, signage and retro fitting of sprinklers. The council has now responded in detail to all these recommendations.

Councillor Ian Wingfield, cabinet member for housing said: "We want to do all we can to ensure maximum fire protection and safety following the tragic deaths at Lakanal, and have already taken action to make blocks safer."

"The majority of the Coroner's detailed recommendations cover areas where we have already made great progress, such as the creation of a dedicated and highly skilled fire safety team and the prioritisation of high risk buildings for fire safety works. Many actions can also be swiftly implemented. For example, she challenged us to improve our signage and onsite information, and we are working with the London Fire Brigade to do that."

"However, in considering the Coroner's letter, it has become clear that some recommendations raise more complex questions and are not things that Southwark can solve alone. There are legal obstacles that prevent us from carrying out some of the suggested work, and I have written to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to see how these can be overcome."

In the event of a fire

- If a fire breaks out in your flat, tell everyone and get out as quickly as possible via a planned escape route.
- Don't stop to pick up valuables.
- Dial 999 and stay out of your home until the fire brigade says that it is safe to return.
- Use the stairs, not a lift. Don't use a balcony unless it is a proper escape route.
- If you are trapped, close the door of your room and use bedding or towels to block any gaps to stop smoke or fumes.
- Shout from the window to attract attention and call for help.
- Many purpose built flats and maisonettes have fire safety measures built into them, so if fire breaks out elsewhere in your building, you are usually safer staying in your home. But if heat or smoke affects your home, get out at once and close the door behind you.

Top tips for reducing the fire risk your home

- Fit smoke alarms
- Don't smoke in bed
- Never leave candles unattended
- Don't overload electrical sockets
- Keep matches and lighters away from children
- Switch off electric blankets when in bed
- Keep clothing away from heating appliances
- Don't overfill or leave pans and deep fryers unattended

For more information on the Lakanal inquests and to read the complete response to the Coroner, please visit www.southwark.gov.uk

Further information on fire safety can be found at www.southwark.gov.uk/firesafety