

Addressed to:

The Chair of the Fire and Rescue Authority
The Chief Executive of the County Council
The Clerk to the Fire and Rescue Authority
The London Commissioner
The Chief Fire Officer

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[Title: Update on Fire and Rescue Circulars](#)

To inform Fire and Rescue Service partners that Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) Circulars are being replaced with Bulletins with immediate effect.

[Title: Greater data transparency across the public sector](#)

To raise awareness of measures to increase transparency of data and spend of public bodies.

[Title: External Gas Supplies](#)

This provides information on the risk of hidden damage caused by radiant heat to encased external gas supply pipe work.

[Title: Department of Health National Home Oxygen Service: Working in Partnership with Fire and Rescue Services](#)

This explains the Department of Health integrated Home Oxygen Service and highlights opportunities for Fire and Rescue Services to work in partnership with the service suppliers to raise awareness of key fire safety messages and issues with oxygen user hospital outpatients.

[Title: The Pyrotechnic Articles \(Safety\) Regulations 2010](#)

The Pyrotechnic Articles (Safety) Regulations 2010 came into effect on 4 July 2010 and have replaced the Fireworks Safety Regulations 1997 (as amended). This is for information to alert FRAs to new regulations and the Government's response to the public consultation.

Update on Fire and Rescue Service Circulars

1. Change to Circulars

- 1.1 This bulletin informs the Service that Communities and Local Government Fire and Resilience Directorate will no longer be issuing Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) Circulars. They are being replaced by FRS Bulletins to streamline our communication with you so that it is more efficient and focused.

2. New Process

- 2.1 There will be two different types of Bulletin:

- Fire and Rescue Service Monthly Bulletin
- Fire and Rescue Service RED/Immediate Bulletin

- 2.2 A Fire and Rescue Service Monthly Bulletin will be issued at the start of each month (first Monday of each month). It will include a cover page which will identify what is included within the Bulletin.

- 2.3 Fire and Rescue Service RED Immediate Bulletins may be sent any time during the month. This would be information which needs to be communicated to the Service at short notice and cannot wait for the next Monthly Bulletin. For example operational/safety critical issues; time critical financial announcements and updates or upcoming Ministerial announcements/speeches.

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Greater data transparency across the public sector

1. Transparency Agenda

- 1.1 The new coalition Government is committed to increasing transparency across central and local government and this includes all areas of the public sector. The first step in this process has been to encourage the publication of items of spend over £500 online.
- 1.2 Greater transparency across government is key to enabling the public to hold politicians and public bodies to account; to reduce the deficit and deliver better value for money in public spending; and to realize significant economic benefits by enabling businesses and non-profit organizations to build innovative applications and websites using public data.

2. Background

- 2.1 Local authorities have been encouraged to provide greater disclosure on spending as part of a series of sweeping measures detailed in a letter sent to councils by the Secretary of State. He makes clear that transparency and openness should be the default setting for the way councils do business, and calls on local government to move at speed to adopt this new approach.
- 2.2 Further information regarding data transparency plans for Government and local public bodies, including initial guidelines about how to publish payments over £500, are available online for comment and debate. <https://www.data.gov.uk/blog/publishing-itemised-local-authority-expenditure-advice-comment>

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External Gas Supplies

1. Background

- 1.1 The Chief Fire and Rescue has received notification of a Coroner's Rule 43 Letter concerning an incident, involving an external gas supply to a domestic property that resulted in the death of a member of the public which has implications for the fire and rescue service.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 Information on Coroner's Rule 43 Letters and its implications for the fire and rescue service can be obtained from the Fire Service Circular 49/2009.
- 2.2 Following the incident the inquest jury found that the victim had died as a result of an explosion caused by natural gas which had collected in the wall cavity of the victim's home. The natural gas had escaped from a split in a gas riser pipe on the external wall of the property caused by radiated heat from a car fire.
- 2.3 The pipe was sheathed in a glass reinforced plastic (GRP) cover that whilst suffering only light scorch marks to its surface had allowed sufficient heat to transfer through it to damage the gas pipe behind. These scorch marks were very light and were not seen by the attending firefighters in the dark conditions at the time of the incident.
- 2.4 The resultant build up of natural gas in the GRP sheath from the leak caused the gas to seep through the ground into the wall cavity of the property. Approximately two and a half hours after the initial incident, the gas was ignited by the central heating thermostat in the wall of the property resulting in an explosion that caused extensive structural damage and injuries to the victim that were ultimately fatal.

3 Actions

- 3.1 Operational Crews should examine closely any external natural gas supply pipe work, GRP sheathed pipe work or external meter box that may have been exposed to either direct flame contact or radiant heat.
- 3.2 Where Incident Commanders consider that either supply pipe work, GRP sheathed supply pipe work or external meter box has been exposed to any form of heat they should contact the relevant Gas Transporter via the National Gas Emergency Service "Blue Light" Number (0800 917 2414) to request an engineer to attend and carry out an inspection.

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*continued***External Gas Supplies**

- 3.3 Where damage or a leak on the domestic side of the meter is suspected, the supply should be isolated at the isolation valve on the incoming supply, unless the meter is located in the cellar or basement, and the Incident Commander should contact the National Gas Emergency Service “Blue Light” Number to report the leak.
- 3.4 If safe to do so, the building should be ventilated by opening all doors and windows. The use of naked flames, electrical switches or other potential ignition sources should be avoided. The owner/occupier should then be instructed to have the domestic supply inspected by a Gas Safe registered competent person before reinstating the supply.
- 3.5 Whilst awaiting the attendance of an engineer, the Incident Commander should take the necessary actions to mitigate any risk to the occupier or member of the public and/or any other personnel present in the area.
- 3.6 Whenever operational crews attend a suspected gas leak or an incident when the origin of a gas leak is unknown the relevant Gas Transporter should be contacted via the National Gas Emergency Service “Blue Light” Number to report the incident.
- 3.7 The National Gas Emergency Service also provides a Freephone Number (**0800 111 999**) to enable members of the public to report an escape of gas from a Gas Transporters Network or from a gas fitting supplied with gas from a Gas Transporters network.
- 3.8 In the event of an incident involving a gas supply not connected to the National Grid, such as a LPG installation, the supplier or engineer who maintains the installation should be contacted.
- 3.9 This Bulletin should be read in conjunction with the *Fire Service Manual Volume 2 Fire Service Operations Natural Gas Incidents*.

END.**For further information please contact:**

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Department of Health National Home Oxygen Service: Working in Partnership with Fire and Rescue Services

1. Background

- 1.1 In February 2006, a new National Integrated Home Oxygen Service (HOS) was implemented across the National Health Service (NHS) in England and Wales. Initially, four suppliers were contracted to deliver oxygen in different NHS regions, however recent changes in the market means there are now three suppliers delivering the service. The three suppliers - Air Products, BOC Linde, and Air Liquide - are contracted to provide Home Oxygen Services to approximately 92,000 outpatients in 10 regions in England. This new service replaces the previous arrangements for delivering home oxygen to patients via local pharmacies.

2. Fire Safety Issues

- 2.1 There are clearly a number of fire safety risks associated with patients using oxygen in their own homes, which, in turn, pose additional risks to firefighters attending a fire where oxygen is in use in a dwelling. Although fire and rescue services will be aware of registered flammable materials kept on commercial premises, the same is not necessarily true of domestic premises. There is also a significant issue of oxygen users smoking whilst using oxygen.
- 2.2 In recognition of the risks associated with oxygen use in the community, the Department of Health (DH) contract requires the three Home Oxygen Service (HOS) suppliers to work in partnership with all local fire and rescue authorities within the geographical oxygen service area to address these safety issues. To help facilitate good partnership working between fire and rescue authorities and the HOS suppliers, CLG and the DH formed the HOS, Fire Safety and Smoking Working Group. The Group membership includes: the DH, NHS, CLG, Health and Safety Executive (HSE), the British Lung Foundation, all three HOS providers, and representation from Cheshire, Merseyside, Lancashire and West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Services. The purpose of the Group is to ensure fire and rescue authorities are working effectively with the DH contracted suppliers. In particular to:
- help fire and rescue authorities effectively target home oxygen users with Home Fire Risk Checks
 - provide fire and rescue authorities with advice and guidance on risks associated with home oxygen use through NHS and oxygen supplier websites, E-Learning and vocational training
 - facilitate oxygen suppliers to report/alert fire and rescue authorities and Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) to known incidents of patients smoking whilst using oxygen and patients deemed to be at higher risk from fire and identify any trends; and
 - help improve fire and oxygen safety advice for patients and health care professionals.

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- 2.3 Clearly, good partnership working between the Fire and Rescue Service and the three DH HOS suppliers is key to the successful delivery of fire and oxygen safety advice to patients using oxygen in their own homes, and firefighter safety issues. The three HOS suppliers are keen to work with fire and rescue services and would welcome a direct approach from fire and rescue services to facilitate better partnership working. Annex A provides the contact details for the HOS suppliers and the geographical areas they cover.

3. Cheshire Pilot

- 3.1 In looking to improve patient safety and investigate a potential service enhancement the Fire Safety and Smoking Working Group commissioned a pilot between Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) and Air Products. The purpose of the pilot was to deliver a reduction in domestic dwelling fires and safety incidents through a programme of Home Fire Risk Checks targeted at home oxygen users in the Cheshire area. Annex B provides a summary of the Cheshire Pilot.

Annex A

HOME OXYGEN SUPPLIER

Supplier	Main FRS Contact	Telephone Number	Service Regions
Air Products	Philippa Cracknell	0800 373 580	The North West, Yorkshire & Humberside, East Midlands, West Midlands, North London, Wales
BOC Linde	Kimberley Fisher	0800 136 603	The East of England
Air Liquide	Lau Vlaar	0500 823 773	South London, South Central, South East Coast, North East, South West

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Department of Health National Home Oxygen Service: Working in Partnership with Fire and Rescue Services

Annex B

Summary of the Cheshire Pilot

A partnership between Cheshire FRS and Air Products was formed in 2009 to reduce domestic dwellings fires and safety incidents in homes of people using oxygen in the Cheshire area. A key outcome of the pilot was to train Air Products engineers in completing Home Fire Risk Checks on behalf of Cheshire FRS, including the fitting of smoke alarms in those homes where one was not already present.

The first phase of the pilot involved a reciprocal training day for Cheshire FRS advocates and Air Products engineers. The Air Products training was aimed at improving the advocates awareness of the potential risks associated with home oxygen use and oxygen equipment and how patient information can be shared between the HOS suppliers and FRSs. The aim of the Cheshire FRS training was to train Air Product engineers in completing Home Fire Risk Checks, including the fitting of smoke alarms. This included a two day field based training which allowed Air Products engineers to work closely with Cheshire FRS staff whilst jointly delivering Home Fire Risk Checks and smoke alarm installations.

During February and March 2010, the pilot went operational and saw over 50 HOS patients being offered a Home Fire Risk Check by Air Products staff when delivering fresh supplies of oxygen to the user – 40 patients accepted and 10 declined, mainly because they had already had Home Fire Risk Check. The Home Fire Risk Check added an extra 29 minutes to the time the oxygen installer spent at the patient's home.

In summary, the two services integrated well and demonstrated how partnership working can benefit both the patient and firefighter safety.

END.

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The Pyrotechnic Articles (Safety) Regulations 2010

1. Background

- 1.1 The Pyrotechnic Articles (Safety) Regulations 2010 which came into effect on 4 July 2010 serve to transpose the European Directive 2007/23/EC into UK law.
- 1.2 This Directive is intended to harmonise safety standards for pyrotechnics across the EU while allowing Member States to retain existing national prohibitions and restrictions on possession, use and sale of particular categories of fireworks justified on grounds of public order, security, safety or environmental protection. It covers fireworks, theatrical pyrotechnics, and other pyrotechnical articles which include car and air-bag detonators and restraint systems, nail guns and shroud cutters.

2. Guidance

- 2.1 The Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) has developed guidance on the regulations and this is available at:
<http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/consumer-issues/docs/g/10-1106-pyrotechnic-regulations-guidance.pdf>
- 2.2 Guidance prepared by the Explosive Industry Group (EIG) and the Local Government Regulation (formerly the Local Authorities Coordinators of Regulatory Services (LACORS)) is available at:
<http://www.eig.org.uk/eig2007/?p=205>
- 2.3 The new regulations are available at:
http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2010/pdf/uksi_20101554_en.pdf
- 2.4 And the Government response to the public consultation is at:
<http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/consumer-issues/docs/p/10-1009-pyrotechnic-articles-ia.pdf>

And the Government response to the public consultation is at:
<http://www.bis.gov.uk/Consultations/pyrotechnic-articles-eu-directive?cat=closedwithresponse>

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