Closure of the National Community Fire Safety Centre

This Circular announces the closure of the National Community Fire Safety Centre. However, Communities and Local Government will continue to support the community fire safety agenda through continuing the national Fire Kills media campaign.

For further information, contact:

Mike Larking
Communities and Local Government
9th Floor
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London, SW1E 5DU

Direct line 020 7944 5695
Fax 020 7944 8319
E-mail Mike.larking@communities.gsi.gov.uk

General helpline 020 7944 8194
Website www.communities.gov.uk
Closure of the National Community Fire Safety Centre

1.0 Introduction

1.1 In 1995, an Audit Commission report (In the Line of Fire) recommended that the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) should shift from a reactive culture of fighting fires to a proactive culture of preventing them. This recommendation was reaffirmed in 1997 by the Safe as Houses report and again in the 2003 White Paper (Our Fire and Rescue Service) which said the Government would make community fire safety a statutory duty of Fire and Rescue Authorities.

1.2 The FRS can be justifiably proud of the progress it has made in reducing accidental fire deaths over the past 10-years or so. The trend in accidental fire deaths in the home is downwards. For the 12-month period up to 31 December 2005, the fire fatality figure show there were 212 deaths in accidental fires in the home compared with 230 in the previous year, a fall of 8%.

2.0 Background

2.1 The National Community Fire Safety Centre (NCFSC) was created in 1998 to provide a framework and focus for all CFS endeavours and best practice to flourish, as well as initiating national campaigns and materials for appropriate sectors of the community.

2.2 The NCFSC’s work has been particularly broad, drawing on techniques, interventions and outreach strategies which range from media campaigns to initiatives based on community development and health promotion models. The NCFSC has therefore been involved in community-based opportunities such as the development of FRS links with One Stop Shops; links with the Sure Start network; Neighbourhood Management pathfinders and links with the Government Offices.

2.3 The NCFSC has also produced a “toolbox” of guidance information and resources for FRS, which identifies key fire risks, target audiences, community networks and “tools” for effective communication. Similarly, the NCFSC has produced a comprehensive fire safety education programme which is designed to increase fire safe behaviour amongst primary and secondary children.

3.0 The Future

3.1 Since its creation the NCFSC has been a success story. However, nine years on the NCFSC has now successfully discharged most of its functions. Its strategic lead has helped considerably in making proactive fire safety work a core activity of FRS; CFS work is now a statutory requirement for all fire authorities; and much of the NCFSC work is regarded as mainstream activities by FRSs.
3.2 We therefore will close down the NCFSC. However, Communities and Local Government is firmly of the view that high profile media campaigns have played a key role in helping us deliver against the PSA 3 target to reduce accidental fire deaths in the home by 20% by 31st March 2010. We have good pre and post campaign research that demonstrates that the TV advertising works. Once the media finishes, the recall of campaign messages naturally reduces, but the overall effect of campaigns last much longer. People buy smoke alarms and test them more regularly, and our campaign tracking shows an awareness of the need for householders to make fire escape plans etc. Regular advertising is therefore required to keep fire safety messages in the public's awareness. But key to the success of the campaigns has been the excellent partnership between Government and the FRS to work together in an integrated approach to campaigning, delivering the same messages, the same campaigns, at the national and local level, using a common set of national materials and resources.

3.3 The Department will therefore demonstrate its ongoing commitment to supporting the CFS agenda through continuing the national Fire Kills media campaign, underpinned with targeted and tactical work to help FRS reach the hard to influence. This work will be managed and delivered by the Department’s Fire and Resilience Directorate and Directorate of Communication.

MIKE LARKING

Fire Kills Campaign Manager