



DEVON &
SOMERSET
FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

Legislative Changes To Fire Safety In Rented Accommodation

Thank you Chairman, for affording me the opportunity to put forward the proposed legislative changes that are required to alter the way we think regarding the use of smoke alarms and detectors in rented properties.

Mark Healey

Chairman

Devon & Somerset Fire Authority



There is currently no law in England that directly requires the provision of automatic fire detection.

Are you aware that approximately 20 percent , THAT'S ONE IN FIVE households have no working smoke alarms? This, without any pun intended, is alarming within itself.

Only a few weeks ago a Mother and daughter in Milton Keynes were the victims of a house fire.



Fatal Fire, I would like to talk you through the following incident

- **It's Saturday 17 October 2009 A sunny autumn day**

**Where? Ellacombe, Church Road, Torquay,
The English Riviera
what a pleasant place to live.**

- **It's 10.35am**



The Property/Occupancy

- A Family of 5 lived at Church Rd
- It's a single dwelling, rented from a local housing association.
- Which had NO smoke alarms fitted
- Father's name Michael
- Mother's name Gillian
- Children, Ricky, Stephanie and Ben, their foster child.



Front of
property prior
to DSFRS
arrival



Photograph
taken by a
member of the
public



Time line of Fire Events

09 00 Ben awake and unsupervised

09:30 Stephanie in her bedroom, texting,
Older brother Ricky asleep in the dining room.

10:19 Ricky woken by Stephanie.

10:30 Fire discovered by Ben.

10:31 Children go upstairs to inform parents.

10:33 Ricky goes downstairs to investigate, opens fire compartment door
At same time Michael observes smoke at bottom of stairs moving upwards.

10:34 Gillian goes to top of stairs, smoke now at head of stairs.

10:34 Stephanie calls fire service from her mobile phone.

10:35 Michael also calls fire service off wife's mobile, at the same time Ricky calls
service from outside the premises.

10:37 Second call from Stephanie diverted to Police assumed to be silent 999 call.

10:41 Torquay appliance 172 in attendance.

10:42 2nd Torquay appliance 171 arrives.

10:48 The 3rd appliance 173 arrives as does two others, the fire is extinguished shortly
after.





This fire engine and crew were there in approximately six minutes from time of call. A distance of three miles from the station. Look at the severity of the fire in the background.

Note the member of the public. He was very instrumental in helping Gillian.

We can help prevent scenes like this by supporting Adrian Sanders, Private Members Bill.







Ben McAuliffe

Age 8

Stephanie Wojak

Age 15

BOTH DIED IN THIS FIRE.

I would like to pause for a second or two so we can reflect on the image before you. This is preventable.





Where next?

Similar preventable tragedies have occurred everywhere in the UK.

Another reason for asking you to support the raising of fire safety standards in rented accommodation.



Adrian Sanders MP

**Support this Private Members Bill in
House of Commons, November 2010**

**This is not legislation for legislation's
sake**



Gas Safety

**1 Death due to gas explosion and
26 Deaths from Accidental Carbon
Monoxide Poisoning in 2008**

**Landlords MUST carry out annual Gas Safety
Checks. So why not carry out annual smoke
alarm checks?**



Electrical Safety

38 Deaths related to electricity (2008)

**Landlords MUST provide safe electrical systems
So once again why do we fail to carry out fire safety
checks on smoke alarms?**



Fire Safety

331 fatalities

9937 non fatal casualties

Due to fires in dwellings throughout the UK. (2007) A proportion of these fatalities and casualties were avoidable, if we had changed the way we look at fire safety methodology in rented accommodation.



Fire Safety

**There was no working smoke alarm
where 222 of these people died**

A sobering thought.



Smoke Alarms

So why isn't it a legal requirement for landlords to provide a suitable and sufficient fire alarm system in all cases to the properties that they rent out AND MAKE PROFIT FROM?

“ DON'T THEY HAVE A DUTY OF



So what are the advantages and benefits in supporting such a move, to make smoke alarms a legal requirement?

Individuals, families and friends

Landlords

NHS

Localised business generation

Fire Service call reduction



As a rent paying customer:

Do you agree they should have the right to feel safe in their surroundings, in the knowledge that a smoke alarm is fitted to a legislative standard? That friends and relatives should also be afforded the same protection when visiting.

From a Landlord's perspective:

If smoke alarms became a legal requirement and were implemented, there is the possibility that insurance companies may look upon their premiums favourably, being seen as responsible Landlords.



Introducing this legislation could bring potential NHS savings of £1.7 billion.

9937 non fatal fire casualties, multiplied by the financial strain it puts on our NHS resources, doctors' time, surgeons' time, nurses, paramedics, take up of valuable bed space. And of course the suffering of those who became the victims of fire, because there was no smoke alarm fitted to alert them of the impending danger. The monetary savings would be colossal. Up to £170,000 per seriously injured fire victim



Business generation,

If legislation was implemented to hard wire smoke alarms in rented accommodation, there would be a need for local businesses to provide a service to install them, which stimulates the local economy and would drive down the cost of installation.

Benefits to your Fire and Rescue Service.

Reduced emergency callouts is just one saving, let alone the cost of wages materials and fair wear and tear to equipment.



Typical rent

£300 - £2300 per month

For a one bedroom flat



Typical Cost of Alarm

£300 - £400 one off installation cost

**For a one bedroom flat
(mains powered alarm)**

A small price to pay for saving lives



Conclusion

FIVE times more people are killed by fire than gas and electricity combined...

Shouldn't fire safety legislation be strengthened?



Conclusion

Please lobby your local MP to support the Bill.

Should we not support it directly as the Fire Commission?



DEVON &
SOMERSET
FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

Fire Safety (Protection of Tenants) Bill

November 2010

Adrian Sanders MP