



07 AUG 2017

Northamptonshire County Council

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Mr H Shah
HM Assistant Coroner for Northamptonshire
110 Whitworth Road
Northampton
NN1 4HJ

Please ask for: [REDACTED]

Tel: [REDACTED]

Our Ref: DD/ss

Your Ref: HS/Chauhan

Date: 3 August 2017

If you have any difficulty in obtaining the above telephone number please ring (01604) 797000 or email enquiries@northantsfire.org.uk.

Dear Mr Shah

Re: Rasikaben Lallubhai CHAUHAN (deceased) – Regulation 28

I am writing in response to your letter dated 14 June 2017 requesting us to provide information required in your Regulation 28 Report to Action to Prevent Future Deaths.

In respect of the "Matters of Concern"

- 1) It is not clear if any awareness about this specific risk has been raised at a local or national level, with relevant community and religious organisations.

National Awareness

Following the issue of the Regulation 28 letter and report to me, I contacted the national prevention lead for the National Fire Chief Council (NFCC). The NFCC is the professional body that represents Fire Chiefs across the country. The NFCC has an online communication tool known as "communities" which allows information to be sent to all UK Fire and Rescue Services. Northamptonshire have, therefore, made the risks and circumstances which led to this death known to other UK Fire Services in order to alert them. We have received a number of responses from other services highlighting work they have also carried out. Examples of these are enclosed with this letter.

The risk around the use of candles in the home and the cultural aspects associated with this are well known across the whole fire and rescue sector and targeted safety advice features in nationally driven campaigns supported by local action plans. The national Firekills Candle Safety Campaign will take place specifically during the week of the 5 day Diwali celebrations in October (16th -22nd) and we will be fully promoting that campaign focusing on keeping clothing (including Saris and scarves) from divas and other flames. I include for your information, the following link to the campaign calendar <http://www.cfoa.org.uk/12029>. This is just one example of a wide range of targeted safety campaigns led by the Prevention and Protection Committee within the NFCC which feature in local delivery plans providing fire, water and road safety advice to communities within Northamptonshire.



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Northamptonshire
County Council

In respect of "Actions that should be taken to prevent future deaths",

The Fire and Rescue Service Act 2004 requires all fire and rescue authorities to undertake prevention activity. At a national level this is coordinated through the NFCC and supporting committees as mentioned previously.

At a local level, Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service develop prevention strategies through analysis of local risk (Integrated Risk Management Planning) and through developing delivery plans through the integrated Fire/Police community safety function and through our fire station based personnel who are embedded within the local communities.

One of the key activities undertaken is the undertaking of Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSC) to residents. In the past ten years Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service has carried out over 50,000 of these visits, this has included the fitting of free smoke detectors in the majority of cases. Where appropriate, work is carried out in partnership with other organisations and any potential risks that are highlighted to us are acted on by our personnel as a matter of priority.

Fire safety advice is regularly delivered to community groups and to residents living in sheltered accommodation, which cover the dangers of cooking, using candles / prayer shrines, smoking, electrical appliance, the flammability of Sari's and what action to take if they catch fire. At these visits posters and fire safety information are handed out to display around the building and individuals' flats.

As a Service we also provide safety messages via our website at www.Northantsfire.org.uk along with Social Media Facebook and Twitter which provide regular safety messages throughout the year.

Specific Actions following the Incident on 27 December 2016:

Whenever a serious fire such as this occurs, a Community Impact Assessment is undertaken to capture all of the information required to inform follow-up action to help prevent any similar occurrences. In respect of this incident we have been working with a number of partners including the Housing Scheme Managers for Nazarana and Ghirana Nivas, representatives of the building owners and management, Northamptonshire Police Community Engagement Officers.

During the weeks following the fire, the Service maintained a constant presence in Nazarana to support and provide reassurance and advice to the Scheme Manager, family of the deceased and other residents and their families. A fire safety information poster (attached) was put together by our Prevention Team and Arson Task Force detailing what to do if clothing catches fire. The poster was translated into Gujrat and Bengali and displayed around the building as well as being put in Gharan Nivas, Albert Road, Wellingborough, their sister organisation. Fire Safety booklets, in Gujrat, Bengali and English were also distributed. The owners and managers of the premises (Accord Group) ensured that posters in both of their properties (Nazarana and Ghirana Nivas) were distributed to all residents' flats and communal areas.

On 13 February 2017, our District Liaison Officer met with a number of staff from the Accord Group at Nazarana to discuss how fire safety awareness amongst the residents could be improved. Attendees at the meeting included the Scheme managers for the two sites, the Accord Group Risk & Health & Safety Manager, the Accord Group Head of Locations and representatives from the NFRS Prevention Team.

During the meeting it was decided to do deliver a safety talk to residents from both Nazarana and Ghirana Nivas sites at the same time. The topics covered at the safety talk to residents were:

- Site Fire Evacuation Procedure – explained and given out to each resident and displayed in corridors.
- Stay Put Policy – explained and given out to each resident and displayed in corridors.
- Procedure if there is a fire in communal area or corridor.
- Candle safety – explained and leaflet given to each resident.
- Converting to battery candles – Accord offered to buy the residents the battery operated candles if they committed to change to these. All residents agreed to this.
- Clothing catching fire – explained the stop, drop and roll procedure.
- Incense sticks / prayer shrines – explained dangers of leaving them burning and carrying around.
- Cooking safely – explained oils, unattended cooking and not tackling a fire themselves and raising the alarm.
- Electrical safety – explained voltages of appliances that residents may have brought back from abroad which could be dangerous.
- All residents agreed to home fire safety checks and crews delivered them. [REDACTED] to do monthly checks and remind residents of safety advice.

On 26 April 2017, our District Liaison Officers discussed the incident at the East and West Midlands Prevention Managers meeting to share the learning with colleagues from other brigades.

On 29 June 2017, six months after the incident, home fire safety checks were carried out at Nazarana, together with the Scheme Manager to ensure residents were continuing to follow the advice that had been given to them. Although no serious safety issues were identified, concerns of potential hazards in kitchens were highlighted with wearing traditional Saris. Additional electrical points and broken electrical points were highlighted, as some residents were housing fridges and fridge freezers in their bedrooms which were blocking exits. Our prevention team were pleased to report back after their safety checks, that all the residents were using the battery candles.

On 30 June 2017 a joint safety talk to a Hindu / Sikh Women's Community Group was given with Police Community Engagement Officers also in attendance.

As part of our prevention strategy going forward we contacted Dostiyo who run a weekly group at Nazarana. Joint safety talks from the police and fire are now taking place at these meetings. [REDACTED] who runs Dostiyo group also oversees the Zingali group which has a group for women and men each consisting of 30 predominantly retired members from the Hindi and Sikh community and visits are also planned for them.

We have linked in with The Indian Hindu Welfare Organisation to deliver home fire safety talks and they have agreed to advertise fire safety messages in their quarterly newsletters. The Independent Advisory Group for Wellingborough and East Northants has agreed to assist us with engaging with the Indian community with fire safety education.

Police Community Engagement Officers send out quarterly Safety Newsletters to 900 Community Leaders across the county which will include fire safety messages. These leaders have been invited to attend a meeting at Police and Fire Headquarters at Wootton Hall on 19 October 2017.

Our prevention team will be in attendance to ensure safety messages reach all communities and discuss future planned work.

I do hope that the information within our response to your Regulation 28 Report provides you with an assurance that NFRS has not only responded appropriately to this very serious fire incident but that there are suitable and sufficient mechanisms in place at a local and national level to ensure that risk information is shared effectively and that Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service will continue to feed any learning outcomes into prevention strategies and action plans in order to help prevent incidents occurring.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need anything further.



Darren Dovey
Chief Fire Officer

cc: Anne Pember, HM Coroner for the County of Northamptonshire

Enc. Home Fire Safety Checklist
Poster

Attachments



loose clothing
presentation 2013.ppt

<https://vimeo.com/15841343>

<https://vimeo.com/158339943>

<https://vimeo.com/19395062>

East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service shared the following case study, videos and safety leaflet:-

<http://www.esfrs.org/black-museum-cases/all-the-black-museum-cases/vulnerable-people-and-clothing-fires/>