



Office for Product
Safety & Standards

Office for Product Safety and Standards

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Peter H Straker
Assistant Coroner
North London Coroner's Service
Barnet Coroner's Court
29 Wood Street
London EN5 4BE
By email: [REDACTED]

31 January 2025

Dear Mr Straker,

Thank you for sharing your Regulation 28 Report to Prevent Future Deaths, dated 6 December 2024, following your investigation and inquest into the deaths of Ms Champagauri Bhatt and Mr Dipak Bhatt, from inhalation injuries sustained due to a fire caused by an electrical fault in a tumble dryer.

I was very sorry to hear of Champagauri and Dipak's deaths. If you have the opportunity, please do pass on my deepest sympathies to their family and friends.

The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS), within the Department for Business and Trade, is the UK's national product regulator, responsible for the regulation of most consumer goods, including electrical appliances. OPSS was made aware of this incident by London Fire Brigade on 31 March 2023, and took the following steps - we made contact with the manufacturer of the tumble dryer, Hotpoint UK Appliances Ltd, and with the relevant local authority that leads the regulation of the business through Primary Authority, North Yorkshire County Council. Following OPSS' evaluation of the early information in this incident, it was agreed with North Yorkshire County Council that they would lead the investigation in this case. OPSS remains in regular contact with the Council and continues to offer them any necessary support. I understand that they also received a copy of your report and will be responding to you directly.

You may be aware that in 2018-2019, OPSS was the lead regulator overseeing a national recall affecting up to 5 million tumble dryers, sold under the Hotpoint, Indesit, Swan, Creda and ProLine brands. That recall was instigated to address a risk of fire caused by fluff coming into contact with heating elements within the dryers. We have no evidence to suggest that the model in this incident was involved in the earlier recall.

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I would like to address the matters of concern in your report which OPSS is best placed to consider.

You have raised the issue of data and information sharing between manufacturers and regulators, particularly when manufacturers are investigating potential safety issues with their products. Under the Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations 2016, manufacturers of electrical goods are already required to notify regulators when they become aware of a safety issue with a product they have placed on the market. The Regulations also provide regulators with powers to require information from manufacturers or other persons in the supply chain regarding product safety issues, and to require corrective actions to ensure they are addressed.

OPSS has also established a process of information sharing with London Fire Brigade (LFB) and other Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) to collect information about product-related fires, known as Product-related Fire Notifications (PFNs). In more serious cases, including those involving serious injuries or fatalities, fire investigators can undertake detailed investigations to determine the cause, defect or failure that led to a product-related fire breaking out. OPSS has been gathering this information in partnership with LFB since 2020, and other FRS since February 2023, when OPSS published guidance [Product-Related Fire Incident Notifications - GOV.UK](#) to assist and support FRS to report product-related fires.

This approach helps OPSS in identifying products that may be putting people at risk, so we can consider and take any action necessary. As an example, OPSS were notified of reports from several FRS of fires in the UK caused by the same UPP brand of e-bike battery. OPSS was able to carry out enforcement action to prohibit online marketplaces, online sellers and the manufacturer from supplying the battery in the UK. OPSS continues to actively promote the value of reporting product-related fires to individual FRS and fire investigation teams, and the role it can play in dealing with unsafe products.

The Government has introduced a new Product Regulation and Metrology Bill, which is currently going through Parliament. The Bill includes provisions that will facilitate, among other things, information exchange on product safety issues and includes powers to make regulations for information sharing and co-operation with, for example, emergency services in future. It also includes powers to amend our existing product regulations to strengthen notification requirements, should that be necessary in future.

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You have raised the issue of manufacturer risk assessments. Those supplying electrical equipment such as tumble dryers are already required to carry out pre-market risk assessments when assessing the overall conformity of their products to the requirements in the regulations, and document these actions. This includes risks that might arise from the product's use in instances of predictable human behaviour, such as when people are asleep. OPSS' PRISM tool is a post-market risk assessment methodology for product regulators to use across the broad spectrum of consumer products. While businesses can consider the use of PRISM, it is their responsibility to determine how to fully identify and mitigate risks that might arise in their specific products before they are placed on the market, and fulfil their safety obligations in the regulations.

I know that you have also addressed your report to the British Standards Institution (BSI) regarding your recommendation that BSI Committee CPL/61 should review the voluntary standards concerning the manufacture of mains and sub mains operated condensate pumps and RFI filters, to consider whether they should be improved. I would like to reassure you that OPSS is committed to supporting any changes to product standards that could help raise safety levels further. Representatives from OPSS attend this Committee, and we will work with BSI to update and improve the standard wherever necessary.

You also raised the issue of product identification plates. The Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations 2016 require that before placing electrical equipment on the market, a manufacturer must ensure that it bears a type, batch or serial number or other element allowing its identification, and is marked with the contact details at which the manufacturer can be contacted. BSI have previously been asked by Ministers to consider the feasibility for fire resistant identification marking for large electrical appliances to be included in international standards. In response, BSI commissioned a working group to explore how a requirement for fire-resistant marking could work in practice. This working group is currently trialing a pilot approach to enabling the identification of fire-damaged appliances and supporting their traceability. We are seeking an update from BSI on the progress of this pilot project.

I hope that Champagauri and Dipak's family are reassured that this tragic incident is already being considered by product regulators. While North Yorkshire County Council is taking the lead in investigating this case, OPSS will continue to engage with them and other stakeholders, so that we can provide any support needed and can learn from any

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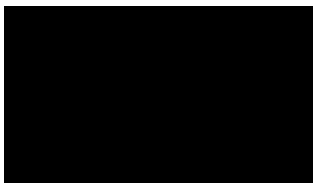
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lessons that may have wider implications for the safety of this or other similar products in future.

Thank you again for writing to OPSS on this matter. I would be grateful if you could share a copy of this letter with colleagues who may find it useful.

Kind regards,



Chief Executive
OPSS



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