

Lewisham Homes – who manage a proportion of the housing stock of Lewisham Council – must take measures to improve their fire safety actions after a successful prosecution brought by London Fire and Rescue Service under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order (known as the FSO).

The case concerned a fire on the 16th floor of a Deptford tower block in February 2011, brought before Woolwich Crown Court. The fire was started deliberately, but spread from one flat to communal areas and into an adjacent flat where two residents sadly died.

The housing manager of Lewisham Homes was fined £40,000, with additional costs of £23,407, after a guilty plea of failing to properly maintain fire doors and keep the FSO risk assessment under review.

Reference:

<http://www.constructionenquirer.com/2016/02/04/fire-door-warning-following-fatal-tower-block-blaze/>

The presiding judge said that the prosecution should serve as a “wake up call” to alert all those responsible for residential buildings of the serious risks that can arise by not maintaining suitable and sufficient fire safety measures (as required under the FSO).

The Importance of Fire Doors

Fire doors have a critical role to carry out in preventing the growth and spread of fire. They are there as essential elements to maintain compartmentation and fire separation – that is to keep fire to its place of origin, prevent the spread of heat and especially smoke, and minimise risks to individuals.

Smoke is the biggest threat to people from fire, and the risks of smoke spread are tremendously increased should the fire be allowed to spread and grow. So an important aspect of fire door function is for the door to close properly, and for the fire and smoke seals as fitted to operate in fire as intended.

Door Maintenance

All fire doors should be routinely inspected for signs of deterioration and damage that could inhibit their designed operation in case of fire. That should include a number of important aspects, for example:

- The condition and state of essential hardware (e.g. hinges, locks, latches, closers, floor springs).
- Closing of the door (e.g. binding of door leaves, the leading edge to the door frame and meeting edges of double door, any obstructions).
- Condition of fire resistance and smoke seals, as fitted (e.g. missing sections and general wear).
- Operating gaps around the door edges, including the gap under the door.
- Condition of any fire-resisting glazing panels in the door leaf and any associated door screen (e.g. especially condition of the retaining beads and the bead fixings and any holes through the glass).
- Damage to the door leaf and frame from use and impact (particularly affecting the face and edges).
- Effective functioning of hold-open devices, if fitted.

Further detailed guidance available from the ASDMA web site: [www.asdma.com/Knowledge Centre](http://www.asdma.com/Knowledge_Centre)

Door repair, maintenance and replacement, if needed, should be carried out by a knowledgeable specialist who has the necessary expertise. ASDMA members can be contacted via our web site.