

FAO - Rosemary Butler
Committee Chair for the
Legislation Committee No 1,
National Assembly for Wales

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Date: 4th October

Dear Rosemary,

Building Research Establishment Review of Cost Benefit Analysis of Residential Sprinklers

I have been asked to write to you to outline the timescales and the issues surrounding the above research. The aim of the research is:

- To carry out some independent cost benefit analysis of residential sprinklers

The specific objectives are:

- To update BRE 2004 cost benefit analysis
- To consider sprinkler protection in residential premises related to the impact of future trends of fires and their consequences

In 2002 BRE carried out a research study on the effectiveness of sprinklers. It was at that time commissioned by Communities and Local Government (formerly Buildings Division of ODPM). The study was published in 2004 and included a cost benefit analysis. The 2002 research and subsequent report of 2004 drew much of its data from the preceding ten years, where there was very little domestic sprinkler activity to draw concrete conclusions. The report did not take into account empirical evidence offered from other international studies.

The report also acted in the then economic cost of life. The report found that in the case of reducing the number of deaths sprinklers would be between 55% and 85% effective and in the case of the reduction in the average property damage, would be 35% to 65%. This has been challenged subsequently by every other report into the effectiveness of sprinklers, except for the Thames Gateway study which drew much of the research from the original BRE study.

There is a small stakeholder group which work with BRE currently in updating their original research using more empirical data, but the same cost benefit analysis tool, so there can be no discrepancy over the validity of the findings.

I represent the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) on this group and we had our first meeting of the stakeholder group on the 22nd September 2010, whereby we agreed the aims, objectives, program of work, work package tasks for work package 1 and 2 (work package 2 concentrating on economic matters). During that meeting the researchers presented to us that they felt that sprinkler effectiveness would change dramatically and would be more in line with other international research findings. Typically in the reduction in the number of deaths, they felt it would fall around 85% and a reduction in the average property fire would fall around 90%.

The next meeting of the stakeholder group where the analysis will be discussed by the group and the figures shown to the group is the 10th November 2010. Clearly it will be too late to report to the committee by then, hence my letter today.

I hope this has clarified some issues surrounding the BRE research and if I can clarify any other points, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Chris Enness
Deputy Chief Fire Officer