



## DEBATE PACK

Number CDP 2017/0204, 31 October 2017

# Product safety and fire risk in residential premises

This pack has been prepared ahead of the debate to be held in Westminster Hall on Wednesday 1 November 2017 from 2.30-4pm on product safety and fire risk in residential premises. The debate will be opened by Jim Fitzpatrick MP.

A number of product safety issues around the recall and fire safety of domestic appliances led to two recent Government sponsored reviews. These reported in 2016 (the [Faulds Wood review](#)) and in March 2017 (the [Working Group on Product Recalls and Safety](#)). Concerns have previously been raised in [Parliament around the recall of Whirlpool tumble dryers](#), and the London Fire Brigade are currently running a [‘total recalls’ campaign](#) that calls for changes to recall systems and product safety rules. The LFB, with others, [wrote to the Prime Minister](#) on the issue of Fire Safety in August 2017.

This briefing sets out the product safety system, detail of recent reviews, the campaign by the London Fire Brigade, recent Government statements on the issue and further reading.

The House of Commons Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee are holding an inquiry on current safety regulations for electrical goods in the UK

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/business-energy-industrial-strategy/news-parliament-2017/product-safety/>

Their evidence session from 31 October 2017 can be watched here:

<http://www.parliamentlive.tv/Event/Index/a4917fc0-3c4d-402b-bcf6-a446a1e5e602>

The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

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# 1. Background

## 1.1 Background to debate: London Fire Brigade campaign

In [July 2016](#) the London Fire Brigade (LFB) launched their 'Total Recalls' Campaign. Stating that 'Nearly one fire a day in London involves white goods', the campaign calls for a number of measures:<sup>1</sup>

1. A single, publicly accessible register of product recalls
2. Include international recalls on the UK recall register
3. Publicise recalls better to reduce confusion
4. Publish risk assessments when a fault is identified
5. Greater regulation of secondhand appliances
6. Change the way fridges and freezer are manufactured
7. Mark all appliances with model and serial number
8. Include sleeping risk as a factor in risk assessments

Many of the actions relate to the system of recalls (see section 1.3 below), while other 'asks' relate to the sale of goods and their manufacturing. Fridge safety in relation to fire is a particular issue raised by the LFB.<sup>2</sup>

The LFB, along with others including the Mayor of London, wrote to the Prime Minister in August 2017 on the issue of fire safety. The letter asked for the Government to respond to recent Government commissioned reports on appliance safety:<sup>3</sup>

We appreciate that the Government has been looking into these issues and commend the work that Margot James at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has undertaken.

We are extremely concerned, however, that the review of the UK product recall system was first announced in November 2014. This was then launched in March 2015 with consumer champion, Lynn Faulds Wood leading the review which reported in February 2016 with a series of recommendations. A steering group was then set up to take these forward. Following the Shepherds Court fire, a new working group to replace the steering group was set up in autumn 2016 which published its recommendations in July 2017. We are now awaiting a Government response to the report which we understand is due in the autumn.

This means that the process of review has been ongoing for almost three years and as yet there has been no substantial changes made to improve this system. What is needed now is action.

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<sup>1</sup> London Fire Brigade, "[What we are calling for](#)",

<sup>2</sup> A page on their website provides more details on their concerns around fridges: <http://www.london-fire.gov.uk/total-recalls/change-the-way-fridges-and-freezers-are-constructed.asp>

<sup>3</sup> LFB letter to Rt Hon Teresa May, "[Thousands of dangerous white goods are still being used in homes across the UK](#)", 18 August 2017

There are some simple things the Government can do. For instance, it is extremely difficult for consumers to check if appliances they have in their home are subject to product recall. We believe there should be one, trusted, searchable place to look up your appliances – this should be set up centrally on gov.uk.

We are also concerned that the review process did not address manufacturing standards for white goods. For example, all fridges and freezers should be constructed to keep flammable insulation material protected from the components in the appliance which could cause a fire. All appliances should be marked with the model/serial number so they can be identified after a fire. There needs to be improvements in the way that producers and distributors undertake assessments of how safe white goods are to specifically take into account the risk of a fire starting while people are asleep.

**We are writing to you now to call for the recommendations of the working group report to be acted upon swiftly and in full, to include a single register for UK product recalls. We also call upon the Government to put its full weight behind bringing about changes in the international standards for how white goods are manufactured and to look at what can be done to bring about these changes more quickly in the UK. [bold retained from letter]**

This note sets out the current product safety regime, recent issues around product safety and summaries of recent Government reports on product safety.

## 1.2 Product safety

A PQ at the end of June 2017 asked about fridge safety: “To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make a statement on how best to ensure that fridge freezers and other white goods are safe for use”. The Government’s response gave a brief update on their position on product safety (on 19 July):<sup>4</sup>

The UK system of product safety requires white goods to meet strict safety requirements before they are put into use. Where faults occur, Trading Standards have powers to order recalls or other corrective actions.

Consumers can check for the latest information on recalls on the GOV.UK website searching for ‘product recall campaign’.

The Working Group on Product Recalls and Safety submitted its final report in April 2017. I had intended to publish the report then, but the announcement of the General Election prevented me from doing so.

Following the Grenfell Tower fire tragedy, I asked the Working Group to urgently review their findings and their report has been published today.

I have also asked the Working Group to look at further potential areas of product safety and recalls where action might be required, in light of the tragic events at Grenfell Tower.

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<sup>4</sup> [PQ 2104 \[on Domestic Appliances: Safety\] 19 July 2017](#)

A written statement was also laid on the same day setting out the findings from the working group and setting out the Government position in more detail.<sup>5</sup>

The [Working group's report](#), provides an overview of the regime for the product design and safety in the UK:<sup>6</sup>

Product safety starts with manufacturers designing and manufacturing products that comply with reasonable safety standards. The concepts of product liability, the general obligation to place only safe products on the market and more detailed product specific safety regulations underpin the legal liability and responsibilities of manufacturers and importers under UK civil and criminal law.

The manufacturer must fully consider the likely uses of its products (including anticipated misuse by consumers). Greater understanding of this part of the equation is likely to have an impact on design, safety systems and, if necessary, the nature of corrective actions.

Products are required to be safe and what is safe in the case of domestic electrical goods is defined by reference to 'essential requirements' that are met by certification against approved standards produced by UK (BS), European (EN) and global (ISO) standard setting bodies.

The British Standards Institution operates a series of expert committees, comprising business, regulatory and consumer expertise that review the content of UK and international standards and support the development of new standards when required. There are a large number of detailed standards relating to the design and safety of domestic electrical appliances.

Development and revision of standards is a continual process, driven and supported by businesses wanting to do the right thing to improve industry standards and the quality of products available to the consumer.

Consumer safety organisations such as Electrical Safety First, test laboratories, BEIS, the Fire Service and other public bodies are able to input to the standards making process which is independent, open, transparent and trusted.

## EU safety standards

All consumer products sold in the UK must carry a 'CE mark'. In brief, a CE mark must be affixed to certain categories of products sold in the 27 member states of the EU and Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway (in other words, the European Economic Area, or EEA). A CE mark is a declaration by the manufacturer that the product in question complies with all relevant EU legislation that mandates:

- compliance with specific standards and requirements concerning product safety, environmental impact, consumer protection, etc.; and
- the placing of a CE mark

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<sup>5</sup> Working Group on Product Recalls and Safety: [Written Statement – HCWS74](#), 19 July 2017

<sup>6</sup> [Report of the Working Group on Product Recalls and Safety](#), 30 March 2017, p7

In effect, CE marking enables a product to enter the European market. More than 30% of industrial products can be sold on the EU market only if they bear the CE Mark. Within the EU and the broader EEA, the marketing and use of products which carry a CE mark cannot be restricted unless there is evidence of non-compliance with the underlying EU legislation justifying such restriction. A CE mark is also intended to serve as a sign of assurance for consumers and other end users of the products.

A wide range of products are covered by EU laws that mandate CE marking. It is important to note that CE marking does not address all regulatory requirements that may apply to a product. A CE mark only signifies compliance with a certain set of EU legislation that specifically mandates CE marking. There is other EU legislation that regulates products, but does not mandate CE marking. For example:

- [Directive 2001/95/EC](#) (the “General Product Safety Directive”) stipulates that a product which is intended for consumers must meet certain product safety requirements before it is placed on the market. However, the General Product Safety Directive does not require such product to be CE marked.
- [Directive 2012/19/EC](#) (the ‘WEEE Directive’ on waste electrical and electronic equipment), stipulates the manner in which electrical and electronic equipment which constitutes waste should be collected and treated, and also provides that electrical and electronic equipment must not be designed or produced in a manner which prevents the reuse of their waste. However, the WEEE Directive does not require such products to be CE marked.

In other words, the fact that a product bears a CE mark does not necessarily mean that it complies with all other EU legislation that applies to that product.

Finally, it is important to point out that CE marking of a consumer ‘white good’ is in addition to other legal requirements as to consumer protection, product safety, environmental protection, etc.

## 1.3 Product recall

### Overview of the process

In the UK, general product safety is covered by the [General Product Safety Regulations 2005](#). Producers, importers and sellers of goods are required to put on the market products which are safe. If they become aware that a product they are selling is not safe, that there is a risk of serious injury, damage or death, they should institute “corrective action”. The defective product should immediately be removed from sale and recalled in some way, which might mean a modification, repair or other process which removes the potential harm.

Manufacturers, importers, distributors, etc. are required to carry out checks to ensure consumer products are safe – this is a requirement under the [EU General Product Safety Directive](#) (GPSD). These duties are enforced by Market Surveillance Authorities (MSAs). In the UK, local authority Trading Standards Services are the main MSAs in respect of

consumer goods (whether they are bought from a shop, online or second-hand). Specifically, it is the responsibility of Trading Standards to stop unsafe products from entering the country, remove products already on the market, conduct random sampling, offer advice and assistance to business, and investigate reports of unsafe products.

## Who monitors product safety recalls?

In respect of white goods (i.e. electrical equipment), manufacturers are required to inform their local Trading Standards Authority of any issue that poses a serious or moderate risk to health and safety. General product safety is covered by the [General Product Safety Regulations 2005](#). Under these Regulations, the manufacturer must:

- contact consumers who have purchased the product in order to inform them of the recall, “where and to the extent it is practicable to do so”
- publish a notice in such form and such manner as is likely to bring to the attention of purchasers of the product the risk the product poses and the fact of the recall, or
- make arrangements for the collection or return of the product from consumers who have purchased it or for its disposal

Although the recall communication will be led by the manufacturer, they must be supported by the distribution chain (e.g. retailers). This is to ensure that the recall communication quickly reaches as many customers as possible thereby reducing the risk of consumers being harmed by the product.

## Challenges of communicating a product safety recall to consumers

Product recalls are often complex and it can be difficult to trace the customer – for example they may not have provided contact details when the product was purchased or have moved house. According to [YouGov research](#), just over a third of consumers currently register their appliances.

Where manufacturers do not know the owners of affected products they have to resort to ‘broadcasting’ details of the recall in the hope that consumers see the information, realise that they have the product and make contact. In practice, a manufacturer may need to use a combination of approaches in the hope that at least one communication gets through to every customer with an affected product.

A report on the findings of an [Independent Review](#) into product recall<sup>7</sup> under Lynn Faulds Wood, was published in February 2016 (see below). According to this report, consumers are confused by the number of websites (over 30 in some form or another) which list consumer product recalls. The main websites are:

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<sup>7</sup> [“UK Consumer Product Recall – An Independent Review by Lynn Faulds Wood”](#), February 2016, [online] (accessed 25 October 2017)

- [Chartered Trading Standards Institute](#)
- [OECD Recall Portal](#)
- [RAPEX](#)
- [Electrical Safety First](#)
- [UK Association of Fire Investigators](#)

The feeling from stakeholders was a need for more information sharing and more consistency between the main players involved in a product recall.

### **Consumer redress**

A UK consumer will have the benefit of certain statutory rights depending on the date of purchase of the good (i.e. the faulty tumble dryer, fridge etc):

- If the product was purchased on or before 30 September 2015, then the [Sale of Goods Act 1979](#) (as amended) (the 'SGA 1979') will still apply.
- If the product was purchased on or after 1 October 2015, then the new [Consumer Rights Act 2015](#) (the 'CRA 2015') will apply.

There are separate Library briefing papers on both the "[Sale of Goods Act 1979](#)" (CBP 2239) and the "[Consumer Rights Act 2015](#)" (CBP 6588).

In addition, if a consumer bought a faulty white good using a credit card, depending on the circumstances, he/she may be able to pursue a claim against the credit card company under section 75 of the [Consumer Credit Act 1974](#). This provision makes the credit provider "jointly and severally liable" with the retailer for any breach of contract or misrepresentation by the company, provided the item costs between £100 and £30,000. This protection applies to purchases made over a counter, online or by phone.

### **Personal injury**

In addition to statutory rights under consumer protection legislation, a personal injury claim might also be brought to recover financial compensation for anyone who has suffered a personal injury through no fault of their own. Much would turn on the circumstances of the case.

## **1.4 Calls to reform product recalls**

### **Background**

#### **Whirlpool tumble dryers**

Following Whirlpool's acquisition of the Hotpoint/Indesit brands in 2014, it carried out a safety review of its product portfolio. As part of this review, Whirlpool identified a fault with two tumble dryer models manufactured between April 2004 and September 2015. In some cases, excess fluff coming into contact with the heating element, presented a fire risk. The affected brands are: Hotpoint, Indesit, and Creda.

Whirlpool has asked the public to check whether their machine is one of those affected and, if so, to contact the company through its [dedicated website](#). Consumers were advised of a 6-8 week wait for an engineer visit. However, it has been reported that some consumers have waited as long as 16 months for the necessary repair.<sup>8</sup> Initially, consumers were advised by Whirlpool that the dryers were safe to use provided the following precautions were observed: the tumble dryer was not left on overnight; the machine was not left unattended during the day; the lint filter was cleaned after every use; and the machine was properly vented. However, in February 2017, Whirlpool updated its website advising consumers to unplug faulty machines and refrain from using them at all until they have been modified.<sup>9</sup>

There was an Adjournment debate on [Faulty tumble dryers \(fire risk\)](#) on 13 September 2016, introduced by Andy Slaughter MP following a serious fire in a block of flats in Shepherd's Bush on 9 August 2016 which began in an Indesit dryer. A further debate on [Whirlpool: Product Safety System](#) took place on 26 April 2017. Margot James, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) gave the following update of the Whirlpool situation:<sup>10</sup>

We have made considerable progress since I last had the opportunity to engage in a debate on product safety. However, I see from hon. Members' remarks, to which I have listened carefully, that that has perhaps not been communicated as effectively as it should. Allow me to put that right. I reiterate that the Government take consumer product safety extremely seriously. On the safety issue identified in Whirlpool tumble dryers, I and my officials have been in regular contact with Whirlpool and its management. I must say that I have been shocked to hear the extent to which Whirlpool has not engaged with other hon. Members; I think that it might come to regret that. I hope that, in the new Parliament, it will manage to put that communications issue right.

I met the chief executive of Whirlpool and emphasised the need to resolve the situation quickly and pushed the company hard on meeting its obligations. I have repeatedly pressed it in further correspondence on the need to ensure that consumer safety remains paramount and that consumers have accessible routes to resolve their issues with the company's products quickly and effectively. I am concerned about the number of unregistered machines still on the market; as hon. Members have mentioned, second-hand machines and people moving into homes with an existing machine and not realising the safety issues make it a complex situation. I will come back to that when talking about the working group that we have set up.

I am concerned to hear of the experiences of some consumers who have registered their machines with Whirlpool and who have faced unacceptable delays in having their machines modified.

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<sup>8</sup> [HC Deb 13 September 2016 c.867](#)

<sup>9</sup> The Guardian, "[Hotpoint tells tumble dryer owners: unplug faulty machines due to fire risk](#)", 22 February 2017

<sup>10</sup> [HC Deb 26 April 2017 c558WH](#)

[...]

Whirlpool has, however, been taking action to address the concerns that we have debated this afternoon. The hon. Member for Swansea East (Carolyn Harris) is the only one among us, apart from myself, who has met Whirlpool. What Whirlpool said to her is largely right, in terms of what it has lived up to following the proposals that its representatives made when they met her some time ago.

Whirlpool has increased its engineer workforce by 50%, allowing it to resolve approximately 100,000 cases per month. It has now exceeded the number of cases that it anticipated resolving when it met the hon. Lady. It has modified more than 1.5 million machines—almost 90% of the total number registered with the company—but, of course, that leaves 10% unresolved, to say nothing of all the other machines out there that nobody knows of. Whirlpool now employs the UK's largest technician workforce, at 1,700-strong, which is almost three times the size of the next largest one in the country.

In response to demands for a full recall, I understand the attraction of that proposition, but the key must be to take whatever action is most likely to achieve the outcome we are all aiming for, which is to ensure that consumers are protected from unsafe products. That may be statutory recall in some instances, but other forms of corrective action, including making modifications to products in a consumer's home, may be more proportionate, appropriate and effective in other cases. It is often better and more effective to encourage a company to accept its responsibilities and take action proactively.

[...]

We hear from industry and other experts that recall programmes typically have a success rate of resolving between 10% and 20% of affected products. In this case, Whirlpool's resolution rate is over 40%, which is well above the industry norm. We can therefore posit that the action taken by Whirlpool in co-ordination with Peterborough trading standards has achieved more in terms of resolving cases than recalls typically achieve, meaning a greater number of consumers have been protected from potential harm.

### **Hotpoint fridge-freezer**

The Grenfell Tower fire, in North Kensington, occurred on 14 June 2017. The Metropolitan Police have now confirmed that the fire started in a Hotpoint fridge-freezer (FF175BP model).

The Hotpoint FF175BP model was made by Indesit under the Hotpoint brand; both are part of Whirlpool. It was manufactured between March 2006 and July 2009 and has not previously been recalled. Hotpoint said a total of 64,000 units were made over the three years, but believed that the number of appliances in use today would be lower because of normal product obsolescence.<sup>11</sup>

Consumers who believe they own that model or the FF175BG have been advised by Hotpoint to contact the company on a freephone

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<sup>11</sup> ["Hotpoint tells customers to check fridge-freezers after Grenfell Tower Fire"](#), Guardian, 23 June 2017, [online] (accessed 25 October 2017)

hotline or visit the website to register their details. The product has not been recalled.

The government ordered an immediate examination of the fridge-freezer by technical experts to establish the cause of the blaze and, in particular, tests to establish whether a product recall is necessary. Greg Clark, the Business Secretary, said:

The safety of consumers is paramount. The device is being subject to immediate and rigorous testing to establish the cause of the fire. I have made clear to the company that I will expect them to replace any item without delay if it is established that there is a risk in using them.<sup>12</sup>

The government has advised consumers to follow standard safety advice by not overloading plugs, ensuring sockets are not damaged, and checking cables and leads are in good condition.

It was reported in the press that in a letter to Greg Clark, the Andy Slaughter MP asked the government to update its advice as a matter of urgency until the precise reason the appliance at Grenfell Tower caught fire is known. Specifically, the government should immediately tell consumers to stop using the Hotpoint fridge-freezer model. Mr Slaughter wrote:

Since the Shepherds Court fire little has been done by either the manufacturer or your department to address the safety concerns it raised. There has been no recall of the defective machines and the advice that they were safe to use if attended was only changed in February this year after the threat of legal action.

Despite parliamentary debates, meetings with ministers and extensive correspondence, your department ignored requests by myself and other MPs of all parties, as well as the London fire brigade, Which? and Electrical Safety First to recall these machines.

Please do not let the same approach govern your response to the Grenfell Tower tragedy.<sup>13</sup>

As well as calling for broader steps to improve fire safety in fridge-freezers and white goods in general, Mr Slaughter also asked the government to clarify who was carrying out the tests on the Hotpoint fridge-freezer, when the results were expected, and whether there were other instances of fires occurring in this model.

A letter to the Prime Minister, Theresa May, in August 2017, asking that the recommendations made after the Shepherd's Court fire be acted upon, was signed the London Fire Brigade, the London Mayor Sadiq Khan, the Fire Brigades Union, the National Fire Chiefs Council and the charity Electrical Safety First safety groups (see section 1.1).

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid

<sup>13</sup> See: "[Grenfield Tower fire: MP says public must be told to stop using Hotpoint Model](#)", Guardian, 27 June 2017 and "[Grenfell Tower Fire: MP says reaction must be better than last year's Shepherd's Bush tower blaze](#)", getwestlondon, 28 June 2017, [both online] (both accessed 25 October 2017)

## 1.5 Government action

### Independent review into product recall

During the House of Lords Report Stage of the [Consumer Rights Bill](#) on 19 November 2014, a review of the UK's system for the recall of unsafe products was announced by Baroness Neville-Rolfe. Jo Swinson, then Consumer Minister, announced on 13 March 2015 that Lynn Faulds Wood would lead this review. Its remit was to consider how enforcement could be made more effective and explore consumer understanding of the process.

The review considered the key issues that directly impact on the effectiveness of the UK's consumer product recall systems, and how those systems interact with the wider EU RAPEX system (a pan-Europe online platform which identifies and removes unsafe consumer products from the market). Specifically, the review considered:

- The existing mechanisms in place to assist Market Surveillance Authorities (MSAs), business and consumers and how well these are used and understood by all of the relevant parties and what currently works well and what does not.
- Regional variations, how well the recall regulations are being enforced around the UK.
- The procedures used by business to allow consumers to register products, the impact of this approach on the use of data for marketing purposes.

A [report](#) on the findings of this review was published in February 2016.<sup>14</sup> It reached the following conclusion about the current recall system:

On paper it looks like a good system – our robust laws in the UK and Europe are among the strongest in the world, potential penalties and fines have been increased, thousands of products are withdrawn from sale or recalled every year. But the system is out of date. It isn't working well enough to protect us. Trading Standards Officers have suffered severe cutbacks and find it difficult, if not impossible to catch businesses cutting corners and behaving badly. Only one company across Europe has been fined. Many unsafe goods come from outside the European Union through entities which are hard – if not impossible - to trace. Traceability is a major issue.<sup>15</sup>

The report made a number of recommendations, as outlined in **Box 1** below.

#### **Box 1: Recommendations of the Faulds independent review into product recall**

- **Recommendation 1:** There is a need for the creation of an official national product safety agency or 'centre of excellence' to show leadership and coordinate the system, promoting, protecting, informing and empowering business and consumers.

<sup>14</sup> "[UK Consumer Product Recall – An Independent Review by Lynn Faulds Wood](#)", February 2016, [online] (accessed 25 October 2017)

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p.12

- **Recommendation 2:** There should be an official trusted website for business and the public –for everyone – with the central product safety agency its guardian.
- **Recommendation 3:** There is an urgent need to improve funding, training, resources and procedures for Market Surveillance – the enforcement authorities whose job it is to make the system work effectively.
- **Recommendation 4:** Alternative funding solutions to improve the recall system should be explored, solutions which could bring enormous benefits to good business and the insurance industry.
- **Recommendation 5:** Business could lead Europe with more reliable, detailed guidance on product recall (templates, British Standards etc.) – guidance under consideration for the European General Product Safety Directive.
- **Recommendation 6:** There is an urgent need for a ‘mapping’ of organisations involved in product recall and better data and information sharing to prevent injury, damage and death.
- **Recommendation 7:** There is a need to re-introduce a national injury database with wider benefits beyond providing information and evidence for the recall system.
- **Recommendation 8:** There is a need to improve consumer interest and involvement in the recall process – to research evidence-based ways to reach consumers and influence their behaviour.

The Government’s [response](#) to the Faulds Wood report was published in February 2016. In terms of “next steps”, the Government said:

This document sets out the actions that Government will take in response to the Review’s recommendations. However, Government cannot act alone; everyone with an interest in the recall system needs to play their part.

To support our actions, we will therefore set up a steering group comprising senior representatives from key stakeholders (manufacturers, distributors, trade associations, consumers groups and market surveillance authorities) and supported by BIS officials. This group will then appoint its own chair and terms of reference. The group will be tasked with monitoring progress on each of the actions outlined above, together with the actions taken by others in response to the Review.

We believe that having a group comprising of stakeholders that have a range of skills and perspectives and a vested interest in seeing an improved UK recall system will deliver meaningful and effective change. A report outlining progress against the actions will be published in due course.<sup>16</sup>

## Recall Review Steering Group (RRSG) and Working Group on Product Recalls and Safety

The **Recall Review Steering Group** (RRSG) set up to evaluate the independent review met three times in 2016. According to the Government, its key objective was to improve the UK recall system and improve consumer safety more generally, whilst identifying ways to further engage business and consumers.<sup>17</sup> A target of 24 months was agreed to meet three main targets, which were to:

<sup>16</sup> Department for Business Innovation and Skills (now BEIS), [“UK Consumer Product Recall Review: The Government response to the independent recall review by Lynn Faulds Wood”](#), February 2016, [online] (accessed 20 April 2017)

<sup>17</sup> Gov.UK, [“Product Safety: Working Group”](#), 28 November 2016 [online] (accessed 20 April 2017)

- establish a 'centre of excellence' or official website for business and the public
- more reliable, detailed guidance on product recall (templates, British Standards)
- the 'mapping' of organisations involved in product recall and better data and information sharing to prevent injury, damage and death<sup>18</sup>

During an Adjournment Debate on [Faulty tumble dryers \(fire risk\)](#) on 13 September 2016, (see below) Margot James, gave the following appraisal of the work of the RRSg:

"The group works closely with officials from my Department who provide a secretariat function. It is primarily focusing on three work strands: (i) establishing a centre of excellence, or official website, for business and the public; (ii) considering how to ensure that we have more reliable, detailed guidance on product recalls, which would, I hope, improve the rate of recall from its current one in four success rate; and (iii) establishing a mapping process whereby all organisations involved in product recalls can have access to better data and information sharing. There will be regular updates on the work of the group, including progress on the new website. Hon. Members will be able to see that information posted on gov.uk very shortly.

[...] Although they have set themselves a timeline of reporting within two years, the Government has asked them at least to produce an interim report, in a much shorter timeframe, with measures that the Government can then consider implementing without further delay."<sup>19</sup>

In October 2016, a new **Working Group on Product Recalls and Safety** ("the Working Group") was announced by the Government, to build on the earlier work of the previous RRSg. The role and membership of this new group has been expanded (bringing together experts in the fire services, trading standards, consumer groups and industry) to consider wider issues of product safety and recall. The group met for the first time on 1 November 2016.

The Working Group published its report and recommendations on 30 March 2017.<sup>20</sup> A summary of its recommendations is provided in **Box 2** below.

### **Box 2: Key recommendations of the Working Group on Product Recalls and Safety**

- A need for centralised technical and scientific resource capability to support decision making and co-ordination of activity of Local Authorities and the businesses that they regulate.
- A detailed Code of Practice should be developed with input from all relevant stakeholders; this should be informed by behavioural insights research. This should set out expected good practice with regard to product safety corrective actions (including recalls).
- Full consideration should be given to establishing central capacity to co-ordinate product safety corrective actions at a central level.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

<sup>19</sup> [HC Deb 13 September 2016 c.876](#)

<sup>20</sup> Gov.UK, "[Working Group on Product Recalls and Safety](#)", 30 March 2017 [online] (accessed 25 October 2017)

- Systematic and sustainable ways to capture and share data and intelligence should be established and agreed by relevant parties – this should make use of existing systems used by Trading Standards and the Fire Service.
- Manufacturers and retailers should continue to work together and through standards setting bodies to develop technological solutions to product marking and identification.
- Primary Authority provides a key mechanism for ensuring that businesses, local authority and BEIS expertise is shared to ensure the protection of consumers.
- The registration of appliances and other consumer goods with manufacturers by consumers should be encouraged to make corrective actions (including recalls) more effective.

On 19 July 2017, a Written Statement on the Working Group's report was made by Margot James, Parliamentary under Secretary of State for Small Business, Consumers and Corporate Responsibility. An extract from this Written Statement is reproduced below. This includes information on the implementation of the report:

Significant progress has already been made by the Working Group, supported by my officials at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, in relation to the development of a code of practice on corrective action and product recalls, and a public consultation will be published shortly.

Further work to promote the registration of appliances, understand consumer responses to safety information and recall communications are set out in the report as important steps towards a strengthened product safety framework.

We are also keen to see continued progress on work to promote the registration of appliances and understand consumer responses to safety information and recall communications. My Department has supported the behavioural insights work, which underpins the understanding of consumer behaviour. We have also enhanced the product recalls webpages on GOV.UK to make it easier to access information about white goods subject to a recall on grounds of a fire safety risk and made links to the Register My Appliance website.

The Working Group recognised the important role that Primary Authority Partnerships can play in achieving better safety outcomes. My department continues to champion and push forward the scheme. The legislative changes which we are bringing into effect in October will extend and simplify the scheme so that as many businesses as possible can access its benefits.

Following the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower, I asked the Working Group to consider whether there was any further work or recommendations for their report. The Working Group have completed that review and concluded that the original report remains valid and relevant.<sup>21</sup>

### **Register My Appliance Day**

On 19 January 2017, the Consumer Minister Margot James and the [Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy](#) (BEIS)

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<sup>21</sup> Working Group on Product Recalls and Safety: [Written Statement – HCWS74](#), 19 July 2017

announced their support for “Register My Appliance Day” with the Association of Manufacturers and Domestic Appliances (AMDEA) to raise awareness of product safety and recalls. Consumers are encouraged to add product details onto the [AMDEA Register My Appliance portal](#), so that they can be contacted swiftly in the event that a safety repair is needed.<sup>22</sup>

### **Minister’s letter to Whirlpool**

According to a press notice published by BEIS on 15 October 2016, the Consumer Minister, Margot James, wrote to Whirlpool UK asking for reassurance that everything possible was being done to ensure the safety of consumers.<sup>23</sup> She asked the company to resolve the ongoing safety issue affecting consumers more quickly.<sup>24</sup>

In the same press notice, two other measures were announced, namely:

- The formation of a new government-backed working group to deliver urgent recommendations to improve the safety of white goods (including tumble dryers) (see above).<sup>25</sup>
- An ongoing review into local authorities to prioritise the issue of product safety following an investigation into a serious fire caused by a tumble dryer in Shepherd’s Bush, London. (The investigation concluded on Thursday 6 October 2016 that the cause was a tumble dryer with a fault previously identified by the manufacturer.)

An extract from the press notice is reproduced below:

While Whirlpool has made significant efforts to modify the affected machines, the Minister does not consider this to go far enough and has asked the managing director to look at options to reduce the waiting times for machine modifications. Government also wants consumers to receive a clear response committing to action within an agreed timeframe and for Whirlpool to improve how they communicate the option of receiving a replacement machine rather than a modification to its customers.

The new working group on product recalls and safety will bring together expertise from the fire service, trading standards, consumer groups and industry, and report back with interim findings by the end of the year (2016). Areas of focus will be the causes of fires in white goods, the marking of appliances to make them easier to identify after a fire, and a code of practice for product recalls, including the peer review of risk assessments.

Alongside this, the Minister has asked an ongoing review into local authorities to prioritise the enforcement of product safety regulation.

Consumer Minister Margot James said:

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<sup>22</sup> Gov.UK, “[Consumer Minister urges people to register their appliances](#)”, 19 January 2017, [online] (accessed 20 April 2017)

<sup>23</sup> “[Government demands more action from Whirlpool on faulty tumble dryers](#)”, Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, 15 October 2016, [online] (accessed 25 October 2017)

<sup>24</sup> Ibid

<sup>25</sup> Ibid

“Manufacturers should be doing everything they can to make sure their products are safe to use and, where needed, rectifying issues as quickly as possible. This government takes consumer safety very seriously and I have offered to meet the managing director of Whirlpool to discuss how the company can improve its response to this issue.

I also want to see what more can be done to improve the safety of white goods and to support local trading standards officers to make sure customers aren't put at risk.”<sup>26</sup>

## 1.6 Fire Statistics

The Home Office's Incident Recording System publishes [fire statistics](#), including statistics on dwelling fires - “fires in properties that are a place of residence” i.e. houses and flats, houseboats, and caravans. It excludes hotels, hostels and residential institutions.

2016 saw 30,296 recorded fires in England, of which 27,201 (90%) were accidental and 3,095 (10%) were deliberate.

213 fatalities were recorded, of which 183 (86%) were accidental and 30 (14%) were deliberate. There were 5,358 non-fatal casualties, of which 4,751 (89%) were accidental and 607 (11%) were deliberate.<sup>27</sup>

Fire related deaths are those that would not have occurred had there not been a fire. Fire-related non-fatal casualties can be defined as ranging from a precautionary check to attend hospital or see a doctor, to spending time overnight in hospital as an in-patient.

### **Primary fires in dwellings by cause, England**

The table overleaf shows dwelling fires by cause in England in recent years. It shows the most frequent cause of dwelling fires is misuse of equipment or appliances. Since 2010 it has been listed as the cause of over 30% of total fires and 35% of accidental fires. Faulty appliances and leads are attributed as the second most common cause, at around 15%.

The most recent statistics for 2016 (see overleaf) show that 9,445 (31%) of total dwelling fires were caused by misuse of equipment or appliances, and 4,432 (15%) were caused by faulty appliances and leads. Please note that “unknown” data has been removed in order to calculate these percentages.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid

<sup>27</sup> [Home Office Incident Recording System, Table FIRE0202](#)

## Primary Fires in dwellings by cause, England

Year	Total Fires	Deliberate	Accidental Fires									
			Total Accidents	Faulty fuel supplies	Faulty appliances and leads	Misuse of equipment or appliances	Chip/fat pan fires	Playing with fire	Carelessness with fire or hot substances	Placing articles too close to heat	Other accidental	Unspecified
2010/11	36,595	4,756	31,839	2,361	5,059	11,620	2,327	308	3,196	3,505	3,382	81
2011/12	35,401	4,489	30,912	2,207	4,931	11,512	2,141	348	3,167	3,241	3,302	63
2012/13	33,279	3,548	29,731	2,470	4,941	10,906	1,948	283	2,673	3,372	3,129	9
2013/14	31,899	3,218	28,681	2,328	4,652	10,417	1,877	233	2,702	3,273	3,190	9
2014/15	31,332	2,928	28,404	2,341	4,652	10,362	1,873	189	2,550	3,348	3,070	19
2015/16	31,377	2,940	28,437	2,384	4,329	10,199	1,755	212	2,866	3,458	3,228	6
2016/17	30,296	3,007	27,289	2,450	4,432	9,445	1,668	166	2,453	3,415	3,253	7

Source: Home Office Incident Recording System, Table FIRE0601

PRIMARY FIRES BY CAUSE, ENGLAND 2016		
Number of primary fires by cause		As %
Misuse of equipment or appliances	9,445	31%
Faulty appliances and leads	4,432	15%
Placing articles too close to heat	3,415	11%
Other accidental	3,253	11%
Deliberate	3,007	10%
Carelessness with fire or hot substance	2,453	8%
Faulty fuel supplies	2,450	8%
Chip/fat pan fires	1,668	6%
Playing with fire	166	1%

Source: Home Office Incident Recording System, Table FIRE0601

## 2. Press Articles

Telegraph

### **Faulty Hotpoint tumble dryer 'most likely' cause of fire which killed two men**

1 September 2017

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/money/consumer-affairs/faulty-hotpoint-tumble-dryer-likely-cause-fire-killed-two-men/>

BBC news

### **Ministers 'must act on faulty white goods fire risk'**

21 August 2017

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-40991800>

Guardian

### **London fire brigade calls for urgent action on electrical goods safety**

21 August 2017

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/aug/21/london-fire-brigade-calls-for-urgent-action-on-electrical-goods-safety-tumble-dryer>

Independent

### **Government inaction is putting people at risk from faulty white goods, warns fire brigade**

21 August 2017

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/faulty-white-goods-government-inaction-londonfire-brigade-grenfell-tower-fridges-freezers-flammable-a7905011.html>

Telegraph

### **Tumble drier scandal: Whirlpool 'sold out' of popular replacement machines**

10 March 2017

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/03/10/tumble-drier-scandal-whirlpool-sold-popular-replacement-machines/>

Telegraph

### **Whirlpool scandal: Three million families told 'do not use' faulty dryers**

22 February 2017

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/02/22/whirlpool-scandal-4-million-families-told-do-not-use-faulty/>

## 3. Press releases

### London Fire Brigade

#### Don't turn your back on fridge fire risk warns Brigade

**21 September 2017**

Consumer campaigners Which? have today added their voice to the Brigade's Total Recalls campaign by asking manufacturers to stop making non-flame retardant plastic-backed fridges and freezers. They have written to manufacturers to urge them to stop using non-flame retardant plastic backing on fridges, freezers and fridge freezers, which could create a fire risk in people's homes due to the potential to accelerate the spread of fire.

*Fire retardant backing is crucial*

In response to the announcement Assistant Commissioner for Fire Safety Dan Daly said:

We have been calling for fridges and freezers to be properly covered with fire retardant backing for a number of years and so we are pleased Which? have added weight to our campaign.

The entire back of fridges and freezers must be properly covered in fire resistant material to limit the spread of fire but the current manufacturing standards still allows for holes in the backing for cables or components which would leave the highly flammable insulation inside exposed.

Partially covering the back of a fridge is like having a fire door with a hole in it that would allow fire, heat and smoke to pass through.

Nearly one fire a day in London involves white goods and June's tragic fire at Grenfell Tower started in a fridge freezer. Between 2010 and 2016 there have been nine fire deaths and 298 injuries as a result of fires involving white goods in London.

The Brigade has made a series of urgent calls for action to make white goods safer as part of its Total Recalls campaign.

### London Fire Brigade

#### Letter to Theresa May calling for action

**18 August 2017**

Since the death of Santosh Benjamin Muthiah in a fire caused by a Beko fridge in 2011, we have been calling for more to be done about potentially dangerous white goods.

Since 2010 we have attended 2,170 fires involving white goods like fridges, freezers, tumble dryers and washing machines. Steering groups have been set-up, recommendations have been made, but still no action has been taken by government.

*Letter to Theresa May calling for action*

Dear Prime Minister,

*Thousands of dangerous white goods are still being used in homes across the UK.*

This week marks the 12 month anniversary of a major fire at Shepherds Court in Shepherd's Bush. The fire destroyed the homes and all the possessions of a number of families living in the tower block. The fire investigation showed that the fire was caused by

a faulty Indesit tumble dryer which was subject to the corrective action/safety notice by Whirlpool, the parent company.

A year on people across the UK are still using white goods that pose a serious fire risk and are subject to recall or corrective action. Worse still, some fridges and freezers are still being produced with a flammable plastic backing, which offers very little protection against the insulation foam inside catching alight if a fire starts

We are deeply concerned that, a year after Shepherds Court, decisive action is still needed to improve product recalls and manufacturing standards for white goods in the UK.

*There are three fires a day involving tumble dryers in the UK and the devastating fire at Grenfell Tower started in a fridge freezer.*

In 2010 36-year old Santosh Benjamin Muthiah died from the effects of smoke inhalation after saving his wife and two young children from a fire in their Wealdstone home that was found to have been caused by a faulty Beko fridge freezer. The Coroner recommended a series of measures to improve product recalls, but these changes have still not been made.

In 2011 Muna Elmufatish, 41 and five of her children Hanin, 14, Basma, 13, Amal, nine, Mustafa, five and Yehya, two all died in a fire at their home in Sonia Gardens in Neasden which was caused by a Whirlpool chest freezer.

*There has been over three years of reports and recommendations but as yet no action from Government.*

We appreciate that the Government has been looking into these issues and commend the work that Margot James at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has undertaken.

We are extremely concerned, however, that the review of the UK product recall system was first announced in November 2014. This was then launched in March 2015 with consumer champion,

Lynn Faulds Wood leading the review which reported in February 2016 with a series of recommendations. A steering group was then set up to take these forward. Following the Shepherds Court fire, a new working group to replace the steering group was set up in autumn 2016 which published its recommendations in July 2017. We are now awaiting a Government response to the report which we understand is due in the autumn.

This means that the process of review has been ongoing for almost three years and as yet there has been no substantial changes made to improve this system. What is needed now is action.

There are some simple things the Government can do. For instance, it is extremely difficult for consumers to check if appliances they have in their home are subject to product recall. We believe there should be one, trusted, searchable place to look up your appliances – this should be set up centrally on gov.uk .

We are also concerned that the review process did not address manufacturing standards for white goods. For example, all fridges and freezers should be constructed to keep flammable insulation material protected from the components in the appliance which could cause a fire. All appliances should be marked with the model/serial number so they can be identified after a fire. There needs to be improvements in the way that producers and distributors undertake assessments of how safe white goods are to specifically take into account the risk of a fire starting while people are asleep.

We are writing to you now to call for the recommendations of the working group report to be acted upon swiftly and in full, to include a single register for UK product recalls. We also call upon the Government to put its full weight behind bringing about changes in the international standards for how white goods are manufactured and to look at what can be done to bring about these changes more quickly in the UK.

Yours sincerely,

Dany Cotton, London Fire Commissioner

## **Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy**

### **Working group report demonstrates progress on product safety**

**19 July 2017**

*The Working Group on Product Recalls and Safety has set out its recommendations for improving the UK's product safety system.*

Established in October 2016 by Consumer Minister Margot James, the [group](#) consisting of product and fire safety experts was brought together to explore and build on the recommendations made by Lynn Faulds Wood in her independent review into consumer product recalls.

Led by Chief Executive of the Institution of Fire Engineers and former deputy Chief Fire Officer Neil Gibbins, the group provided interim recommendations in December 2016 and embarked on a programme of work to improve the recall system. The minister received their report in April, which outlined progress made by the Working Group in the past 6 months.

Since Lynn Faulds Wood's report into product safety was published in February 2016, a number of her recommendations and further actions have already been taken forward, including:

- considering the framework for a national body to support consumers on product safety
- updating the government's product recall page, '[Acting on Product Safety](#)', to provide a one stop shop for recall information across a number of products, including electrical appliances, vehicles and food
- tasking the working group with considering a new standard on recalls, which they are taking forward with the British Standards Institution
- undertaking behavioural insights research with the working group to understand how to increase the impact and effectiveness of product safety messages

The working group's recommendations include:

- setting up a central scientific and technical resource, to help support effective decision making of government, businesses and enforcers, and co-ordinate national corrective action and recall programmes
- working with BSI to create a Code of Practice for businesses and regulators – informed by behavioural insights research – to set out best practice for undertaking and evaluating corrective action and recalls of products

- improving the way product-related accident and fire data is gathered and used to better understand risks
- establishing effective arrangements between trading standards and electrical goods manufacturers through Primary Authority, to strengthen compliance and recalls

Consumer Minister Margot James said:

Everyone deserves to know that the products in their homes are safe to use, and that there is a robust system in place if they need to be repaired or replaced. The government has already taken forward a number of proposals suggested in Lynn Faulds Wood independent review and the working group report builds on that.

I gave the Working Group on Product Recalls and Safety an ambitious task – to explore and progress recommendations for improving product safety within 6 months. Under Neil Gibbins' leadership, the group has made impressive steps which we are already taking forward, for example considering the framework for a national body to support consumers on product safety.

Chair of the Working Group on Product Recalls and Safety, CEO of The Institution of Fire Engineers and former deputy Chief Fire Officer Neil Gibbins said:

Since starting my career in the fire service almost 40 years ago, it has been my personal mission to help reduce fires and other risks. I am confident that the recommendations in this report and the progress we have already made can help improve the UK's product safety regime.

I look forward to continuing to work closely with the minister and the working group members, to deliver outcomes that will make a difference.

The government will continue to work closely with the working group in taking forward its workplan to strengthen the product safety system and will be formally responding in the Autumn.

[Read the report.](#)

## **Brigade reissues essential white goods safety advice following Grenfell Fire**

**23 June 2017**

London Fire Brigade is reissuing essential advice to people about white goods safety following the announcement that the Grenfell Tower fire started in a fridge freezer.

The Metropolitan Police today announced that the fire was not started deliberately and originated in a fridge freezer. The investigation has identified the make and model as a Hotpoint FF175BP and that this model has not been subject to any product recall.

The [Government](#) is asking consumers who believe they may own a Hotpoint fridge freezer model number FF175BP (white) or FF175BG (grey) to call Whirlpool Corporation's freephone hotline on 0800 316 3826 or visit [www.hotpointservice.co.uk/fridgefreezer](http://www.hotpointservice.co.uk/fridgefreezer) to register their details for further updates.

*What to do if you think there's a problem with your appliance*

A London Fire Brigade spokesperson said:

Almost every home is fitted with kitchen appliances such as fridge freezers, washing machines and tumble dryers and most work safely without incident. However issues with these appliances can sometimes arise and it's important that people know what to do to check whether their fridge, freezer and other white goods are safe.

If any of your appliances starts making a strange noise, don't ignore it. If you think there may be a problem always unplug it and contact the manufacturer or a qualified appliance repair technician.

You can also check to see whether it is the subject of a product recall by visiting the [Government's product recall site](#) and you should follow our basic safety advice on guarding against fires in white goods.

#### *Immediate steps you can take to guard against fires in white goods*

If you think there may be a problem with an electrical appliance that you own always unplug it and contact the manufacturer or a qualified appliance repair technician

#### [Check whether an electrical product is subject to recall](#)

Fit a minimum of one smoke alarm per floor and fit enough alarms to cover all areas where a fire could start, making sure they are tested regularly

Plan how you would get out in the event of a fire in your home

If a fire does start, don't try to fight the fire. Get out, stay out and call the Brigade immediately

Make sure white goods are not positioned in escape routes so if they do catch fire they don't block your way out of the property

It is also important [to register your appliance](#) so that if any issues arise, the manufacturer can contact you

#### *What we are calling for*

The Brigade's spokesperson added: "While we can't talk about the circumstances of the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower this latest development throws into sharp focus how important it is to ensure defective appliances are removed from homes across the UK. Our Total Recalls campaign is calling on the government and manufacturers to implement a number of changes to make all white goods safer."

In particular our campaign is calling for:

- A single Government backed product recall data base. The Government has set up a portal to recall databases at [www.gov.uk/productrecall](http://www.gov.uk/productrecall)
- Recalls notices to be better publicised to reduce confusion
- Greater regulation of [second hand appliances](#)
- [Changes to the way that fridges and freezers are manufactured](#) e.g simple things like having a back made from material that would protect the insulation material from the components in the appliance, which could cause a fire. This can make a difference to how quickly a fire spreads.
- For all appliances to be [marked with a model and serial number](#)
- The inclusion of [sleeping as a factor in risk assessments](#)

It's important to stress that these calls relate to all white goods and are not a comment on the circumstances around the Grenfell Tower fire.

People with concerns about product safety can also call the Citizens Advice consumer service line on 03454 04 05 06 or the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy helpline on 0300 123 1016. The government website on product recalls, which will be updated should further action on the product be necessary, can be found at [www.gov.uk/productrecall](http://www.gov.uk/productrecall).

The Brigade's [Total Recalls](#) campaign is calling for manufacturers to make a number of changes to the way they currently operate to improve white goods' safety

## **Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy**

### **Department responds to police identification of Hotpoint fridge freezer involved in Grenfell Tower fire**

**23 June 2017**

Following the Metropolitan Police Service's statement that a Hotpoint FF175BP fridge freezer has been identified as the initial source of the Grenfell Tower fire, the government has ordered an immediate examination of the unit by technical experts to establish the cause of the incident.

This product, which was manufactured between 2006 and 2009, has not been subject to product recalls and this testing will establish whether any further action is required.

Consumers who believe they may own a Hotpoint fridge freezer model number FF175BP (white) or FF175BG (grey) should call Whirlpool Corporation's freephone hotline on 0800 316 3826 or visit [www.hotpointservice.co.uk/fridgefreezer](http://www.hotpointservice.co.uk/fridgefreezer) to register their details for further updates.

At this stage there is no specific reason for consumers to switch off their fridge freezer pending further investigation.

Greg Clark, Secretary of State for the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) said:

The safety of consumers is paramount. The device is being subject to immediate and rigorous testing to establish the cause of the fire. I have made clear to the company that I will expect them to replace any item without delay if it is established that there is a risk in using them.

Customers can expect further updates from the manufacturer about the action it will take in relation to this product and are advised to follow standard safety advice, not overload plugs, ensure sockets are not damaged and check cables and leads are in good condition.

Business Minister Margot James wrote to trade associations representing all major household appliance manufacturers last week outlining the government's expectation of action by their members should a household appliance be found to have played a part in the Grenfell Tower fire.

People with concerns about product safety can also call the Citizens Advice consumer service line on 03454 04 05 06 or our helpline on 0300 123 1016. The government website on product recalls, which will be updated should further action on the product be necessary, can be found at [www.gov.uk/productrecall](http://www.gov.uk/productrecall).

## **London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority**

### **Parliamentary Briefing – White Goods Safety [extracts]**

#### **[extracts]**

#### *The problem*

Despite the substantial reduction in the number of fires in the home in recent years, in October 2016 London Fire Brigade (LFB) released figures that revealed that between

January 2011 – September 2016, London firefighters had attended over 2000 fires in London involving white goods, which came at an estimated cost to the public purse of over £118 million. This also means LFB has been attending, on average, one fire in London every day to tackle white goods fires. Most of the fires caused by these appliances are not down to human factors but are caused by faults beyond the control of the householder. From January 2009 – December 2016 firefighters in London attended 455 tumble dryer fires and 173 dryer/washer fires.

The consequences of such fires can be devastating. In 2010 a 36-year old man died from the effects of smoke inhalation after saving his wife and two young children from a blaze in their Wealdstone home that was found to have been caused by a faulty Beko fridge freezer. The Coroner recommended a series of measures to improve product recalls through a [Prevention of Future Deaths report](#), these changes have not yet been made.

[...]

### *Total Recalls*

London Fire Brigade has long called for changes to improve product recalls and manufacturing standards and last year launched a new campaign called [Total Recalls](#) which is calling on the government and manufacturers to implement key changes to make it easier for people to protect themselves from potentially lethal faulty appliances.

In relation to product recalls we are calling for:

- 1 A single register for UK product recalls, readily accessible to the public online. It is extremely difficult for consumers to check if appliances they have in their home are subject to product recall. There should be one, trusted, place to look up your appliances. Without that, it is hard for the public to do the right thing to keep themselves safe.
- 2 An obligation on producers and distributors to include product recall notices issued about their products in other countries on the UK recall register. Right now, if a product is recalled in another country and the same model has been sold in the UK there is no automatic recall here.
- 3 Agreed, appropriate, guidelines about what a producer or distributor has to do as their “best endeavours” to organise the return of products from consumers – at the moment there is no definition of what that looks like. There are no specified levels of publicity for product recalls. When a safety notice or recall is instigated the wording used may not be the most appropriate which may lead to consumer confusion. An example might be suggesting that an appliance ‘may overheat’ or has a risk of a ‘thermal event’ rather than ‘may be a risk of fire’.
- 4 An obligation on producers and distributors to make publically available the risk assessments they undertake once a fault is found in a product (in redacted form if necessary for commercial sensitivity). At the moment, when a fault is found with a component in an appliance, manufacturers do not have to publish anything about how they decide what action needs to be taken. Publication of risk assessments would make it easier for people to make decisions about the products they buy and own.
- 5 An obligation on organisations, such as insurers, that have evidence that a fire has been caused by a faulty appliance to inform Trading Standards. There is no obligation on anyone other than the manufacturer to let trading standards know if they have concerns – even if something could have caused a death.
- 6 Better regulation to control the second hand selling, or offering for sale, any product subject to a recall notice. Fire investigators have found dangerous

appliances subject to a product recall being sold in second-hand shops in London. In the US it is illegal to sell something under recall.

In relation to manufacturing standards we are calling for:

- 1 We are calling for a change in the way that fridges and freezers are constructed. We want to see the insulation material protected from the components in the appliance, which could cause a fire. We are calling for a new standard, which would mean that fridge and freezer compressor compartments and the entire back panel would have to have a suitable level of flame retardance.
- 2 A significant number of fires which start in fridges and freezers start in components called capacitors. When capacitors are used in fridges and freezers it should be done in a way that prevents them starting fires.
- 3 All appliances should be marked with model/serial no. so that they can be identified after a fire. At present, even before a fire, the model and serial number can be difficult to find with different manufacturers putting them in different places. After a fire it can be almost impossible. Without knowing the make and model of the white goods that caused the fire, it is impossible for us to warn people of the danger and makes it harder for us to determine where the fault might be.
- 4 The risk assessments that producers or distributors carry out on their goods should be improved, in a way that will specifically take into account the risk of fire while people are asleep, the most serious possible consequences of a fault and the potential impact of fires on people's lives. The guidance about what producers or distributors need to do following a risk assessment should be consistent between industry and regulators.

## **Department for Business, Innovation and Skills**

### **Consumer champion Lynn Faulds Wood to lead product safety review**

**13 March 2015**

Leading consumer campaigner Lynn Faulds Wood will lead a review of the UK's system for the recall of unsafe products.

Broadcaster and leading consumer campaigner Lynn Faulds Wood will lead a review of the UK's system for the recall of unsafe products, Consumer Affairs Minister Jo Swinson announced today (13 March 2015).

The independent review will focus on how we can make enforcement more effective and explore consumer understanding of the process.

The UK has robust legislation covering product safety, however recalls are often complex and it can be difficult to trace the customer – for example they may not have provided contact details when the product was purchased or moved house.

Recent YouGov research showed that just over a third of us currently register our appliances.

Consumer Affairs Minister Jo Swinson said:

There are more than 100 million appliances being used in our homes today, so it is vital that when manufacturers discover safety issues they can recall products as quickly as possible.

It is essential that we look at how we can improve the current system so that we can protect consumers and reduce the cases of serious injury, property damage, and in the worst cases, fatalities.

I am delighted to announce that Lynn Faulds Wood will be chairing the review. She has a wealth of experience as a consumer champion and is a fantastic person to take this important work forward.

Lynn is best known as a consumer champion and campaigning tabloid journalist. Lynn has a long broadcasting career which dates back to the early 1980s when Breakfast TV started. For many years Lynn presented Watchdog from 1985 to 1993. During her time on Watchdog she worked with the Department of Trade helping to organise over £10million in recalls for viewers and manufacturers.

Lynn Faulds Wood said:

I'm delighted to have been offered the challenge of chairing this important independent review into product recalls. As a television journalist I've criticised the recall system many times over the years.

Product recalls which have failed to reach the public – or been insufficiently acted upon – have led to unnecessary damage, injury and even death. Good businesses may even be disadvantaged under the present system.

I congratulate the minister on taking action today and I look forward to working with everyone on reviewing the system in this country. Bright ideas on how we can involve the public better in knowing about product recalls and acting on them are especially welcome.

Consumers and businesses are encouraged to get in touch about their experiences of consumer product recalls. The views of the authorities who enforce recall across the UK and other stakeholders such as the legal, medical and insurance professions are also welcomed.

## 4. Parliamentary material

### 4.1 Ministerial Statement

[Working Group on product recalls and safety: Written statement – HCWS74](#)

#### **Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy**

I am today placing in the Libraries of the House, the report of the Working Group on Product Recalls and Safety.

The report is a culmination of longer term, ongoing work on product safety and recalls. An independent review of the recall system was undertaken by Lynn Faulds Wood in 2015, with her review published in February 2016.

The Working Group on Product Recalls and Safety was established in October 2016 to build on the initial work by industry to implement the review. The Working Group was tasked with providing options to support a tangible improvement in the safety of white goods and the recalls system, working to a clearly defined timetable.

The Working Group is chaired by Neil Gibbins, former Deputy Chief Fire Officer for Devon and Somerset and Chief Executive of the Institution of Fire Engineers. Its membership brings together product safety experts, the fire service and trading standards professionals to ensure that we utilise expertise in the relevant fields to identify necessary improvements to the system of product recalls and safety.

Key recommendations include:

- a need for centralised technical and scientific resource capability to support decision making and co-ordination of activity of Local Authorities and the businesses that they regulate;
- a detailed Code of Practice should be developed with input from all relevant stakeholders; this should be informed by behavioural insights research. This should set out expected good practice with regard to product safety corrective actions (including recalls);
- full consideration should be given to establishing central capacity to co-ordinate product safety corrective actions at a central level;
- systematic and sustainable ways to capture and share data and intelligence should be established and agreed by relevant parties – this should make use of existing systems used by Trading Standards and the Fire Service;
- manufacturers and retailers should continue to work together and through standards setting bodies to develop technological solutions to product marking and identification;
- Primary Authority provides a key mechanism for ensuring that businesses, local authority and BEIS expertise is shared to ensure the protection of consumers; and
- the registration of appliances and other consumer goods with manufacturers by consumers should be encouraged to make corrective actions (including recalls) more effective.

Significant progress has already been made by the Working Group, supported by my officials at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, in relation to the development of a code of practice on corrective action and product recalls, and a public consultation will be published shortly. Further work to promote the registration of appliances, understand consumer responses to safety information and recall communications are set out in the report as important steps towards a strengthened product safety framework.

We are also keen to see continued progress on work to promote the registration of appliances and understand consumer responses to safety information and recall communications. My Department has supported the behavioural insights work, which underpins the understanding of consumer behaviour. We have also enhanced the product recalls webpages on GOV.UK to make it easier to access information about white goods subject to a recall on grounds of a fire safety risk and made links to the Register My Appliance website.

The Working Group recognised the important role that Primary Authority Partnerships can play in achieving better safety outcomes. My department continues to champion and push forward the scheme. The legislative changes which we are bringing into effect in October will extend and simplify the scheme so that as many businesses as possible can access its benefits.

Following the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower, I asked the Working Group to consider whether there was any further work or recommendations for their report. The Working Group have completed that review and concluded that the original report remains valid and relevant. I publish that report today, with copies of the documents placed in the Library of the House.

## 4.2 Debates

[Whirlpool: Product Safety System](#)

HC Deb 26 April 2017 Vol 624

[Faulty Tumble Dryers \(Fire Risk\)](#)

HC Deb 13 September 2016 Vol 614

## 4.3 PQs

[UK Consumer Product Recall Review](#)

**Asked by: Slaughter, Andy**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress has been made by the Steering Group created as a result of the Government's response to the independent review by Lynn Faulds Wood, UK consumer product recall, published 18 February 2016.

**Answering member: Margot James | Department: Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy**

In October 2016 the Steering Group was replaced by a new Working Group on Product Recalls and Safety with a permanent Chair, wider representation, and a broader remit. It was also asked to report to a much tighter timeframe than the Steering Group it replaced.

I received the Working Group's initial recommendations to further improve the safety of white goods and the recall system in December 2016 and work started immediately to take these forward. In June this year, I asked the Working Group to review their report in light of the Grenfell Tower fire and their final report was published on 19th July.

Significant progress has already been made by the Working Group to develop a code of practice on corrective action and product recalls together with the British Standards Institution (BSI), and a public consultation will be published in the autumn. The Report also sets out the further work that is underway to strengthen the product safety framework

including promoting the registration of appliances and better understanding consumer responses to safety information and recall communications.

**20 Jul 2017 | Written questions | HC 5294**

[Domestic Appliances: Safety](#)

**Asked by: Slaughter, Andy**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with white goods manufacturers on fridge freezer safety since the Grenfell Tower fire.

**Answering member: Margot James | Department: Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy**

Shortly after the Grenfell Tower fire I spoke to the Association of Manufacturers of Domestic Appliances (AMDEA) to ensure their members were ready to take any actions necessary should investigations into the cause of the fire show that white goods were involved. I also attended the Working Group on Product Recalls and Safety where AMDEA were represented on 22 June.

My Rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy also spoke directly to the UK Managing Director and the Global CEO of Whirlpool to ensure they are taking all necessary steps to ensure consumer safety.

**20 Jul 2017 | Written questions | HC 5127**

[UK Consumer Product Recall Review](#)

**Asked by:** Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town

Her Majesty's Government what progress has been made by the Steering Group set up following the Government's Response to the independent review by Lynn Faulds Wood, UK consumer product recall, published on 18 February 2016.

**Answering member: Lord Prior of Brampton | Department: Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy**

The Government set up a new Working Group on Product Recalls and Safety in October 2016 to build on the initial work of the Steering Group with a broader remit, a shorter timetable, a permanent Chair and a wider group of experts

The Working Group's initial recommendations were delivered within three months and a number of these have already been taken forward, including the creation of a new central recalls website; the commissioning of the British Standards Institution to create a new code of practice on recalls; improved organisational mapping and support for better sharing of product safety data; and work to better understand consumer behaviour so that safety messages are more effective

The Working Group submitted its final report in April 2017. We had intended to publish the report then. However, the announcement of the General Election prevented us from doing so. In light of the Grenfell Tower fire tragedy, Ministers have also asked the Working Group to review their findings to consider any further action that may be required. We will publish that report before the summer recess.

**13 Jul 2017 | Written questions | HL 348**

[Product Recalls and Safety Working Group](#)

**Asked by: Lord Kennedy of Southwark**

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Lord Prior of Brampton on 23 January (HL Deb, col 421), which individuals sit on the working group on product recalls and safety; when it first met; when the next meeting is due to take place; and what is the scope and scale of its review.

**Answered by: Lord Prior of Brampton | Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy**

The Working Group on Product Recalls and Safety was announced by my hon. Friend the Minister for Small Business, Consumers and Corporate Responsibility in October 2016. The Group first met on 1 November 2016. It has subsequently met on 14 December and 8 February and the next meeting is due to take place on 13 March.

The Working Group is tasked to develop options to improve the system of product recalls and safety with an immediate focus on recommendations to improve the safety of white goods such as tumble dryers.

The Group is chaired by Neil Gibbins, Former Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Devon and Somerset. Membership of the Working Group is drawn from:

- Association of British Insurers (ABI)
- Association of Chief Trading Standards Officers (ACTSO)
- Association of Manufacturers of Domestic Appliances (AMDEA)
- Baker McKenzie LLP
- British Retail Consortium (BRC)
- British Standards Institution (BSI)
- British Toy and Hobby Association (BTHA)
- Brunel University London (BUL)
- Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI)
- Chief Fire Officers' Association (CFOA)
- Citizens Advice (CA)
- Electrical Safety First (ESF)
- Fire Protection Association (FPA)
- Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA)
- Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT)

More detailed information on the activities of the Working Group, its initial recommendations and meetings notes can be found on the following website <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/product-safety-working-group>. The Group is due to report back to my hon. Friend in March.

**1 March 2017 | Written questions | HL 5507**

[Product Recall](#)

**Asked by:** Lord Kennedy of Southwark

My Lords, the London Fire Brigade attends, on average, one fire every day caused by white goods where there is no fault on the part of the householder. We have seen a death in Wealdstone and, more recently, a devastating fire in Shepherd's Bush caused by a Whirlpool tumble-dryer. Does the Minister agree that Whirlpool's advice issued in Australia, which was not to use the product, and its advice until recently in the UK that, "You can use it but don't go out or go to bed" are unacceptable? Will he agree to meet the chair of the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority, Dr Fiona Twycross, London Fire Brigade officials and me to discuss this matter and ensure that we can improve safety, save property and avoid injury and death?

Oral questions - 1st Supplementary

**Answering member: Lord Prior of Brampton**

My Lord, the noble Lord knows that trading standards has the main responsibility in this area, rather than the Government directly. I am certainly happy to arrange a meeting with my colleague Margot James in the other House with him and whoever he wants to bring to talk about the whole recall system in more detail. I note that the deputy director of the London Fire Brigade sits on the working group that is looking at recalls more generally.

**23 Jan 2017 | Oral answers to questions | House of Lords | 778 c421**

[Consumer Goods](#)

**Asked by:** Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the London Fire Brigade's proposal for a single, publicly accessible UK register of product recalls.

**Answering member:** Baroness Neville-Rolfe | **Department:** Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

We want to ensure consumers have easy access to information on product recalls. We have already asked an industry led Recall Review Steering Group to explore how a single source of information on product recalls can be delivered for business and consumers. We will be discussing proposals on this with them shortly. The London Fire Brigade are represented on the Recall Review Steering Group by the Chief Fire Officers Association.

**23 Sep 2016 | Written questions | HL 1704**

[Product Recall: White Goods](#)

**Asked by:** Andy Slaughter (Hammersmith) (Lab)

If he will take steps to support the London Fire Brigade's Total Recalls campaign on the implementation of changes to the product recall system by manufacturers of white goods.

**Answering member:** The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Margot James) | **Department:** Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

Consumer product safety is a Government priority. We have an effective system of product recall and have established a steering group to consider the recommendations in Lynn Faulds Wood's 2016 product recall review. We will engage with the London fire brigade on its campaign as part of our regular dialogue with them.

**HC Deb 13 Sep 2016 | 614 c757**

[Domestic Appliances: Fires](#)

**Asked by: Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what recent discussions they have had with manufacturers about fires caused by faulty electric tumble dryers.

**Answered by: Baroness Neville-Rolfe | Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy**

Whilst the Government continues to meet regularly with representatives from the electrical appliances sector, the enforcement of the relevant legislation is a matter for local Government Trading Standards services. The recent modification programme for tumble dryers announced by Whirlpool is being overseen by Peterborough Council as the Primary Authority. The Government has asked Peterborough Council to provide regular updates on progress.

**3 August 2016 | Written questions | HL 1314**

[Domestic Appliances: Fires](#)

**Asked by: Baroness Byford**

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will review the safety standards for refrigeration units and tumble dryers in the light of the number of fires caused by such machines in individual homes.

**Answered by: Baroness Neville-Rolfe**

The safety of tumble dryers and refrigeration units is regulated by the Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations 1994, which require these products to be safe and manufactured in accordance with good engineering practice. Standards, although voluntary, support the legislation by providing a benchmark as to what is considered to constitute safe in practice. The review of British Standards is a matter for the British Standards Institution (BSI) which undertakes regular reviews to ensure the standards address any safety concerns raised and follow best practice, and BIS officials participate in these activities.

I am aware that the BSI has submitted proposals to the International Electro-technical Committee (IEC) to revise the refrigeration standard to address the recent fire concerns.

The standard for tumble dryers is frequently revised, the last revision being in 2015, to ensure the relevant hazards are addressed.

**4 July 2016 | Written questions | HL 779**

[Domestic Appliances: Fires](#)

**Asked by: Richard Burden**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, what recent representations he has received on faulty tumble dryers causing fires; and when his Department was first made aware of safety concerns related to such tumble dryers.

**Answered by: Anna Soubry | Department for Business, Innovation and Skills**

Manufacturers, distributors and retailers are legally required to inform their Local Authority Trading Standards Department if they have placed unsafe products on the market under the General Product Safety Regulations 1995. Trading Standards work with the businesses concerned to manage any corrective actions accordingly.

In December 2015, Trading Standards made my Department aware of the safety concerns relating to particular brands of tumble dryer, as part of the formal notification procedure of the EU Rapid Alert system for unsafe products. In addition, my Department has received correspondence from consumers of these products, who have been directed to Trading Standards.

**29 February 2016 | Written questions | HC 27576**

## 4.4 EDMs

EDM 538 (sponsored by Andy Slaughter MP)

[WHITE GOODS FIRES AND PRODUCT RECALLS](#)

That this House is deeply concerned by the potential fire risk currently posed by white goods such as dishwashers, washing machines, tumble dryers, fridges and freezers, and the inadequacies of product recalls; notes that the London Fire Brigade has attended over 2000 incidents since 2011 to tackle fires involving white goods, with an estimated cost to the public purse of over £118 million; further notes that such fires can be devastating for those involved and that the Coroner's recommended changes to improve the product recall system following a fatal fire in 2010 have not yet been made; notes that these concerns have been echoed by Which?, Electrical Safety First, the Chief Fire Officers Association and the Local Government Association; calls upon manufacturers to make publicly available the risk assessments they undertake once a fault is found in a product; and further calls upon the Government to take urgent action as called for by the London Fire Brigade in its Total Recalls campaign, including the introduction of a single register for UK product recalls, readily accessible to the public online.

**12 Oct 2016 | Early day motions | | House of Commons | 538 (session 2016-17)**

## 5. Useful links and further reading

GOV.UK, Working Group on Product Recalls and Safety: report to Margot James, 19 July 2017: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/report-to-margot-james>

London Fire Brigade, Letter to Rt Hon Theresa May on white goods safety, 18 August 2017: [http://www.london-fire.gov.uk/Documents/Letter to Rt Hon Theresa May MP re white goods safety August 2017.pdf](http://www.london-fire.gov.uk/Documents/Letter%20to%20Rt%20Hon%20Theresa%20May%20MP%20re%20white%20goods%20safety%20August%202017.pdf)

House of Commons Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee Inquiry: current safety regulations for electrical goods in the UK

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/business-energy-industrial-strategy/news-parliament-2017/product-safety/>

Evidence session 31 October 2017

<http://www.parliamentlive.tv/Event/Index/a4917fc0-3c4d-402b-bcf6-a446a1e5e602>

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