

BRIEFING



Extended Gas Flues- Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

26 Sept 2008

Further to our initial communication on the above issue in August, I am writing to update you on the latest developments, and in particular to make you aware of the probability that the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) will issue a safety alert within the next week. Summarised below is the course of action we suggest you take following the discussions we have had with members.

Background

In February this year a person died from carbon monoxide poisoning a few months after moving into a new flat.

HSE believes the death was caused by flues that may not have been installed properly.

HBF has been liaising closely with the HSE throughout their investigation in to the cause of the incident. Discussions have also involved CORGI.

We are still awaiting the publication by HSE of their final report into the incident and clearly until such time as it is available we will not be in possession of all the facts.

Progress to date

HBF convened a Gas Flues Sub Group comprising technical staff of various member companies to consider the most appropriate advice HBF should proffer to members pending publication of the HSE report.

Earlier this week, the main HBF Board considered the conclusions this group reached, and following consultation with other member groups decided to suggest the following course of action to members.

As advised by the HSE, suggestions are divided into three categories, depending on the status of the property;

- 1. Properties under design**
- 2. Existing stock and properties under construction**
- 3. Sold properties**

1. For all **new designs** where gas boilers are to be used:

- Gas boilers should be sited on an exterior wall wherever possible with external flue terminals positioned in accordance with the requirements of the Building Regulations and any accompanying CORGI installation guidance.
- If sited on internal walls the shortest possible flue lengths should be used.
- The flues should be designed and installed by a CORGI registered gas installer and should have as few joints as possible with access for inspection where required.
- All installations should be in strict compliance with CORGI TB200.

2. For properties that are **under construction** and/or **stock**

- The CORGI registered installer responsible for the installation should be asked to come back and check existing stock and confirm that the installations are correct and properly commissioned or identify remedial work and carry it out. If new inspection hatches are required this will require house builder input. Note: it is likely that these will need to be fire-proofed and checked for compliance with Robust Details if applicable.
- Work under construction to be carried out by a CORGI registered installer strictly in compliance with TB200.

3. For those properties that have already been **sold**

- Any property occupied since June 2007 (the date when CORGI Technical Bulletin 200 was issued) is to have a battery-operated CO alarm (as shown on CORGI website or similar) provided.
- While we recognise that this is a secondary safety feature it would appear from the information currently available that the fatality might not have occurred if an alarm had been fitted in the flat. Whilst we await the formal report's findings we believe it would be appropriate to undertake to provide these alarms.
- The alternative to providing a CO alarm is to inspect each property to ensure compliance with TB 200.

Further action may be required once the final report is released by HSE, depending upon its contents.

Latest position

Subsequent to the HBF Board meeting we have been warned in strictest confidence that HSE will issue a Safety Alert probably next week. We are seeking further details from HSE

about what form this alert will take, but it is likely that it will appear national newspapers, and clearly this may give your customers cause for concern. On seeing the alert, they may contact you direct and we suggest you notify the appropriate staff members of this possibility.

We will continue our discussions with HSE, Corgi and NHBC and will report back in due course.

In the meantime if any aspect of this note is unclear or you have any questions please contact HBF's Technical Director Dave Mitchell – dave.mitchell@hbf.co.uk or on 0207 960 1621

Stewart Baseley
Executive Chairman