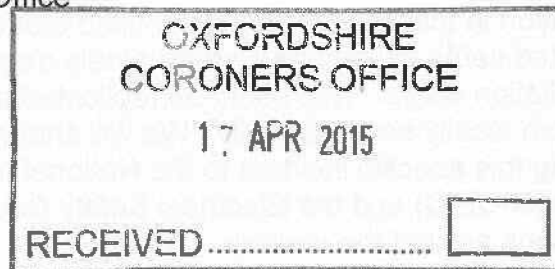


Date: 16 April 2015
Our ref: [REDACTED]
Your ref: 01638-2014

Oxfordshire County Council
Fire and Rescue Service
Headquarters
Sterling Road
Kidlington
Oxfordshire OX5 2DU

Mr Peter G Clark
Assistant Coroner
Oxfordshire Coroner's Office
The Oxford Register Office
2nd Floor
1 Tidmarsh Lane
Oxford
OX1 1NS

David Etheridge
Chief Fire Officer



Dear Mr Clark

Re: Regulation 28 - Further to Fatal House Fire on 5 Sept. 2014 involving Christopher John Butler of [REDACTED] and Inquest at Oxford Coroners Court on 21 January 2014

Thank you for your letter of 24 February 2015, written under Regulation 28 of The Coroners (investigations) Regulations 2013, concerning the inquest into the death of Mr Christopher John Butler who died tragically in the fire at [REDACTED] on the 5 September 2014.

Through your good offices, may I take this opportunity to express my sincere condolences to the family of Mr Butler.

Following the receipt of your letter Oxfordshire County Council Fire and Rescue Service (OCCFRS) has undertaken a comprehensive review of the circumstances relating to this case. We have taken this opportunity to further challenge how we identify, manage and deal with risk in the community. We are also reviewing how to further improve our processes concerning investigating and fully understanding the circumstances to a future tragic incident. We consider that this approach will enable further information to support all investigations into the cause of the fire and also the wider causation that lead to these fatal events.

I have considered the recommendation within your letter and offer the following response: I can confirm that the circumstances relating to this case are under review; the review and our suggested future approach is using the Health and Safety HSG65 model of Plan, Do, Check and Act to ensure that the organisation improves its ability to identify and manage risk within the local community.

I have asked my Home and Community Safety Team to review the partnership arrangements in place across all stakeholders that came into contact with Mr Butler and identify if any concerns around risk were known and flagged to relevant stakeholders. This will ensure future

intelligence concerning 'at risk' groups or individuals is shared earlier and in a more structured fashion.

We are also making improvements and reviewing our approach to incidents of this type to ensure that a critical review of our risk management is carried out earlier in order to inform any internal or external agency investigation or Coroner's Hearing. This new approach will be initiated for all significant "persons reported" (where a life is considered to be in the property) incidents so we can learn from a wider number of incidents which had the potential to lead to a fire fatality. This will enable us to identify the risk factors beyond those that we currently scrutinise and share this with the wider fire sector regionally and nationally.

The outcome of the fire investigation in this specific case identified that the direct cause of the fire was attributed to an overheated cable caused by a sharp ninety degree bend in the wire probably formed during the installation stage. This could be replicated and present in many other internal wiring situations both locally and nationally. We will shortly be publishing and providing a case study concerning this specific incident to the National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting (NICEIC) and the Electrical Safety Council to enable them to use it in the education of electricians around the country.

I have also asked our OCCFRS Home and Community Safety Team to inform and educate residents in the local area and as a result the following activities are being undertaken:

- We have identified a number of properties that were broadly similar in age and design and we wrote to these residents highlighting this fatal incident and have provided them with some additional preventative information
- We are reviewing the property information to determine who the house builder was and whether there have been any local or national trends of fires with this organisation and will take further action as appropriate to our findings
- We have utilised our close links with Oxfordshire County Council's Social and Community Services in order to identify any specific vulnerable residents within this targeted area in order to provide further personal assistance to them
- We are also working with Adults and Social Services to review our Near Miss and Fatal Incident Review process in order to ensure our future approach is comprehensive and will deliver internal reflective learning and offer best practice within the organisation and to the wider fire sector
- We are also working with Electrical Safety First in order to provide these residents with a comprehensive home electrical safety booklet plus we are signposting them to recognised electricians via the OCC Trading Standards 'Trust a Trader' list if they needed some further expert advice
- We have identified a number of other local information avenues, for example Parish newsletters and residents groups to communicate fire safety advice and specifically some electrical fire safety advice
- We have released a general electrical fire safety press release and updated our public websites to raise the awareness and target home electrical testing including the safety benefits and importance of modern fuse box designs.

As fire and rescue services, we continually learn from each other following tragic and unusual incidents such as this and we will share the circumstances of the cause of this fire and the subsequent actions with 51 fire and rescue services via the Chief Fire Officers Association.

I attach a copy of the letter that we have sent to the residents in Kidlington and a copy of the Electrical Safety First booklet.

I am grateful for your recommendations and can assure you of Oxfordshire County Council Fire and Rescue Service's continued commitment to ensuring that the safety of the community within Oxfordshire is our top priority. I do hope the actions and measures we have taken above provide reassurance and directly address the issues raised in your Regulation 28 letter.

Should you wish for any clarification concerning our course of action, please do not hesitate to contact me at the above address.

Yours sincerely



Dave Etheridge OBE
Chief Fire Officer

Direct line:

Email:

www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/fire