



April 2014

All Registered Providers

Dear Sir/Madam

Powered devices and release mechanisms for doors

RQIA wrote to all registered care homes in June 2013 regarding Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Services (NIFRS) audits of care premises and enclosed a copy of correspondence from them outlining their position in respect of the provision of self-closing devices to all doors leading onto corridors in sleeping accommodation in care homes.

As a result of this, care home providers are moving towards provision of self-closing devices on bedroom doors. Many of these will include powered devices relying on an interface with the automatic fire alarm and detection system to cause the fire doors to close and will typically include magnetic hold-open devices/door release units and 'swing free' type overhead automatic self-closers.

Alongside and separate from this, many homes have installed electrically operated or electromagnetic locks to doors on corridors and at exits for a number of security and other operational reasons including control of movement where residents/patients suffer from dementia. In most cases these locks also rely on an interface with the automatic fire alarm and detection system to cause doors to unlock and allow free passage through the locked doors in the event of a fire alarm activation.

Other registered services not providing sleeping accommodation may also have installed devices described above and this letter applies to all such premises.

In all cases, it is important that the devices operate correctly and that the integrity of the means of escape is assured for the duration of emergency evacuations.

British Standard BS7273:2007, '*Code of practice for the operation of fire protection measures – Part 4, Actuation of release mechanisms for doors*' gives recommendations for the design, installation, commissioning and maintenance of electrical control arrangements for actuation of mechanisms that unlock, release or open doors in the event of fire. It applies to all aspects of the interface between these mechanisms and a fire detection and fire alarm

system, including interfaces that incorporate acoustic coupling and radio transmission.

Providers should ensure that due regard is given to the above British Standard for both new and existing devices. Premises' Fire Safety Advisers/Fire Risk Assessors should take the lead in this and should be satisfied that all such devices operate appropriately in conjunction with the fire evacuation procedures and the operation of fire alarm and detection system. Where devices are found not to operate appropriately, or in a way which may compromise the integrity of a means of escape during evacuation, remedial measures should be implemented to address this. In the interim, robust management arrangements should be put in place to ensure that staff are aware of the correct actions to take in order that that escape routes are not compromised during evacuations.

You should discuss the contents of this letter in the first instance with your Fire Safety Adviser/ Fire Risk Assessor.

I trust that you will give this your earliest attention.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'P. Cunningham', is positioned above the typed name.

Phil Cunningham
Senior Estates Officer

cc All Heads of Programmes, RQIA