



## NEWS RELEASE

Issued on 17 July 2013

### **RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS THE IMPORTANCE OF DOMESTIC SPRINKLERS**

Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service is backing calls to bring in a new law to make it mandatory for domestic homes to have a sprinkler system.

The move by the Fire and Rescue Service follows a study by Strathclyde University concerning the effectiveness of standard smoke alarms to wake young children.

Led by Professor Niamh Nic Daeid at the Centre for Forensic Science at the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, '*The effectiveness of domestic smoke detectors in waking children: a UK study*' was prompted by a major fire in Derbyshire and was led by Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service.

A total of 204 tests were conducted as part of the study involving 34 children (20 girls and 14 boys) between the ages of two and 13 years old and the tests were undertaken in the children's homes using standard domestic smoke alarms fitted within the property. Parents activated the smoke alarms continuously for one minute after the children had gone to bed and recorded the time taken for each child to wake. The children were given no prior warning of any tests.

The results were:

- 80% of the children, including all of the male children slept through the alarms on all six tests
- Of the 34 children tested, only seven (all girls) woke up during any of the six tests
- Only two children (6% of the total number tests) both girls aged ten years woke each time the alarm was sounded during the six individual tests.

Whilst the value of smoke alarms as a mean of alerting to people to fires is not in question and there is no doubt working fire alarms can help save lives, the research indicates that standard smoke alarms may not be as effective in alerting, children as they are with adults.

Group Manager Nigel Shaw said: "This latest piece of research highlights the importance of having a properly fitted, working smoke alarm on all floors of your home. They will help save your life if a fire breaks out."

"However, as this study shows, even smoke alarms have their limitations. If every property had a sprinkler system installed then this would dramatically

reduce the threat to life in the event of a fire and buy valuable time to get out, stay out and call the fire and rescue service.”

Dave Curry, Chief Fire Officers Association Director for Prevention, Protection and Road Safety, said: “Given the findings of the research we would advise all parents to have a ‘fire plan’ which includes escape routes, and a process that ensures everyone in your home knows what to do in the event of an alarm and includes waking, alerting and evacuating all children in your home”.

“Smoke detectors can only raise awareness of fire; they cannot prevent fire spreading or protect individuals. We firmly believe that sprinklers are the most effective way to ensure fires are suppressed or even extinguished before the FRS can arrive. They save lives and reduce injuries, protect firefighters who attend incidents and reduce the amount of damage to both property and the environment from fire.

Fire and rescue services nationally are keen to promote the use of sprinklers within the home and will continue to lobby government to follow the lead of the Welsh Assembly, making it compulsory for them to be fitted in all new homes.

**ENDS**

**Notes to Editor:**

To arrange an interview with Group Nigel Shaw (Operational Planning) contact: Dan Cooper Corporate Communications at Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service

Tel: 0116 2292178, [daniel.cooper@lfrs.org](mailto:daniel.cooper@lfrs.org)

To arrange interviews with CFOA personnel or for further information, please contact: Sarah Smith Head of Communications at CFOA Tel: 01827 302371  
Mobile: 07896 924467

Email: [sarah.smith@cfoa.org.uk](mailto:sarah.smith@cfoa.org.uk)

**The Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA)**

The Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) is a professional membership association and a registered charity. CFOA members are drawn from all UK Fire & Rescue Services (FRSs) representing the senior executives and managers of the Service. Through the work of its members the Association supports the Fire and Rescue Services of the UK in its aspiration to protect the communities they serve and to continue to improve the overall performance of the fire sector. CFOA provides professional and technical advice to inform national fire policy.