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Margot James MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
Department of Business, Energy, Innovation and Skills
1 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0ET

30 June 2017

Dear Minister

I understand you are considering electrical safety checks in tower blocks following the Grenfell Tower disaster.

This is a potential policy that Electrical Safety First supports and would very much welcome following this appalling tragedy. Confirmation from the Metropolitan Police last week that a fridge freezer was the source of ignition means that those living in densely populated areas like tower blocks must be protected.

You may be aware that Electrical Safety First has worked to ensure tenants living in the private rented sector are protected by mandatory five yearly electrical safety checks in their properties, which has received attention and approval through the working group set up by DCLG as part of the Housing and Planning Act (2016). We are still awaiting Ministerial approval from the Housing Minister on this matter, however we believe now is the time to include tower blocks regardless of tenure in these checks.

As we understand, there are 4,000 tower blocks in England. Given the Grenfell disaster where the source of ignition was electrical, we believe that people living in tower blocks must have access to free mandatory electrical safety checks to ensure their properties are safe from potential electrical fires caused by electricity.

Housing Associations and local authorities we believe must have a legal responsibility for ensuring mandatory electrical safety checks in tower blocks to include electrical distribution and appliances per property. Housing associations and local authorities must also keep a register of the white goods contained and are operating in their blocks regardless of the tenure of the property and also ensure that the consumers have in turn registered their products they are using.

The current policy of the UK Government means that there is an 'expectation' on landlords to keep the electrical installations safe. On this basis, electrics and appliances contained within

social rented properties could go unchecked for many years or become dangerous until action is taken. This is particularly important given the turnover of tenants in the social rented sector is far lower than it is in the private rented sector.

We believe that these people's housing arrangements, individually, should be seen as a consumer issue and that they have a right to ensure that they live in an electrically safe home in terms of the electrical installations and appliances supplied by the landlord.

Electrical Safety First has put together some initial costs for the operation of this policy, which we believe would be in the range of £48m - £60m every five years. This will be money well spent to mitigate the risks in tower blocks that electrical appliances can pose, as we have now seen in Lakanal House, Shepherds Court and now Grenfell Tower.

I would be very grateful if we can arrange a meeting to discuss this with you directly, and if you officials could contact Robert Jervis-Gibbons, Public Affairs Manager Robert.Jervis-Gibbons@electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk to make the arrangements.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'PBuckle', written in a cursive style.

Phil Buckle
Chief Executive