

New Civil Engineer



**LATEST****Fire at South West London flats highlights continued safety failings**

10 SEP, 2019 | BY SAM SHOLLI

A fire which spread through a block of flats in South West London has raised more questions about the country's fire safety regulations.

The fire ripped through a 23-flat building in the Worcester Park suburb in Sutton early on Monday morning.

While no injuries were reported, Mosen Ltd managing director Fathi Tarada said that there could have easily been fatalities.

PODCAST

not cause any fatalities, Mosen told *New Civil Engineer*.

“While the Worcester Park flats may have adopted an American architectural style, they did not adopt the American National Fire Protection Association fire sprinkler regulations.”

He added: “Another issue of concern is that the building occupants reported that the alarms were only triggered in the common areas, but not within their own flats. Early warning of a fire is critical to evacuate four-storey blocks such as the incident in Worcester Park, particularly since it occurred late at night when occupants were sleeping.”

“Fire investigations will inevitably focus on the question of whether the timber cladding had a role to play in the quick progression of the fire. It should be noted that even timber which has been treated with fire retardants will eventually burn, if exposed to a high enough temperature.”

London Mayor Sadiq Khan yesterday confirmed that an urgent investigation is already underway into the official causes of the fire.

Part of The Hamptons development, the block of apartments was built in an American style with timber cladding and timber balconies.

In total, The Hamptons development features 645 homes built on a former sewage treatment works by Berkeley Homes.

The project to build the development was completed in 2010 and the design for the homes was based on New England "timber boarded" architecture, according to Berkeley Homes.

In response to the fire, a spokesperson for Berkeley Homes said: "The property was constructed a decade ago, in full compliance with all fire regulations.



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priority is to make sure residents are properly looked after.

Tarada drew similarities between The Hamptons fire and a fire earlier this year at a new blocks of flats in [Barking, East London](#).

He added: “During the summer months, building occupants may be tempted to light a barbecue on the balcony, which was the suspected source of the fire in Barking.”

The Barking fire destroyed 20 flats, with 10 other homes damaged by heat and smoke. Two people were treated for smoke inhalation, but no other injuries were reported.

Following the Barking fire, Tarada suggested that there is currently a gap in the building regulations with regards to the specification of fire-retardant materials on balconies in multi-storey apartment blocks.

“This gap could be closed if such balconies were considered part of the habitable space, and balcony materials were covered by Class 0 reaction-to-fire requirements,” he said.

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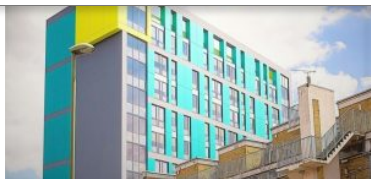
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