



Panel discussion: Keeping Britons Abroad Safe from CO

14:00 – 16:00 (2-4pm), 11th May 2016 | Thatcher Room, Portcullis House

Discussion Chair: David Burrowes MP (Enfield Southgate)

Panellists

- David Burrowes, MP for Enfield Southgate.
- Mark Dingley, father of Francesca Dingley.
- Angela Hills, Destination Services Manager, Association of British Travel Agents.
- Leigh Greenham, Spokesperson for the Carbon Monoxide All Fuels Action Forum.

Action points

- *The office of David Burrowes MP to communicate with the Foreign & Commonwealth Office on making advice provided on its website more robust with regard to CO safety: encouraging all travellers to take CO alarms with them abroad, especially in China.*
- *The COAST group of the Carbon Monoxide All Fuels Action Forum should work alongside the travel industry, to encourage greater safety messaging regarding CO at appropriate moments, e.g. at the point of purchase of travel insurance.*
- *Greater coordination of CO safety campaigns should be facilitated by the Carbon Monoxide All Fuels Action Forum.*
- *David Burrowes MP to contact the Cabinet Office, its Behavioural Insights team, to drive forward government action on CO safety, including encouraging one government department to take clear responsibility for CO issues.*
- *David Burrowes MP to contact Brandon Lewis MP, Minister of State for Housing and Planning at the Department for Communities and Local Government, to challenge him on the discrepancy between regulations for solid and gas-fuelled appliances in the private rented sector.*

1. Welcome from David Burrowes MP (Enfield Southgate) (DB).

David Burrowes was first elected as the Member of Parliament for Enfield Southgate in May 2005, and is a member of the Home Affairs Select Committee. He has a keen interest in social justice, having previously lead the Conservative Party's social justice policy review, and serving as the Shadow Justice Minister from 2007-2010.

DB began the discussion by welcoming the panellists, thanking the attendees and underlining that the panel discussion was not simply an opportunity to discuss the subject, but an opportunity to identify practical efforts to make Britons abroad safer from the threat of carbon monoxide.

2. Opening comments from Mark Dingley (MD), father of Francesca Dingley.

Mark Dingley is the father of Francesca, who lost her life to carbon monoxide poisoning in Chengdu, China, in February 2015. Mark and his wife Chrissy now urge those travelling abroad to take portable carbon monoxide alarms with them before they leave the UK, and for the FCO to amend its advice on CO safety accordingly.

MD discussed the circumstances surrounding Francesca's death, before addressing some of the actions that need to happen to prevent similar tragedies from occurring.

i. Francesca's story

Following graduation from the University of Bristol, Francesca applied to a job teaching English in China, after seeing an ad on Gumtree. Having been successful in the application, she signed a 15-month contract with EF (English First) Chengdu, a franchisee of EF Education First, one of the largest English language-training providers in the world.

After arriving in China in January 2015, Francesca moved into her apartment on the 5th February. Four days later, after going for dinner with her flatmate Emily, Francesca went to bed at around 11pm. Emily, having decided to take a shower and wash her hair, went to run the hot tap in the kitchen, as both girls had been instructed by EF staff that in order for the shower to omit hot water, the faucet in the kitchen had to be running. Emily then went to bed, forgetting to turn the tap off.

The next morning, neither Francesca nor Emily appeared for work. When EF staff later visited the apartment in the afternoon to check on the women, Emily had been rendered unconscious, and Francesca was dead.

ii. The aftermath

A subsequent autopsy revealed that Francesca had been killed by CO poisoning. An inspection report on the boiler revealed that the vent to the water boiler had been incorrectly installed, and did not meet building requirements in China, resulting in CO leaking into the kitchen whenever the boiler was in use.

It was part of the accommodation policy of EF Chengdu to ensure that the apartment was safe: and that all its appliances were tested prior to employees moving in. However when MD questioned staff from EF China, he was told that testing of equipment only involved testing if appliances *functioned*, and not that they were *safe*. Additionally, the landlord of the flat had never supplied safety records, so there was no way of knowing if the boiler had ever been serviced. MD emphasised that as CO poisoning is not uncommon in China, EF's management should have been aware of CO as a potential

risk. MD and his wife Chrissy are currently in the process of suing the landlord who owned the flat, in order to force him to take responsibility.

iii. Recommendations going forward

MD made the following recommendations for increasing CO safety moving forward:

- The Dingleys are working with Francesca's secondary school, Dame Alice Owens in Potters Bar on an awareness-raising project aimed at 16-18 year olds, who may be considering going abroad on gap years. They hope that this could go on to be rolled out nationwide.
- EF, as well as travel companies, should raise awareness of CO safety directly with their clients.
- The advice on the FCO's site should be more prominent and more forcefully delivered: for the page on China, all those travelling in China should be advised to take a CO alarm with them, not just those living there.
- The travel industry should do more to promote the need to bring a CO detector on holiday, e.g. Travel websites could link to sites selling CO detectors.
- CO alarms should be sold in travel hubs, such as airports and ferry terminals, and in 'travel' sections of retail outlets such as Boots.

MD concluded by stating that in order to prevent CO-related deaths from happening abroad in future, the lack of general awareness of CO deaths needed to be combatted effectively.

3. Opening comments from Angela Hills (AH), Destination Services Manager, Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA)

ABTA is the UK's largest travel association, representing travel agents and tour operators that sell £32 billion of holidays and other travel arrangements each year. Angela has responsibility for destination operations, health and safety, crisis management and incident management on behalf of the Federation of Tour Operators and the wider ABTA membership.

AH underlined that safety is critical wherever anybody travels: domestically or internationally, and regardless of length or purpose of travel. In the UK there are regulations in place which landlords must follow, whereas abroad tour operators face challenges in having to work within the laws of the destination country. Every year, an estimated 55 million people travel abroad.

Tour operators must meet certain obligations, exercising due attention in choosing suppliers and selecting subcontractors. However, there are no clear-cut laws in terms of accommodation safety. There are the 1986 fire safety regulations, some laws around occupational health and safety, and the Health & Safety in Work Act. However, there is no concrete safety framework when it comes to tourism accommodation safety.

ABTA have been lobbying the EU for an accommodation safety framework encompassing three key components: fire safety, fuel and energy management, and public health. The European Commission announced that there was a need to review the '86 recommendations, and that a better framework was needed. Following this, the European Commission has published a green paper on the topic.

i. Technical guide

AH then discussed the ABTA Technical Guide, which was written in collaboration with a number of consultancy companies, which provides a 'grass roots' guide to safety measures. This has been

issued to more than 30,000 suppliers overseas. An updated version of the Technical Guide will be published in March 2017, which will cover food, fire, fuel and energy management, swimming pool safety. ABTA also regularly holds relevant training programmes for the tourism sector in destination countries.

ABTA believes that it is the responsibility of the accommodation provider to provide safe accommodation for travellers. AH also expressed concerns regarding holidaymakers carrying alarms with them in holiday, particularly in regard to the possibility that an alarm could be damaged in transit, or that they could be incorrectly located at the accommodation.

AH concluded by calling for a nationwide public awareness campaign, to raise awareness surrounding CO in general, as if people are not aware of CO risks in their home and protect themselves accordingly with a CO alarm, they are unlikely to do so when they go on holiday.

4. Opening comments from Leigh Greenham, Spokesperson for the Carbon Monoxide All Fuels Action Forum

Leigh Greenham is an advisory board member of the Carbon Monoxide All Fuels Action Forum which works alongside the All-Party Parliamentary Carbon Monoxide Group. He provides the technical resource and day-to-day management of CoGDEM, and is also a board director of the Gas Industry Safety Group. He often provides expert advice on gas detectors such as domestic CO alarms, Flue Gas Analysers and worker protection instruments.

LG thanked DB for inviting him to speak. He explained that recently, the Carbon Monoxide All Fuels Action Forum had established the Carbon Monoxide Awareness & Safety in travel & Tourism (COAST) Group, to focus on CO risks in the travel and tourism context. Alice MacAndrew, Director of Group Communications at Thomas Cook and Trustee of the Safer Tourism Foundation, was elected as the chair of this group.

LG then detailed the following on-going initiatives with regard to CO safety:

- CO Awareness Week in November.
- Gas Safety Week in September.
- CO Be Alarmed! campaign in January.
- Project Shout, which works closely with the Dominic Rodgers Trust.
- The Katie Haines Memorial Trust.
- CO Gas Safety, which runs a multimedia competition on CO awareness in schools.
- DCLG have produced radio filler ads.
- CO has formed part of a storyline of a variety of television programmes over the years, ranging from factual consumer affairs programmes such as Fake Britain, to soap operas such as Coronation Street.

LG then underlined that more work needs to be done to raise awareness, particularly to help travellers going overseas, as laws and awareness abroad regarding CO are inconsistent regarding gas safety. The Gas Industry Safety Group is working alongside an organisation called Marcogaz, a Europe-wide trade association for gas companies, to ensure that best practice on gas safety is established across Europe. Additionally, success has been achieved in terms of a new directive on gas appliance regulations, which will require gas appliance manufacturers across Europe to contain CO risks in instruction leaflets and operating instructions, in order to put the CE mark on their products. Additionally, there is engagement in CO safety at the EU level, with Linda McAvan MEP having been involved; however what is needed is a Europe-wide CO Forum to ensure that holidaymakers are safe abroad.

In terms of destinations that are high risk from a CO safety perspective, Eastern European countries are the most dangerous according to a recent WHO study. There are also high CO fatality rates per capita throughout N. America, due to the use of portable generators, the prevalence of attached car garages, and varying competencies of engineers.

Due to this variance in CO safety in destinations abroad, LG said that CO alarms compliant with safety standards are a vital means by which travellers can keep themselves safe from CO risks abroad, as no matter where the alarm is located in the room, it will activate before CO accumulates to a fatal concentration. Recently, Boots has trialled retailing CO alarms at airport branches following the 2006 Corfu incident, but this was discontinued due to lack of sales.

LG concluded by stating that web-based accommodation providers should be required to check that listed accommodation is safe, and that they could additionally start playing a role in making travellers aware of carbon monoxide.

5. Question & Answer session: key themes

i. Holiday mind-set

Roland Wessling of Cranfield University pointed out that often in different environments people operate in different ways: whilst some individuals may be conscious of CO risks in the home, they may not be aware of risks in the 'holiday mind-set', and this should be borne in mind with regard to effective safety messaging.

ii. Responsibility for ensuring safety

MD stated that it should be down to the individual to take responsibility for their own safety, and that CO alarms are simple, light and could easily be taken abroad whilst travelling. It was therefore necessary to educate travellers on how to protect themselves from CO risks. Additionally, if people buy CO alarms for travel, they can then keep them for use in their homes.

AH underlined that accommodation providers should be held responsible for the safety of accommodation, rather than tour operators. Tour operators and accommodation providers often work together as part of their contractual obligations to raise safety standards; that's why ABTA puts together the Health and Safety Technical Standards publication, to ensure consistent safety standards internationally.

DB asked if tour operators could use a standardised mark to show their safety standards have been reviewed, and AH responded by saying that this is a debate that's ongoing within the industry. MD agreed that accommodation providers should ultimately be responsible for accommodation, but that travellers should still bring a CO alarm to protect themselves against risks.

Paul Birbeck (PB), University of Central Lancashire suggested that ABTA make it a part of their contractual arrangements for the companies that they work with to submit to UK safety regulations. AH responded that some tour operators do that already, as an individual contract term between the tour operator and the accommodation provider.

iii. Thomas Cook and the Safer Tourism Foundation

Alice MacAndrew (AM), Director of Group Communications at Thomas Cook, Trustee of the Safer Tourism Foundation (STF), Chair of the Carbon Monoxide Awareness in Travel &

Tourism Safety (COAST) Group attended on behalf of Sharon Wood (whose children died due to CO poisoning when on holiday in Corfu with Thomas Cook, 10 years ago), and explained the following:

- The STF has committed to working with SW on CO safety for Britons abroad.
- The STF had a broad remit regarding tourism safety, but will work on CO safety.
- The STF are working to create a genuine legacy for change, and has appointed Belinda Phipps as CEO, who has a strong track record of providing strategic results in charities and the public sector.
- Next steps are to set up a website and to diversify the board of trustees: Thomas Cook wants the STF to be independent. Linda McAvan MEP is currently on the board.

The STF hopes that its work will raise further awareness of CO dangers.

iv. Training and safe appliances overseas

Chris Jones (CJ), CORGI Technical Services, explained that CORGI has worked with the tour industry for a number of years now, supporting services for gas safety, and providing tour operators with gas safety awareness courses. Additionally, CORGI has undertaken overseas investigations with tour operators, identifying dangerous appliances in many locations around the world including Europe and the Caribbean. In instances where appliances are not working correctly, CORGI advises hoteliers to not use such appliances, hopefully saving lives in the process.

v. Foreign and Commonwealth Office information

LG stated that whilst the FCO does provide information about CO safety to travellers, many people may not consult their website: more people look for the medical advice if they're travelling to far-flung destinations such as China, so CO safety information should be included in country-specific medical advice.

In response, **Lisa Westhead (LW), Head of the Consular Communications team at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office**: stated that this is something the FCO will look at to potentially improve. The FCO works with the travel industry to try and make sure advice is accurate and effective.

Frank Brehany (FB), Holiday Travel Watch stated that his organisation has been invited to the FCO to discuss improving the promotion and quality of information available, and there has been a consultation on the format of travel advisories, but those are only really read by distressed travellers, for example those going to Tunisia after the beach attack. HTW's annual travel survey found that only 33% of respondents read travel advisories.

vi. Survivors and campaigners

Belinda Goldsmid (BG), CO poisoning survivor, explained that her and her family had suffered CO poisoning, that doctors and manufacturers didn't believe her initially, and they are only just recovering as a family. BG underlined the need for the public to be made aware of CO safety, and that survivor groups should be involved in this process.

Stephanie Trotter OBE (ST), CO-Gas Safety underlined that the CO-Gas Safety charity has spent the past 21 years asking for raised awareness, and wants prime time TV warnings about CO. The

charity believes that there needs to be a belt and braces approach in terms of safe appliances and CO alarms, and that safety awareness and legislation needs to cover all the fuels.

Gordon Samuel (GS), father of the late Katie Haines, and founder of the Katie Haines Memorial Trust stressed that an all-encompassing organisation is needed that will make people aware of CO safety. Energy UK's CO Be Alarmed! campaign could provide the basis for this. He underlined that TV advertising does work and should be pursued, and pressed for English regulations for CO alarms for the Private Rented Sector should cover all fuel appliances. GS said he has challenged the Minister of State for Housing and Planning Brandon Lewis MP on this.

vii. Work of the Carbon Monoxide All Fuels Action Forum

LG underlined that The All-Party Parliamentary Carbon Monoxide Group (APPCOG) and the Forum are the right places for action to be moved forward. The success of the CO Be Alarmed! campaign should be built upon; energy suppliers and gas distribution networks should work together to create a stronger campaign for CO awareness. *Richard Denham, Manager of both groups at Policy Connect* stated that the APPCOG would be happy to work with the FCO on finessing the advice provided on their websites regarding CO safety, and encouraging retailers to stock CO alarms in appropriate retail ranges.

Isabella Myers, Chair of the CO Medical and Healthcare Professionals Group (a sub-group of the Forum), stated that the Group will be recommending research into CO in a forthcoming report. They want to do bigger research projects, but those require preliminary research, which doesn't yet exist. To this end, it would be useful for the Forum to foster links with EU researchers.

LG stated that the COAST Group (see above) would be the best mechanism for driving forward actions to improve CO safety for Britons travelling abroad.

viii. Government action

RW stated that one Government department should be made responsible for CO safety, as presently responsibility is too diffuse across government departments. DB suggested that he could set up a meeting with the Cabinet Office, and consult the Behavioural Insights Team on how they could drive CO safety forward.

ix. Other activities

Lee Griffiths, London Hyperbaric Medicine said he has been involved in the treatment of 300 cases, and trains physicians to treat CO poisoning. There appear to be three key issues which need to be addressed: looking at ways prevention can be improved; identifying poisoning cases; assessing how those exposed can be treated. Government is shy to pass regulation, preferring voluntary action by organisations. Organisations should put in place measures to ensure that what they're delivering is as safe as possible, as part of their corporate and social responsibility.

Maria Kokkinaki (MK), Energy UK stated that Energy UK will be running awareness campaigns aimed at festival goers and students in the summer and September respectively. *Chanel Townsend (CT)*, stated that Energy UK has reviewed its' campaigning focus, and will shift from just domestic CO safety towards areas such as tourism and travel from September 2016 – March 2017. If anyone has feedback or thoughts about what CO Be Alarmed! should focus on, they are welcome to get in

touch. MD agreed that awareness was crucial, and that lack of coordination on awareness raising needed to be addressed.

Kate Huet (KH), Association of Travel Insurance Intermediaries stated that as the ATII represents about 90% of travel insurers, it could act as a conduit to raise awareness, putting CO safety information through its distribution channels.

6. Conclusion

DB thanked the panellists, in particular Mr Dingley, everyone for attending, and the APPCOG for arranging the meeting. He stated his intention to drive progress in terms of prevention, identification and support. He reiterated his commitment to contacting the Cabinet Office, and Brandon Lewis MP, to challenge him on the legislative variation between rules covering solid fuel and gas.

He also asked that the group meets again in 6 months to review actions taken forward, and said that the very least that can be done is make sure that lessons are learned and real improvements are made to ensure that what happened to the Dingleys does not happen again, and preventable deaths and injuries from CO poisoning are eradicated.

Attendees

Gaelle Alloin, *UTC Fire & Security*
 Tom Bell, *Northern Gas Networks*
 Chris Bielby, *Gas Industry Safety Group*
 Paul Birbeck, *University of Central Lancashire*
 Jessica Bolton, *Cranfield University*
 Frank Brehany, *HolidayTravelWatch*
 Phillip Burrows, *National Grid*
 Stewart Clements, *Heating and Hot Water Industry Council*
 Scott Darroch, *Gas Safe Register*
 Paul Durose, *Gas Tag*
 Sir Roger Gale MP, *Member of Parliament for North Thanet*
 Belinda Goldsmid
 Leigh Greenham, *Carbon Monoxide All Fuels Action Forum*
 Lee Griffiths, *CO All Fuels Action Forum Medical and Healthcare sub-group*
 Thomas Gurd, *Honeywell Industrial Safety*
 Stephen Hadley, *Consumer Safety International*
 Kate Huet, *Association of Travel Insurance Intermediaries*
 Chris Jones, *Corgi Technical*
 Simon Jones, *Kidde Safety*
 Graham Jukes, *Chartered Institute for Environmental Health*
 Gerarda Kendrick, *Energy Networks Association*

Maria Kokkinaki, *Energy UK*
 Robert Lyon, *Project Shout*
 Alice Macandrew, *Thomas Cook*
 Ashley Martin, *Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents*
 Steve Miller, *Carbon Monoxide All Fuels Action Forum*
 Billy Mitchell, *Smart COMPLIANCE*
 Maureen Nolan, *Gas Safe Charity*
 Belinda Parker, *Energy Networks Association*
 Tom Pashby, *Policy Connect*
 Bill Paton, *Corgi Technical*
 Jason Perrins, *FireBlitz*
 Katherine Perry, *Policy Connect*
 Margaret Ritchie MP, *Member of Parliament for South Down*
 Su Roberts, *Thomson*
 Stacey Rodgers, *The Dominic Rodgers Trust*
 Gordon Samuel, *The Katie Haines Memorial Trust*
 Barry Sheerman MP, *All-Party Parliamentary Carbon Monoxide Group co-chair*
 Robbie Stevenson, *SGN*
 Chanel Townsend, *Energy UK*
 Stephen Ullathorne, *Gas Tag*
 John Walsh, *Sprue*
 Roland Wessling, *Cranfield University*
 Lisa Westhead, *Foreign & Commonwealth Office*

Contact For more information on the All-Party Parliamentary Carbon Monoxide Group, please visit our website at www.policyconnect.org.uk/appcog, or contact the APPCOG Manager Richard Denham on richard.denham@policyconnect.org.uk, or 020 7202 8581.

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