

**PRESS RELEASE**  
**30 March 2021**



## **IFEDA support the Evaluation of the Role of Fire Extinguishers Report**

IFEDA, the Independent Fire Engineering & Distributors Association, are pleased to have supported the publication of the independent report by David Wales: An evaluation of the role of portable fire extinguishers. During a distinguished career in the Fire & Rescue service Wales instigated and led an award-winning national study of human behaviour in fires.

The report looks in depth at the role of portable fire extinguishers and the difference in opinions of their placement and use in buildings and property, including HMO (houses of multiple occupancy); with particular focus on the standard industry recommendations that the public shouldn't use them in the event of a fire as they are not trained in their use.

In looking at the reasoning behind this assumption the report draws on various publications to provide an overview and bigger picture of the role extinguishers play in 'first aid' fire-fighting. The report even goes on to question the use of this term when fire extinguishers could be classed as a standalone intervention.

When the public use fire extinguishers to put out small fires, these are often not even reported, as the fire has been contained and extinguished before it takes hold, negating a need for the fire brigade to attend. Fires extinguished in these circumstances are generally not reported or included in any official figures. The report noted that 70 – 80% of fires dealt with by the public are successfully extinguished.

### **Key highlights from the report's executive summary note:**

The report considers the use of portable fire extinguishers in dwellings/HMO. It does so by drawing largely on evidence and data that provide a human or public perspective on their use and benefit.

It finds that the contribution of the extinguisher and the public in using them, attracts little attention and is poorly recorded within academia, government or the wider fire safety sector. And yet, it is this perspective which ultimately identifies their true contribution and value.

The size of fires is decreasing – both those the fire and rescue service (FRS) attends and those that the public deal with. In either case, the early interventions of the public are likely to be the most significant determinant of the outcome with 70% to 80% of fires dealt with by the public not requiring professional assistance. It is important to note that in doing so, they are willingly acting against official advice and are not being coerced into this. The evidence shows the public to be effective and capable in tackling fires, even in the absence of any professional support, or often without specialist equipment.

The FRS response time to dwelling fires has increased by nearly 50% over the past 25 years. As the FRS does not routinely provide any support or intervention until their arrival, the reduction in fire size, etc. must be attributable to other factors, including the role of the public.

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The report findings conclude that the use of fire extinguishers suffers from several systemic issues, which adversely distort their true role and influence. It notes that the case for training being critical for the safe use of extinguishers (and conversely using a lack of training to justify their non-provision) requires greater scrutiny.

The full report can be read here: [An evaluation of the role of fire extinguishers \(yumpu.com\)](https://www.yumpu.com)

Graham Ferris, General Manager of IFEDA said: “This comprehensive report, I believe the first of its kind, provides a complete overview of the use of portable fire extinguishers and their use. With some industry guidelines stating that extinguishers should be removed from buildings, this report helps to highlight the potential benefit of keeping them within buildings and properties. The report demonstrates that fire extinguishers provide a vital, easy to use, form of fire-fighting equipment, which could be used safely by the public, even when they are not trained in their use.”

--ENDS--

**Notes to Editor:**

IFEDA, the Independent Fire Engineering and Distributors Association, was formed in 1989 with the key aim of promoting professionalism and quality standards within the fire safety industry. To this end all members are required to achieve third party accreditation e.g. ISO 9001 as a means of continued membership.

IFEDA runs fire training courses and provides support on fire safety issues, in addition to publishing the quarterly newsletter, Fire Talk, which keeps members up-to-date with relevant legislation changes and recent prosecutions.

IFEDA can be contacted on: 0844 225 1800, email: [info@ifeda.org](mailto:info@ifeda.org) or visit: [www.ifeda.org](http://www.ifeda.org).

More information about David Wales, author of the report, can be found [here](#).

For images and interviews please contact Kay Pendell-Smith at [ps marketing](#). Tel: 07788 408837.

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