

# New Office for Product Safety and Standards: Further UK Regulation

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In light of the fire that destroyed Grenfell Tower in West London in 2017, and apparent issues with the safety of white goods in particular, we [commented upon the lack of guidance on product recalls](#) in UK law, and the existing government proposals to improve and overhaul various areas of product regulation. On 21 January 2018, the UK Government announced the creation of a new Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) to enhance the current product safety system in the UK. This is considered to be a direct response to the Grenfell Tower tragedy.

## How effective is the OPSS likely to be?

The London Fire Brigade estimate that three house fires a day are attributable to faulty tumble dryers and 60 house fires a week are caused by faulty white goods, and it is expected that the creation of an office to review these issues will assist in regulating, monitoring and guiding manufacturers of these products.

However, the OPSS has only been allocated an annual budget of £12 million, and does not have any enforcement powers. It is designed to be a resource for coordinating the activity of local authorities and private companies with respect to product recalls and dissemination of information. It will also strive to be a centre for capturing and processing data in this area so that risks can be identified at an early stage and responses to incidents managed carefully and effectively.

The OPSS' key role is therefore likely to be in steering local authorities in taking a more consistent approach to enforcement, and reducing the amount of high risk goods in circulation.

However, the introduction of the OPSS has been criticised for simply being a rushed and inadequate response from a pressured government that needed to demonstrate it had taken action quickly. It has also been questioned how much meaningful benefit will be passed directly to consumers in the short term and to what degree the office will scrutinise manufacturers. Irrespective of the OPSS' potential, it is likely that further money and powers will need to be allocated to the office in the future as the scale of the issue of faulty white goods is truly realised.

## Further Developments in Law

There have not been any amendments to product safety legislation in the UK since our [last article in July 2017](#), and there are yet to be any legal proceedings brought against a corporation or public body in association with the Grenfell Tower disaster.

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National Law Review, Volume VIII, Number 86

Source URL: <https://natlawreview.com/article/new-office-product-safety-and-standards-further-uk-regulation>