



# R B F & R S

## news release

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### **WOULD YOU HEAR YOUR SMOKE ALARM?**

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) is supporting Deaf Awareness Week (4 – 10 May) by highlighting the importance of specialist smoke alarms for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Deaf Awareness Week is a national event that aims to promote a greater understanding of the issues faced by people who have impaired hearing.

With an estimated one million adults in the UK unable to hear an ordinary smoke alarm on account of deafness or removing a hearing aid at night<sup>1</sup>, it is essential that people check they have the right smoke alarm in place to alert them to a fire in the home.

RBFRS works closely with local Sensory Needs groups in Wokingham and Slough, which provide specialist support for people with hearing, visual and multi-sensory impairment, and the Reading Deaf Centre. Via referrals from these organisations, RBFRS can provide and install special smoke alarm systems, specifically designed for deaf people. These systems consist of two smoke alarms, a flashing light and transmitter, and a bed shaker, which will alert people to a fire in lieu of an audible alarm.

A member of RBFRS' Community Safety team, who is a Level 1 British Sign Language (BSL) signer, and a volunteer BSL signer can assist with the installation of these specialist alarms where necessary, so that they can effectively communicate important fire safety information to the householder, including how to make a fire escape plan, and answer any queries they may have.

Anyone who has any doubts about their hearing can take RNID's five minute telephone hearing check by calling 0844 800 3838 or online at [www.rnid.org.uk/hearingmatters](http://www.rnid.org.uk/hearingmatters)

If you or someone you know is deaf or hard of hearing and would benefit from fire safety advice and/or a special smoke alarm, please email [community.safety@rbfrs.co.uk](mailto:community.safety@rbfrs.co.uk) or contact your local Sensory Needs centre (please note that priority will be given according to need).

**ENDS.**

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<sup>1</sup> RNID estimate, 2006