



# R B F & R S

## news release

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### **RBFRS SUPPORTS DEAF AWARENESS WEEK**

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) is supporting Deaf Awareness Week (28 June-4 July) by emphasising the importance of specialist smoke alarms for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Deaf Awareness Week is a national initiative coordinated by the UK Council on Deafness.

With an estimated one million adults in the UK unable to hear an ordinary smoke alarm on account of deafness or because they remove hearing aids at night<sup>1</sup>, RBFRS is urging Berkshire residents to check they have the right smoke alarm system in place to alert them in the event of a fire in the home.

RBFRS works closely with local Sensory Needs groups in Wokingham and Slough (which provide specialist advice and 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 fire in lieu of an audible alarm.

The Brigade also has a member of staff who is a British Sign Language (BSL) signer and a volunteer BSL interpreter who can assist with Home Fire Safety Checks and the installation of specialist alarms where necessary. This is an invaluable resource as it means that important fire safety information can be effectively communicated without relying on lip reading alone.

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 system, 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> Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID) estimate, 2006