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Any communication on the subject of this letter should be addressed to—

THE SECRETARY,
MINISTRY OF HOME SECURITY,
(A.R.P. DEPT.)
HORSEFERRY HOUSE,
THORNEY STREET,
LONDON, S.W.1.

and the following reference quoted—



MINISTRY OF HOME SECURITY,
AIR RAID PRECAUTIONS DEPT.,
HORSEFERRY HOUSE,
THORNEY STREET,
LONDON, S.W.1.

H.S.C.185/40

J.2.

22nd July, 1940.

Sir,

Home Security Circular No.185/1940.
F.B. Circular No.107/1940.
Scottish Home Dept. Fire Brigades Dvn.
Circular No.L137/40.

Fire Precautions: Clearance of Lofts Order.

1. I am directed by the Minister of Home Security to inform you that, after consultation with the Secretary of State for Scotland, an Order has been made under paragraph 2 of Defence Regulation No. 27 requiring the occupier of a dwelling house to clear and keep clear of all articles any loft which is not used or furnished for use for human habitation. The term dwelling house will include flats, hotels, and other residential buildings, and hospitals. The Order will apply to attics, and to roof spaces, whether boarded or unboarded, between the roof of a dwelling house and the ceiling of the storey below in cases where ready access is not available. The Order does not apply to a loft or attic, access to which is provided by a staircase. A copy of the Order is attached, and an extract from Defence Regulation 27 is appended to this letter for information.

2. It is very difficult to specify which articles are to be regarded as inflammable and which are not, and in the event of fire due to an incendiary bomb in the roof of a dwelling house the extinction of the fire should not be impeded by the storage of articles, whether inflammable or not. Accordingly the Order requires all articles to be removed from the spaces defined, and not merely those which are inflammable.

3. Under the terms of the Order and paragraph (5) of the Regulation the Local Authority is empowered to authorise any officer or servant of the Council to enter and inspect any premises to which the Order applies for the purpose of seeing whether the Order has been complied with. If the person so authorised finds that the Order has not been complied with, he may take such steps as may appear to him to be reasonably necessary for the purpose of securing compliance with the Order, and any action he may take in this regard will be without prejudice to any proceedings which may be taken for an offence against the Regulation. It is not contemplated that local authorities will be able to institute a detailed and comprehensive survey of dwelling houses with a view to enforcing compliance with the Order. Attention should, however, be directed first to dwelling houses in districts where the fire risk is likely to be greatest and local authorities will no doubt find it convenient to authorise officers and members of the fire service, including the Auxiliary Fire Service, to carry out such inspection as may be considered desirable. Care should be taken that personnel employed on inspection duty are specially selected as the duty will call for considerable tact and discretion.

The Clerk of the County Council,
The County Clerk,
The Town Clerk,
The Clerk of the District Council.

1940,
No.1313

4. If in special circumstances the local authority in England and Wales wish to take proceedings for non-compliance with the Order, the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions should be obtained in accordance with the procedure prescribed in Defence Regulation 93.

5. I am to add that in the Minister's opinion, compliance with the Order will be most readily secured if an urgent appeal is addressed to householders in their own interests as a fire precaution to clear their attics and lofts of all articles, and at the same time to make available for collection by the local authority all waste materials, particularly paper and articles made therefrom, and metals of all kinds, so that these materials can be made available for industrial use. Steps are being taken by the Ministry of Supply for the salvage of disused materials which are urgently needed and if full publicity is given to both aspects, i.e. fire precautions and salvage, compliance with the Order is likely to be made effective without resort, except in special cases, to compulsory powers.

6. In the London Fire Brigade area, the duties of inspection under paragraph 2 of the Order, will be undertaken by the London Fire Brigade. The responsibility for the collection of salvaged articles will remain with the Common Council of the City of London and the Metropolitan Borough Councils.

Elsewhere the Order applies to all boroughs and urban districts.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

H. E. Morrison

Issued to all Local Authorities in England and Wales and Scotland.

Copies sent for information to Chief Officers of Police in England and Wales and Scotland, to Chief Officers of Fire Brigades in England and Wales and to Firemasters in Scotland.

DEFENCE REGULATION 27.

The following paragraphs have been added to Defence Regulation 27 by General Regulations added 10th July, 1940, (S.R. & O. 1940 No.1217).

"(2) With a view to preventing the spread or facilitating the extinction of fire caused by incendiary bombs, the Secretary of State may by order make provision for requiring rooms or other spaces on premises to which the order applies to be cleared and kept clear of articles which are not affixed to the premises.

(3) Any such order may apply either to the whole of Great Britain or Northern Ireland or to any part thereof specified in the order, and either to all premises or to premises of such classes or descriptions as may be so specified.

(4) If the provisions of any order made under this Regulation are not complied with as respects any premises, the occupier of the premises shall be guilty of an offence against this Regulation.

(5) Any person authorised by the Secretary of State in writing, or by or under any such order, may at any time enter and inspect any premises to which the order applies for the purpose of seeing whether the order has been complied with; and if the person so authorised finds that the order has not been complied with, he may, without prejudice to any proceedings which may be taken for an offence against this Regulation, take such steps and use such force as may appear to him to be reasonably necessary for the purpose of securing compliance with the order."