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Pfaffenhain cylinder locking systems are installed at the Burj Al Arab Hotel in Dubai

It's time to review letter box safety

From Dr Efim Rabinovitch, General Manager, Powerprize Ltd

We at PowerPrize Limited are regular subscribers and readers of the *AJ* magazine. For that reason I am pleased to write to you on a subject that should be of interest to your audience.

I take a liberty to introduce PowerPrize Limited as a London-based SME registered since 1998. The company business is research and development of new products. During the last five years the company has dedicated its efforts to the design, patenting and development of the new security letter box products.

Consultation with the public shows that crime and lawlessness are major concerns. Many residents and businesses worry that they will become victims of crime and many people live in fear. There are shocking statistics concerning arson available on the Arson Prevention Bureau website. Arson now accounts for up to 70% of fires in some areas of the country. Petrol bomb attacks on houses kill whole families. The threat of terrorism is another cause of concern.

The letterplate fitted to the property's front door is the only part of the property that is open 24 hours a day. As a result the unprotected letter box offers an easy and attractive route

into the premises for vandals, arsonists, criminals and terrorists whatever alarms, CCTV, locks, etc. the property may have. There have been widely reported and seemingly increasing numbers of crimes committed through the letter box.

In House of Commons Hansard Debates for 8 May 2001 (pt 13) Mr Hawkins said:

"It is not hard to envisage the consequences of such an unpleasant attack, in which petrol is poured through someone's letter box and set alight. We see that all too frequently in our towns and inner cities. In many of those tragic cases of criminal arson, people in the house have no connection with the subject of the grudge attack, and young children have been burned to death. That has always worried us, and I am glad that the Minister has been sympathetic to the issues that we have raised."

The best defence against property crime such as arson, theft and burglary committed through the letter box is to have effective letter box security. Although this sounds simple, an effective and affordable measure to meet the new challenges and solve the problem has not been available until now.

PowerPrize has designed a patented letter box product with the brand name IdealGuard™. This is a maintenance-free letter box that does not interfere with mail delivery but virtually eliminates the risk to occupants, property and contents from vandalism or a crime attack through the letter box. It also facilitates home energy saving and helps to achieve the UK Government's obligations and targets for energy conservation and cutting down on the greenhouse gas emissions.

IdealGuard products are the result of considerable investment, technical expertise, innovative product development and consultations with police crime prevention officers, local authority specifiers, ironmonger distributors and door manufacturers.

They are in full compliance with the current European and British Standard EN BS 13724:2002 "Postal services - Apertures of private letter boxes and letterplates - Requirements and test methods" concerning the aperture for the daily delivery of letter post items. However IdealGuard products are based on a new concept in letter box design, which exceeds the Standard's requirements in security, home

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energy saving, ergonomics and protection of the environment.

For that reason, since 2004, I have been in contact with the BSI, submitting a proposal to amend Standard EN BS 13724:2002. In the proposal I suggested the introduction of a new Class of private letter box aperture - a Class that would provide an effective solution to many of the letter box security and home energy problems, while addressing the problem of the delivery person's health and safety at work.

The new Class was proposed as following: "Apertures positioned below the letter box horizontal line of symmetry near its bottom, with the bottom provided in the form of an acclivity rising from the aperture lower edge, with protection and detention means for obstructing access to the stored mail and its removal through the aperture, with the letter post items

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introduced though the aperture against force of gravity, which is utilised for drawing items, other than letter post items, in particular, liquid out of the letter box through the aperture".

After lengthy debate at the BSI National Committee SVS/4 Postal services it was agreed that (1) the proposal is an accurate account of the areas that would need to be addressed in the Standard and (2) to forward the proposal at the time of the review by the European committee CEN TC/331/WG4 Postal services in 2007.

At the same time, it is the preference of the BSI that amendments, revisions and proposals concerning the new Standards come with the support of the appropriate recognised established trade organisations and professional bodies.

The subject of the amended Standard is of importance to Arson Control Forum stakeholders, door manufacturers, insurance companies, home builders, facilities managers, property developers, contractors, Local Authorities, Housing Associations, communities, residents, security companies, retailers, DIY industries, etc.

There is no doubt that individuals, firms, organisations and companies engaged in the business of Architectural Ironmongery are also among the first to be informed and consulted on the subject of the future Standard and letter boxes.

PowerPrize Limited looks forward to developing links with the interested trade organisations and professional bodies and also to developing mutually beneficial co-operation with industry/clients to facilitate the launch of these new lifesaving products to the market. Please contact me at power@prizeltd.freereserve.co.uk



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