

Building Standards Compliance and Fire Safety Consultation response

INSULATED RENDER AND CLADDING ASSOCIATION

1.1. Do you agree that the roles and responsibilities of verifiers (including their key activities) must be clearly defined and recorded, including the expected level of resources and skills needed to undertake verification activity, and the actual level?

Yes

1.2. Do you agree that verifiers must place a greater emphasis on inspection and testing throughout construction and at completion?

Yes

1.3. Do you agree that verifiers must place a strong focus on safety critical elements such as structure (for example wall ties, lateral restraint) and fire safety (for example fire protection, fire-stopping, cavity barriers)?

Yes. Verifiers should be sufficiently independent, trained, experienced and competent to fulfil their role.

1.4. Do you agree that local authorities should not be able to act as verifier for their own “higher risk” building work due to possible conflicts of interest?

No

1.5. Do you agree that local authorities should still be able to act as verifier for their own lower risk work?

Yes

1.6. Do you agree that the roles and responsibilities of building owners and developers (including their key activities) must be clearly defined within the Building Standards system and recorded including the expected level of resources and skills needed to assure themselves and verifiers of compliance, and the actual level?

Yes

1.7. Do you agree that the building owners and developers must, to ensure compliance, place a greater emphasis on inspection and testing throughout construction and at completion, with focus on the safety critical elements?

Yes

1.8. Do you agree with the requirement for a Compliance Plan, to be provided by the owner or developer, to demonstrate their approach to compliance from initial design, through detailed design and construction, and leading to their final sign-off and certification of the completed building?

Unsure

1.9. Do you agree that the building owner or developer should be required to appoint a competent professional person, with the appropriate experience and qualifications, to act on their behalf in order to assure them of compliance when they submit the completion certificate?

Yes

1.10. Do you agree that mandatory pre-application discussions and pre-commencement of construction discussions should be introduced for higher risk buildings?

Unsure

1.11. Do you agree that amendments to warrant should differentiate between minor changes, major changes, and staged warrants?

Unsure

1.12. Do you agree that the construction procedures and guidance should be reviewed and that mandatory notifications are introduced, including notification of progress on higher risk projects?

Yes

1.13. Do you agree that verifiers should carry out ad-hoc (unannounced) progress inspections and be able to require disruptive surveys when mandatory notifications are not made to them?

Yes

1.14. Do you agree that verifiers should record safety critical building standards non-compliances and feedback at a national level to drive improvements?

Yes, significant non-compliances and failures should be flagged up to all verifiers regularly to highlight particular problem areas.

1.15. Do you agree that verifiers should be notified of minor changes in design as the project progresses, on the understanding that they are to be covered by an amendment to warrant before the completion certificate is submitted?

Yes, a definition of a minor change is needed.

1.16. Do you agree that the completion certificate for a higher risk building should have subsets for safety critical aspects, and be accompanied by as-built drawings and the completed Compliance Plan?

Yes

1.17. Do you agree that the procedures for the temporary occupation or use of a building should be strengthened for example requiring a declaration of compliance and monitoring of the expiry dates?

Unsure

1.18. Do you agree that restrictions to the occupation or use of existing buildings should be considered when significant alterations are being carried out to higher risk buildings?

Yes

1.18. Do you agree that local authorities should be more pro-active in enforcing building regulations and monitor construction regularly?

Yes

1.20. Do you agree that local authorities should have a building standards enforcement policy in place that is based on national guidance?

Yes

1.21. Do you agree that national guidance on building standards enforcement should include what enforcement related actions local authorities should carry out and the level of resources and skills they should have to do so?

Unsure

1.22. Do you agree the penalties and levels of fines associated with serious failures in compliance should be increased?

Unsure

2.1. Do you agree that the guidance should be developed to make clear that there is more than one way of achieving compliance with the mandatory functional standards?

Yes

2.2. Do you agree that the annexes in the Technical Handbooks for residential care buildings, hospitals and enclosed shopping centres should be published separately?

Yes. This would remove ambiguity and the usability of documents.

2.3. Do you agree that an additional Technical Handbook for simple domestic detached and semi-detached dwellings (up to 3 storeys) should be introduced as a means of compliance with fire, and all applicable building standards and sections of the Handbooks?

Unsure

2.4. Do you agree that a national “hub” approach should be developed to share expertise and skills and be responsible for verifying fully performance based “fire safety engineering designs”?

All verifiers should be managed as a core unit with similar information and recommendations and not left to local interpretation.

2.5. Do you agree that consideration should be given to a certification scheme for fire engineering?

Unsure

2.6. Do you agree that the reference to British Standards Reaction to Fire Tests should be removed from the Technical Handbook?

To achieve Dame Judith Hackett's recommendation of increasing regulatory clarity we believe that it would be helpful if there were a single product classification system in operation in the UK.

2.7. Do you agree that only A1 and A2 materials, using the European Harmonised “reaction to fire tests”, should be required for external walls or insulation exposed in a cavity of a high rise building (domestic and non-domestic) with a storey at a height of more than 11m above ground?

No. INCA does not believe that combustible materials in cladding systems should be A1 or A2. No material exists in isolation from other components, and each element must be considered as part of the overall system. Materials that are non-combustible or of limited combustibility combined in an unsuitable system or designed and installed incorrectly can create other significant problems.

2.8. Do you agree that only A1 and A2 materials, using the European Harmonised “reaction to fire tests”, should be required for external walls or insulation exposed in a cavity of entertainment and assembly buildings, residential care homes and hospitals of any height?

No. INCA does not believe that combustible materials in cladding systems should be A1 or A2. No material exists in isolation from other components, and each element must be considered as part of the overall system. Materials that are non-combustible or of limited combustibility combined in an unsuitable system or designed and installed incorrectly can create other significant problems.

2.9. Do you agree that BS 8414 (and BR135) may still be used as an alternative method of providing evidence to show compliance?

Yes. The European classification is deemed by INCA to be a sufficiently robust classification for systems suitable for use in high-rise buildings. It is generally accepted that A2 or better are classifications which do not propagate the spread of fire.

INCA proposes only to permit BS8414 and BR135 classification or systems that have passed a European accredited and audited full-scale fire test issued by an approved testing authority such as those that exist in other European countries.

2.10. Do you agree fire service activated evacuation sounders should be required in each flat in new domestic buildings which have a storey at a height of more than 18m above ground level?

Unsure

2.11. Do you agree that two stairways should be required for new domestic buildings which have a storey at a height of more than 18m above ground level?

Unsure

2.12. Do you agree that new HMOs used for “care” 24/7 should be included in the list of buildings with a mandatory requirement for automatic fire suppression systems?

Unsure

2.13. Do you agree that new HMOs with 10 or more occupants should be included in the list of buildings with a mandatory requirement for automatic fire suppression systems?

Unsure

2.14. Do you agree that new flats should be included in the list of buildings with a mandatory requirement for automatic fire suppression systems?

Unsure

3.1. Do you agree that protected lobbies need not be provided to shared residential accommodation with only one escape stair?

Unsure

3.2. Do you agree that exempt type 16 of building regulations should be reviewed in respect of the criteria for the erection of a temporary building and the temporary use of a building?

Unsure

4.1. Do you agree with the areas identified for further consideration?

No comment

4.2. Do you consider there are other areas of the building standards system that require further consideration?

No Comment

4.3. If Yes above please tell us what they are in the box below.

No Comment