

# FIRE & SAFETY BULLETIN

## THREE-QUARTERS OF FIRE DOORS FAILED INSPECTIONS IN 2019

More than three-quarters (76%, in fact) of the fire doors inspected by the Fire Door Inspection Scheme (FDIS) during 2019 were condemned as being not fit for purpose. In addition, 63% of those buildings inspected also had additional fire safety issues.

The data, which refers to more than 100,000 inspections conducted in over 2,700 buildings across the UK, also highlights the challenges with fire door installation. 30% of fire doors nationwide were condemned due to poor installation, with problems including excessive gaps around doors and the use of non-compatible foam.

The data suggests that 57% of installed fire doors inspected needed small-scale maintenance, with the Top Three reasons for failures including excessive gaps, smoke sealing issues and poorly adjusted door closers, which would prevent the door performing as designed to hold back the spread of a fire.

Of the buildings inspected, nearly a quarter (24%) of fire doors that were third party certificated were correctly installed and maintained, while 40% of third party certificated fire doors were condemned due to poor maintenance and 36% due to both poor installation and poor maintenance.



## LANDMARK GOVERNMENT BILL TO DELIVER “BIGGEST CHANGES TO BUILDINGS SAFETY FOR NEARLY FOUR DECADES”

The Government has published its landmark Building Safety Bill which is designed to deliver the biggest changes to building safety for nearly 40 years and, ultimately, make residents safer in their homes.

The Building Safety Bill is published in draft form and will improve regulations as the Government seeks to bring forward a clearer system with residents’ safety at the very heart of the matter. Residents have helped to develop the proposals through engagement groups.



## LATEST HOME OFFICE FIGURES HIGHLIGHT FALL IN NUMBER OF FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE INCIDENTS

**The latest figures released by the Home Office show that the number of incidents attended by Fire and Rescue Services in England have fallen. The number of fires attended has fallen by 12%, while fire-related fatalities have reduced by 10%. The figures – which cover the year ending 2019 – include statistics on all incidents, fire-related fatalities and casualties from fire.**

Roy Wilsher, chair of the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), has welcomed the findings, but warns that now is not the time for complacency, especially so during the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Wilsher stated: “While I am pleased to see the reduction in the number of incidents attended, it is absolutely vital that we do not become complacent. Fire and Rescue Services are working in unprecedented times. At this

stage, we do not know how COVID-19 will continue to impact our communities and the future numbers or types of incidents.”

### KEY FINDINGS

In terms of the other key findings in the Home Office statistics, there has been a 4% decrease in incidents attended. The total number of deliberate fires has decreased by 9%. Fires have accounted for 28% of all incidents attended by the Fire and Rescue Service, fire false alarms 41% and non-fire incidents 30%. There has also been a 5% reduction in fatalities associated with dwelling fires.

The NFCC adds that some of the figures should be viewed against the hot, dry conditions witnessed in 2018, when there was a large spike in outdoor fires.

### GOVERNMENT RECOGNISES NEED FOR CLEAR AND CONSISTENT APPROACH ON FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT

**The Fire Safety Bill has had a successful Second Reading in the House of Commons during which James Brokenshire (the Minister of State at the Home Office) focused on the tragic Grenfell Tower fire and stressed that “the Government is resolute in its commitment to ensure that events of this kind are never repeated.”**

Brokenshire told Parliament: “The Queen’s Speech committed the Government to bringing forward two Bills on fire and building safety. The first is this short, technical, Home Office-led Fire Safety Bill, which will

amend the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

The second, the building safety Bill led by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, will put in place an enhanced safety framework for high-rise residential buildings, taking forward the recommendations from Dame Judith Hackitt’s review.”



### MAYOR OF LONDON TARGETS ROGUE LANDLORDS

**The Mayor of London Sadiq Khan has announced the launch of a new online database that will name and shame criminal landlords and letting agents.**

The new database, to be built in partnership with London Boroughs and published on the Mayor’s website, will cite criminal landlords and letting agents who have been successfully prosecuted for housing offences. The Mayor has not revealed if this will include fire safety offences.

The database will be developed in the coming months with information from six councils – Newham, Brent, Camden, Southwark, Kingston and Sutton – with other boroughs across London set to join following its public launch in the autumn.

### GOVERNMENT “BACKS AWAY” FROM 3 MONTH FIRE DOOR CHECKS

**The Government has ‘backed away’ from following the Grenfell inquiry’s recommendation that it be a ‘legal requirement’ to undertaken three monthly checks of all flat block fire doors.**

The government is now proposing three monthly checks being ‘compulsory only for fire doors in communal areas of high rises’, with six monthly checks required for flat entrance doors in high rises. The timeframes ‘double’ for buildings between 11m and 18m in height, and the government is ‘also seeking views’ on whether prescribing a frequency of such checks for shorter buildings is ‘reasonable and practicable’.

## NFCC 'FRUSTRATED' AT NUMBER OF UNSAFE BUILDINGS



**To mark the third anniversary of the devastating Grenfell Tower fire, the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) has expressed concerns over the amount of unsafe premises that still remind in the UK.**

While NFCC welcomed the additional £1 billion government funding for the removal of cladding, it warns cost should not be a barrier to people's safety and if necessary, this fund should be increased. A recent Select Committee highlighted that the removal of dangerous cladding would cost more than the £1bn fund.

NFCC Chair Roy Wilsher has repeatedly stated it is 'wholly unacceptable' that people are still living in dangerously clad buildings. In some cases, building owners

are not doing enough to support residents, with some leaseholders paying unacceptable fees for safety measures, which were meant to be temporary.

NFCC has made it clear to government that while some progress has been made, change has not happened quickly enough; fundamental reform of building safety must happen at a faster pace and government should now commit to a clear timetable and date for the removal of unsafe cladding from buildings.

The government recently said there was an 'ambition' for the removal of cladding at all sites to begin by the end of the year, but at this time no deadline for completion could be committed to.

## FIREFIGHTERS URGE RESIDENTS TO DO THEIR BIT TO AVOID SUMMER FIRES



- ▶ Make sure disposable barbecues are fully cooled before throwing them away
- ▶ Use recognised fire lighters of starter fuel for charcoal barbecues – **Do not use petrol**
- ▶ Keep barbecues away from fences or foliage



## Amendments to the Approved Documents

**The Building Regulations 2010 – Approved Document B: Fire Safety – 2019 edition has been amended in May 2020.**

The changes highlighted in this amendment booklet take effect on 26th November 2020 for use in England.

The changes focus on the following fire safety provisions in blocks of flats:

- ▶ **Sprinklers**
  - ▶ A reduction in the trigger height from 30m to 11m
- ▶ **Wayfinding signage for the fire service**
  - ▶ A new recommendation for floor identification and flat indication signage within blocks of flats with storeys over 11m.

**We would like to remind landlords and building owners that they have certain legal obligations when it comes to fire safety and protection of their properties and the safety of people who reside in their premises.**



## EWS1 FORM

**So you have finally decided that you will arrange for an external wall fire review and attempt to obtain an EWS1 Form for your building but have you any idea of the level and type of documentation that will be asked for by the appointed consultant?**

Do you even know, for example, where the as built drawings of the building are? Do you even have any record information on the building?

If you haven't done so already it might be a good idea to start collating information so that it is in a format ready to issue to the consultant. This will save you time in the process. Information can be loaded up onto a Drop Box or similar.

Depending on the age of the building, the type of construction and the particular requirements of the consultant you will be asked for variety of documents which could include the following amongst other things:

- ▶ As built drawings
- ▶ The Health and Safety file
- ▶ O&M Manuals
- ▶ The Building Manual
- ▶ The latest fire risk assessment
- ▶ A fire risk assessment for any balconies or other attachments
- ▶ Product literature, safety data sheets, and BBA



- certificates for the cladding and cavity barriers
- ▶ Proof of maintenance inspection
- ▶ The building control completion certificate
- ▶ The fire strategy for the development
- ▶ Warrantees and guarantees
- ▶ Any fire test results of systems
- ▶ My own view is that I prefer to have access to all information available as and then I can select what need for I know what I am looking for.

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## FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES STRESS PANDEMIC IS “NO EXCUSE FOR IGNORING FIRE SAFETY”

**An example of this would be the one-way systems shops have introduced, blocking access to particular directions. This affects multiple fire safety measures, including means of escape and access to fire safety provisions such as manual call points and fire extinguishers. This should be appropriately reflected in an updated fire risk assessment.**

Life safety systems, such as fire detection solutions and emergency lighting, should be also be tested and maintained to ensure the early detection of fire and raising of the alarm as well as engender a safe evacuation.