Advice for building owners: Large-scale wall system test with ACM with A2 filler (category 1 in screening tests) with polyisocyanurate (PIR) foam insulation.

1. The government is undertaking large-scale testing of cladding systems to better understand how different types of Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) panels behave with different types of insulation in a fire. This note should be read alongside the government’s explanatory note on the large scale wall systems testing, and sets out in more detail the results of the large-scale test for a wall system including:

- ACM with A2 filler (category 1 in screening tests), and
- Polyisocyanurate (PIR) foam insulation.

2. In all other respects, all tests are being specified and constructed according to the Building Regulations guidance – including fire stopping between floors and the required cavity barriers in place.

3. Four previous tests have been conducted, and the results and advice are available here. Further tests over the coming weeks will provide more information about how other systems behave in a fire, and more advice is expected to be published over the course of this month as results from the testing become available. In addition, the government has asked the BRE and industry to publish the results of previous large-scale tests\(^1\) on ACM and other cladding systems. This will help inform building owners’ decisions about whether remediation work is required, and if so what materials could be used as replacements.

What do the test results say?

4. BRE have undertaken test BS8414-1 with a wall system with the above generic description. The detailed technical specification and results are available here.

5. This wall system passed the test, which means it adequately resisted the spread of fire over the wall to the standard required by the current Building Regulations guidance and which is set out in BR135.

6. The Expert Panel’s advice is that this result shows one way in which compliance can be achieved and offers an indication of how remedial works could be specified for those buildings that have been found to have problems.

7. However, the composition of different products from different manufacturers will vary and it is possible that products from different manufacturers may behave differently in a fire. Fixing details and the provision of cavity barriers is also important, and building owners should seek expert advice to satisfy themselves that their building is safe and before commissioning any remedial work.

8. Equally, it is important to note that materials may have been fitted or maintained differently, which can affect the safety of the cladding system.

\(^1\) Under BS8414
Building owners should seek professional advice that looks at the specific circumstances of their building.

9. A further test of the cladding material tested in this test, ACM with A2 filler (category 1), in combination with stone wool, will be taking place shortly. Results and advice will be circulated to building owners when the test results become available.

What do I need to do in light of these results?

10. Based on advice from the Expert Panel, where building owners have the same materials on their building as those set out in paragraph 1, it is recommended that they should follow the steps set out below:

• Take professional advice on whether any remedial work is necessary to ensure the safety of their building. This may need to consider whether the construction of their building meets the other provisions of Building Regulations guidance including fire stopping between floors and the required cavity barriers in place.
• If any remedial work is undertaken building owners will need to take professional advice to ensure that work is undertaken safely.
• Assure themselves that remedial work also complies with Building Regulations guidance on how the system is designed and fitted – including provisions for fire breaks and cavity barriers.
• The fire safety of buildings must be maintained by the responsible persons at all times under the provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order, for which advice is available here https://www.local.gov.uk/fire-safety-purpose-built-flats

11. DCLG has published a circular letter to building control bodies which sets out the planning and building control requirements that will need to be considered.

What other advice or support is available?

12. Further advice will be provided as more information is received following other large-scale tests. This will add to the information available to building owners to help them take decisions about any remediation work necessary. All advice will be published on the Building Safety Programme webpage, and anyone can sign up for weekly email updates.

13. Government and industry are working together to support the process of remedial work needed to ensure that buildings are safe. Further information will be provided on this via the website above.

14. If you are the owner of a residential building over 18m with ACM cladding and are unsure of its composition or have not had the cladding screened, Melanie Dawes’ letter of 18 June provides details of how to get samples screened at no cost.
15. Government will be producing a summary note following the completion of the large-scale system tests to help building owners interpret the results of the testing programme.