

Government Building Safety Programme – update and consolidated advice for building owners following large scale testing

This Advice Note is for the attention of anyone responsible for the fire safety of residential buildings over 18m in height who are concerned about the fire safety implications of external wall systems incorporating Aluminium Composite Material.

This note was developed in consultation with MHCLG's Independent Expert Advisory Panel on building safety. This is an update to the note published on 5 September 2017 following large scale tests.

Summary

- Following the Grenfell Tower tragedy, the government has established a Building Safety Programme with the aim of ensuring high rise residential buildings are safe, and residents feel safe in them.
- Screening tests at the Building Research Establishment (BRE) have been identifying whether Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding samples from buildings meet the limited combustibility requirements of current Building Regulations guidance.
- Seven further large scale tests have been undertaken to understand whether and when it may be safe to use ACM as part of a wall system in high rise buildings, in line with current Building Regulations guidance.
- The Expert Panel's advice following these tests is that ACM with an unmodified polyethylene filler (category 3 in screening tests) with any type of insulation presents a significant hazard on buildings over 18m.
- It is possible ACM with a fire retardant filler (category 2 in screening tests) could be used safely with non-combustible insulation (e.g. stone wool), but this is highly dependent on the insulation used, and how it is fitted.
- ACM with a limited combustibility filler (category 1 in screening tests) can be used safely, although this is also dependent on how it is fitted.
- Building owners should take their own professional advice on any further action, with regard to their cladding system, reflecting their own particular circumstances.
- Building owners have been given advice on interim fire safety measures they should take pending remedial action being completed.

- The government plans to provide further advice on the issues building owners may need to consider as they undertake remedial work, and will work with building owners to ensure buildings are made safe.
- The government is working with the Expert Panel to consider whether there are any heightened risks linked to other cladding systems and broader fire and building safety issues in high rise buildings.
- Alongside this work, the government has established an Independent Review of building regulations and fire safety, led by Dame Judith Hackitt, which will aim to ensure that buildings are safe in future.

Introduction

1. Following the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower on 14 June 2017, the government established a Building Safety Programme, with the aim of ensuring high rise residential buildings¹ are safe, and residents feel safe in them. The main parts to this work are:
 - Finding other buildings that may be of concern
 - Making existing buildings safe
 - Identifying changes needed to make buildings safer in future
 - Making the changes needed to make buildings safer in future
2. The focus over the past three months has been on finding buildings that may be of concern, and identifying steps that need to be taken to make them safe. An Independent Expert Advisory Panel ([appointed 27 June](#)) has provided the government with advice on immediate steps that can be put in place to make buildings, and the people living in them, as safe as possible. The panel have a wealth of experience in fire and building safety, and have drawn on wider technical expertise to inform their advice to government, including from experts on building design and construction, building control, testing processes, fire safety and fire engineering.
3. This work has not attempted to establish the cause of the fire at Grenfell Tower or the circumstances around it, which are being investigated by the police and the Public Inquiry established by the Prime Minister and led by Sir Martin Moore-Bick. Terms of Reference for the Inquiry are available [here](#).

Screening tests

4. In light of early concerns about the role cladding played in the Grenfell Tower fire, building owners were asked to identify residential tower blocks over 18 metres in height with Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding. On the advice of a panel of independent experts, initial screening tests were made available, at no cost to building owners, to identify whether cladding was of 'limited combustibility'

¹ Including hotels and public buildings (e.g. schools and hospitals)

as this is one way that buildings over 18m can meet current Building Regulations guidance (on external fire spread). The tests were made available to social and private sector landlords and to public sector building owners (for example for hospitals and schools).

5. By 31 August, 294 ACM samples have been sent for initial screening tests for buildings in the United Kingdom, 278 in England. Of the 278 in England, this includes 173 social housing, 16 public buildings, and 89 private buildings (including 62 private student residential). None of these samples were found to be of limited combustibility.
6. Alongside initial screening tests, MHCLG issued advice on interim fire safety measures building owners should take to ensure the safety of their residents, in particular arranging a visit from the local fire and rescue services (FRS). In the period from 14 June to 31 August, the FRS have visited over 1,200 high rise buildings, including all those covered by the screening tests.

Large-scale tests

7. On the basis of the screening test results, and on advice from the Expert Panel, the government commissioned a series of large scale system tests, testing how different types of ACM panels behave in a fire with different types of insulation. The British Standard test used for the large scale tests (BS8414) is a way of demonstrating that a wall system meets Building Regulations guidance for buildings over 18m. Seven tests were undertaken in priority order, taking into consideration which systems were likely to present most risk, so urgent advice could be provided to building owners.
8. A summary of the results and advice for building owners is set out in the consolidated advice from page 5. Of the 278 buildings in England which have been screened and have ACM which is not of limited combustibility, 266² buildings have cladding systems which the Expert Panel advise are unlikely to meet current Building Regulations guidance and therefore present fire hazards on buildings over 18m.
9. The government is engaging closely with the owners of these buildings to ensure they are following the necessary advice set out in this note. The advice summarised here includes:
 - Results and advice for building owners on the large scale wall system tests; and
 - Frequently Asked Questions.
10. Following the large scale testing, the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) is, with other fire safety experts, reviewing the advice on the interim fire safety measures and developing guidance on waking watch and common fire alarms. This guidance is due to be published shortly, and we will reissue advice on the interim

² This figure includes 49 buildings inferred to have failed where their insulation is not yet known: 38 with category 3 ACM panels, and 11 buildings with category 2 ACM panels.

measures alongside this. In the meantime, existing advice from [22 June](#) on the recommended interim mitigation measures to ensure the safety of residents, pending any required remediation of cladding systems, still stands.

Next steps

11. The ACM screening and large-scale tests were the first phase of work to find other buildings of concern following the Grenfell Tower fire. Where buildings have been identified as having ACM, the government is working closely with building owners to ensure those buildings are made safe. The government is confident that all social housing blocks over 18m with ACM have been identified, and the government has been encouraging private sector landlords to urgently send their samples for testing so private sector ACM blocks can be identified. The government has asked local housing authorities to ensure that all (social and private sector) residential blocks over 18m in their local areas with ACM have been identified and that any necessary remedial action is being taken, and is working with those local authorities, FRS and others to support and monitor this.
12. The government will be working to support building owners and gain assurance that remediation work is carried out appropriately. We will be asking building owners to provide regular returns confirming the scope and progress of remediation works.
13. With the Industry Response Group ([established 10 July](#)) and the Expert Panel we will also develop a series of briefing notes to inform key stages of remediation. We expect the first note to be issued in September and it will be published on the Building Safety Programme [webpage](#).
14. We propose to align the briefing notes with the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) [Plan of Work](#) (a guide which sets out the different stages of a construction project). Examples of the briefing notes we expect to publish include: advice on feasibility issues and options appraisal, including a summary of cladding systems available and issues to be considered when replacing part or all of the cladding system; and information on procurement approaches and available frameworks.
15. Given the particular concerns around ACM cladding, the primary focus to date of the first phase of the Building Safety Programme – finding other buildings that may be of concern – has been testing ACM cladding systems. With the large scale tests now complete, the government, supported by the Expert Panel, is considering whether there may be heightened risks linked to other issues, such as other cladding systems and broader safety issues. The Expert Panel will consider whether there is any further advice that is needed for building owners in relation to any wider issues, and any updates will be posted over the coming months on the Building Safety Programme [webpage](#).
16. As a first step to understand what other cladding systems may be safe on high rise buildings, the BRE has sought permission from its clients and is publishing a list of historical data on cladding systems which have passed the BS8414 test set

out in current Building Regulations guidance. The catalogue can be accessed [here](#).

17. Alongside this work to ensure that existing buildings are safe, the government is also taking forward work on the next phase, to “Identify changes needed to make buildings safe in future”. A key stage is an Independent Review of the Building Regulatory and Fire Safety System, led by Dame Judith Hackitt. The Terms of Reference for the review are [here](#). The review will publish an interim report at the end of November and a final report in the spring of 2018.

Consolidated advice for building owners

Summary of results

18. The government recently conducted seven large scale tests of wall systems to better understand how different types of ACM panels behave in a fire with different types of insulation. Based on these tests, this consolidated advice informs building owners of the steps they should take to ensure the safety of their residents.

Key findings

19. Based on the tests conducted and the Expert Panel's advice, the key points are:

- ACM cladding with unmodified polyethylene filler (category 3) presents a significant fire hazard on buildings over 18m with *any* form of insulation.
- ACM cladding with fire retardant polyethylene filler (category 2):
 - presents a notable fire hazard on buildings over 18m when used with *rigid polymeric foam* based on the evidence currently available.
 - can be safe on buildings over 18m if used with *non-combustible insulation* (e.g. *stone wool*), and where materials have been fitted and maintained appropriately, and the building's construction meets the other provisions of Building Regulations guidance, including provision for fire breaks and cavity barriers.
- ACM cladding with A2 filler (category 1) can be safe on buildings over 18m with foam insulation or stone wool insulation, if materials have been fitted and maintained appropriately, and the building's construction meets the other provisions of Building Regulations guidance, including provision for fire breaks and cavity barriers.

20. In all instances, building owners have been advised that they should seek professional advice on what further steps to take with respect to their cladding system based on the specific circumstances of their building, and to satisfy themselves that their building is safe.

21. All building owners have also been advised to ensure their local FRS has visited to complete a fire safety audit of their building, and that they have implemented the recommended interim measures.

22. Results of the seven tests are available on the Building Safety Programme [webpage](#).

23. The results for England are summarised in the table overleaf, and in more detail in the advice that follows.

Test results for buildings in England

Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) with...	Insulation		
	PIR Foam	Phenolic Foam	Stone Wool
Unmodified polyethylene filler (Cat. 3 in screening tests)	Test 1 failed 81 Buildings Report and Advice	N/A	Test 2 failed 107 Buildings Report and Advice
Fire retardant polyethylene filler (Cat. 2 in screening tests)	Test 3 failed 8 Buildings Report and Advice	Test 7 failed 21 Buildings Report and Advice	Test 4 passed 12 Buildings Report and Advice
Limited combustibility filler (Cat. 1 in screening tests)	Test 5 passed 0 Buildings Report and Advice	N/A	Test 6 passed 0 Buildings Report and Advice

Advice for building owners on the large scale wall system tests

24. The government initially commissioned six tests on the advice of the Expert Panel, testing three types of ACM cladding with two commonly used types of insulation; and published the accompanying [explanatory note](#) on 20 July 2017. A seventh test was subsequently commissioned, to test one of the types of cladding with a third kind of insulation.

25. The seven tests undertaken were:

- **Test 1** (23 July 2017): ACM cladding with unmodified polyethylene filler (category 3 in screening tests) with polyisocyanurate (PIR) foam insulation
- **Test 2** (30 July 2017): ACM cladding with unmodified polyethylene filler (category 3 in screening tests) with stone wool insulation
- **Test 3** (30 July 2017): ACM cladding with fire retardant polyethylene filler (category 2 in screening tests) with PIR foam insulation
- **Test 4** (6 August 2017): ACM cladding with fire retardant polyethylene filler (category 2 in screening tests) with stone wool insulation
- **Test 5** (6 August 2017): ACM cladding with A2 filler (category 1 in screening tests) with PIR foam insulation
- **Test 6** (16 August 2017³): ACM cladding with A2 filler (category 1 in screening tests) with stone wool insulation

³ Test 6 was delayed due to a technical issue, so took place after Test 7

- **Test 7** (13 August 2017): ACM cladding with fire retardant polyethylene filler (category 2) with phenolic foam insulation

26. In all other respects, all tests were specified and constructed according to the Building Regulations guidance – including fire stopping between floors and the required cavity barriers in place. The detailed technical specification for each of the tests is available on the Building Safety Programme [webpage](#).

Results

27. Results of the seven tests, and accompanying advice for building owners, are available on the Building Safety Programme [webpage](#), and are summarised in this note.

28. The number of buildings screened and covered by large scale tests is 294 for the United Kingdom. Numbers for England alone (278 buildings) are shown in the table below.

	Number screened ⁴			Large Scale Tests		
	Cat. 2 ACM	Cat. 3 ACM	Total	Tests 1, 2, 3, 7 (Fail) ⁵	Tests 4, 5, 6 (Pass)	Total
Social housing	29	144	173	165	8	173
Public buildings	4	12	16	16	0	16
Private: student residential	12	50	62	59	3	62
Private: residential	7	20	27	26	1	27
Total	52	226	278	266	12	278

ACM cladding with unmodified polyethylene filler (category 3 in the screening tests)

Test 1: ACM cladding with unmodified polyethylene filler (category 3) with PIR foam insulation

Test 2: ACM cladding with unmodified polyethylene filler (category 3) with stone wool⁶ insulation

29. These wall systems both **failed** the test, which means they did not adequately resist the spread of fire over the wall to the standard required by the current

⁴ Screened at BRE or by Proxy (not directly tested, but where the category of ACM can be deduced from other sources, such as testing of identical cladding from a different building)

⁵ This includes 49 buildings inferred to have failed, where their insulation is not yet known: 38 with category 3 ACM (15 social housing, 4 public buildings, 6 private student residential, and 13 private residential), and 11 buildings with category 2 ACM (2 social housing, 3 public buildings, 5 private student residential and 1 private residential).

⁶ A form of non-combustible mineral wool.

Building Regulations guidance and which is set out in BR135. Based on these test results, the Expert Panel's advice is that, **they do not believe that any wall system containing an ACM category 3 cladding panel, even when combined with limited combustibility insulation material, would meet current Building Regulations guidance**, and are not aware of any tests of such combinations meeting the standard set by BR135. **Wall systems with these materials therefore present a significant fire hazard on buildings over 18m.**
ACM cladding with fire retardant polyethylene filler (category 2 in the screening tests)

Test 3: ACM cladding with fire retardant polyethylene filler (category 2) with PIR foam insulation

Test 7: ACM cladding with fire retardant polyethylene filler (category 2) with phenolic foam insulation⁷

30. Tests 3 and 7 both **failed** the test, which means they did not adequately resist the spread of fire over the wall to the standard required by the current Building Regulations guidance and which is set out in BR135. The Expert Panel's advice is that, based on these test results, and in the absence of any other large scale test evidence, **it is unlikely that any combination of ACM cladding with fire retardant polyethylene filler (category 2 in screening tests) and rigid polymeric foam insulation⁸ would pass the BS8414-1 test⁹**, and therefore fail to meet current Building Regulations guidance. **This combination of materials therefore presents a notable fire hazard on buildings over 18m.**

Test 4: ACM cladding with fire retardant polyethylene filler (category 2) with stone wool insulation

31. Test 4 **passed** the test, which means the wall system **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. The Expert Advisory 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.**

32. However, it is important to note that there are many different variants of this cladding and insulation and it is possible that products from different manufacturers may behave differently in a fire. The composition of ACM panels

⁷ This test was commissioned following the completion of the third test to further build the evidence base on the behaviour of foam insulation with these panels.

⁸ PIR foam and phenolic foam are both commonly used forms of rigid polymeric foam insulation.

⁹ Updated 28 February 2018 - Following completion of government commissioned large scale tests on ACM cladding systems, two other design variations of the cladding system incorporating ACM cladding with fire retardant polyethylene filler (category 2) with phenolic foam insulation have since been tested by manufacturers to British Standard-8414-1 and have achieved a BR-135 classification. These results, including design information, are available on the BRE's online catalogue of cladding systems that have passed large scale testing <https://www.bre.co.uk/regulatory-testing>. These results highlight the role of fitting, design and fixing details of cladding systems and their effect on fire performance. Our advice continues to be that building owners should take professional advice that looks at the specific circumstances of their building and that considers any variations between their building's cladding systems and the tested systems.

with fire retardant polyethylene filler can vary between manufacturers. The average of the calorific values of the fire retardant panels used in the test were 13.6 MJ/kg. Building owners with this combination of materials should consult their screening tests to check how their category 2 values compare. A higher value will indicate greater combustibility than the panel used, and vice versa.

33. Equally, it is important to note that materials may have been fitted or maintained differently, to how the tests were specified and constructed, which can affect the safety of the cladding system. Fixing details and the provision of cavity barriers are also important. Building owners should seek professional advice that looks at the specific circumstances of their building.

ACM cladding with A2 filler (category 1 in the screening tests)

Test 5: ACM cladding with A2 filler (category 1) with PIR foam insulation

Test 6: ACM cladding with A2 filler (category 1) with stone wool insulation

34. These wall systems both **passed** the test, which means they **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. The Expert Panel's advice is that **these results shows two ways in which compliance can be achieved and offer an indication of how remedial works could be specified for those buildings that have been found to have problems**. In particular, Test 6 reaffirms that one way to ensure that a cladding system adequately resists external fire spread is for all of the relevant elements¹⁰ of the wall to be of limited combustibility¹¹.

35. 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. Equally, it is important to note that the materials used may have been fitted or maintained differently, to how the tests were specified and constructed, which can affect the safety of the cladding system.

What should building owners do?

Where building owners have wall systems which failed the test

36. Firstly, and while building owners are considering further actions they should take, based on the advice from the Expert Panel it is recommended that they ensure they implement, if they have not done so already, the recommended [22 June interim mitigation measures](#), for ensuring the safety of residents. Local fire and

¹⁰ Gaskets, sealants and similar are not included in the guidance in 12.7 of Approved Document B.

¹¹ Limited combustibility is defined in table A7 of Approved Document B (ADB) against both national and European standards. ADB notes that, for the purpose of ADB, a material that is classified as A2 in the relevant European test standard, EN 13501-1 (or the national standards also set out in table A7), would also be acceptable as a material of limited combustibility. While the surface of a panel may be classified as Class 0, this does not address whether the filler material in the core of the panel meets the definition of limited combustibility.

rescue services will continue to work with building owners to ensure any necessary mitigation measures are in place.

37. Secondly, building owners should take professional advice on what further steps to take with respect to their cladding system. This professional advice may be obtained from a qualified chartered professional with relevant experience in fire safety, including fire testing of building products and systems, such as a chartered engineer or surveyor registered with the Engineering Council by the Institution of Fire Engineers or a chartered professional from another built environment profession¹² specialising in fire safety consultancy. Professional assessment of system performance may be obtained from a test laboratory accredited by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service to carry out BS8414 full scale tests and classify results to BR135.
38. Based on advice from the Expert Panel, where building owners have wall systems that failed the tests, it is recommended that in conjunction with their own professional advice they should follow the steps set out below:
- Take full professional advice on what remedial work is necessary to ensure the safety of their building. This may need to consider the combination of materials used in the cladding system, as well as 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.
 - Building owners will need to take professional advice to ensure that any remedial work is undertaken safely (for example from an expert in cladding systems with relevant experience), and to ensure any replacement materials are safe.
 - 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.
 - Ensure that when any work is carried out, including removing cladding, care is taken to consider the impact that removal may have on the other wall elements, and therefore on the overall structural and fire integrity of the building as well as other Building Regulation requirements. In particular care should be taken to ensure that insulation material is not exposed to the elements unnecessarily. (MHCLG has published a [circular letter to building control bodies](#) which sets out the planning and building control requirements that will need to be considered).
 - 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 2005, for which advice is available [here](#).

¹²such as the Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists (CIAT), Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE), Fellows of the Institution of Structural Engineers (IStructE), Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB), and the Society of Façade Engineers.

Where building owners have wall systems which passed the test

39. Based on advice from the Expert Panel, where building owners have wall systems which passed the tests, 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 2005, for which advice is available [here](#).

Where building owners have wall systems which do not clearly fall into scope of one of the large scale tests

40. Based on the advice from the Expert Panel, where building owners have ACM panels but are unsure of the type of insulation being used as part of the wall cladding system, they should in the case of:
- Category 3 ACM panels follow the advice for building owners with wall systems failing the test.
 - Category 2 ACM panels, take professional advice based on the specific circumstances of their building.
41. Any building owners with category 1 ACM panels should similarly obtain professional advice to assure themselves that their building is safe.

Further advice and support

42. MHCLG has published a [circular letter to building control bodies](#) which sets out the planning and building control requirements that will need to be considered.
43. In addition to resolving any concerns about the nature of cladding materials on a block of flats, building owners should also consider the other fire safety measures in their buildings.
44. The detailed design of the tested cladding systems have been reviewed by the Expert Panel to ensure that it is representative of the systems in common use. Three common insulation types have been tested in combination with three types of ACM panel products. Design information is provided in the individual test reports which include details on fixings, insulation thickness, cavity barrier types, and ACM filler calorific value. Where there are variations between a building's

cladding system and the tested cladding systems, buildings owners are advised to seek professional advice.

Frequently Asked Questions

Building owners

Does it matter if I've got different cavity barriers?

Cavity barriers are relied upon to inhibit fire spread within the cladding system. For cavity barriers to perform effectively the barrier type must be suitable for the cladding system and they must be fixed appropriately. It is recommended that building owners confirm the presence of cavity barriers, the suitability of the type, and the quality of workmanship. The manufacturer's product information will provide details on the design, application, and fixing requirements.

What if I've got a different kind of foam, such as glass foam?

The Building Safety Programme has focused on the most common insulation types present in buildings. Other insulation products may have different fire performance characteristics, therefore building owners should take professional advice on whether any remedial work is necessary to ensure the safety of their building.

My foam is thicker/thinner than the foam you used; what does that mean for my building?

The detailed design of the tested cladding systems have been reviewed by the Expert Panel to ensure that it is representative of the systems in common use, including the insulation thickness. Building owners should take professional advice on differences between their building's cladding system and the tested systems.

My building's cladding isn't made of ACM. Does that mean it's safe?

Given the particular concerns around ACM cladding, the primary focus of the Building Safety Programme to date has been testing such cladding systems. With the large scale tests now complete, the government, supported by the Expert Panel, is considering other issues, such as other cladding systems. Further information will be set out in due course.

We have cassettes, not flat panels; does that matter?

The fixing details and panel shape are factors which could affect the fire performance of the cladding system. Therefore building owners should take professional advice on differences between their building's cladding system and the tested systems.

My building is over 18m if the basement is included. Is it in scope?

Building regulation guidance (AD B) measures the building height from the ground level to the upper floor surface of the top storey. This excludes basement stories. Whilst low-rise buildings (less than 18m), are not subject to the same recommendations for limited combustibility materials (or BR 135 classification), the cladding may still be subject to other surface spread of flame fire performance recommendations, for example in relation to separation distances. Building owners should seek professional advice where there is doubt over the fire performance of the cladding system.

I only have ACM cladding on part of my building. Do I need to take it off?

Small panels of ACM with a PE filler, such as where it has been used as a trim for window reveals or balcony edges may present a lower fire risk where it is isolated from

other combustible cladding materials but this would require careful consideration. Building owners should seek professional advice to ensure their building is safe and that it adequately resists the spread of fire over the wall to the standard required by the current Building Regulations guidance.

I have rigid foam insulation, will it be OK to replace the ACM with any material of limited combustibility (A2)?

Test 5 has shown that A2 ACM (limited combustibility) with rigid foam insulation passed the large scale fire test. Whilst the ACM with mineral filler was classified as an A2 material, it cannot be assumed that other materials of limited combustibility would have the same resilience and integrity in a fire. Therefore where other parts of the cladding system (such as the insulation) are not of limited combustibility, buildings owners should not assume that replacing only the outer ACM panels with any limited combustibility material will be sufficient. Professional advice should be sought.

I have stone wool insulation, will it be possible to replace the ACM with any material of limited combustibility (A2)?

Yes, but you should still ensure that the finished work meets all other provisions of building regulations. We recommend that you check with the manufacturer to ensure it is suitable for the proposed use and take appropriate professional advice.

Where can I get professional advice?

Professional advice may be obtained from a qualified chartered professional with relevant experience in fire safety, including fire testing of building products and systems, such as a chartered engineer registered with the Engineering Council by the Institution of Fire Engineers, or a chartered professional from another built environment profession specialising in fire safety consultancy, such as the Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists (CIAT), Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE), Fellows of the Institution of Structural Engineers (IStructE), Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB), and the Society of Façade Engineers.

Professional assessment of system performance may be obtained from a test laboratory accredited by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service to carry out BS8414 and classify results to BR135.

What about funding this work?

Our expectation is that building owners will fund measures designed to make their buildings fire safe, and draw on their existing resources to do so.

Housing Associations should contact the Social Housing Regulator (at mail@homesandcommunities.co.uk) if they have concerns about their ability to meet the cost of essential works. Where a Local Authority has concerns about funding essential fire safety measures, they should approach MHCLG as soon as possible to discuss the position at LocalAuthorityHousing@communities.gsi.gov.uk. In these cases, the Government will consider removing financial restrictions, where financial barriers stand in the way of essential works being done. Where public sector building owners have concerns, they should contact their home department.

Essential works would include those advised by local fire services to be essential to ensure the fire safety of a building. It would also cover cases where building owners have received professional advice on any essential work to make cladding systems safe.

Should I install fire suppression systems as part of my building's fire safety strategy?

A building's fire strategy applies a number of fire protection measures to provide a suitable standard of safety. This can include smoke alarms, fire compartmentation and smoke control. Fire suppression systems such as sprinkler and water mist systems can form an effective part of an overall fire strategy, particularly in tall buildings, where they are provided in accordance with the relevant British Standard. Where there is a risk of external fire spread via the external walls of a building then a sprinkler system or water mist system should not be assumed to be an alternative to remedial work to the cladding system.

Residents/ tenants

I'm a resident. What should I do?

Residents should speak to their building owner/landlord about the steps they are taking, both in light of advice from the fire and rescue services on interim measures that should be put in place to help ensure residents safety while any remediation work is planned and undertaken, and on any further steps building owners are taking to ensure their cladding system is safe. The government is in contact with all building owners who have had cladding tested and which have been found not to be of limited combustibility.

My building owner/ Landlord is refusing to cooperate. What should I do?

Building owners are responsible for ensuring that any necessary repairs or improvements are carried out.

If the building owner, landlord or letting agent refuses to deal with the issue or is taking an unreasonably long time to do so, residents should contact the environmental health department at your local authority. They have the power to inspect the property and, if they discover any hazards, they can ensure the landlord or agent makes any necessary repairs or improvements.

The government has published two guides providing further information:

- https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/496709/How_to_Rent_Jan_16.pdf
- https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/412913/150309_How_to_rent_a_safe_home_final_.pdf