



Cabinet Office

**John A Manzoni**  
Chief Executive of the Civil Service &  
Cabinet Office Permanent Secretary

**Melanie Dawes CB**  
Permanent Secretary  
Department for Communities and Local  
Government



Department for  
Communities and  
Local Government

By email

Addendum:

This letter advises that if a sample fails a test, or is expected to fail a test, the local Fire and Rescue Service should be contacted. Please note, instead you should contact the National Fire Chiefs Council at:

[nfccwmfshighrisecoordinationgroup@wmfs.net](mailto:nfccwmfshighrisecoordinationgroup@wmfs.net)

They will coordinate an inspection by the appropriate fire and rescue service (or the Crown Premised Fire Inspection Group where appropriate).

28 June 2017

Dear Permanent Secretary,

## **PUBLIC SECTOR ESTATE SAFETY CHECKS FOLLOWING GRENFELL TOWER**

Thank you all for the work you have been doing to identify those buildings in the public estate which might be at risk after the events at Grenfell Tower. At the cross Whitehall meeting, which Melanie chaired yesterday, and the meetings that Government Property Unit (GPU) has had with all departments, it is clear that departments are working to ensure that the appropriate safety and response measures are in place.

There has been much concern about the potential flaws in the Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding used on Grenfell Tower. It is important to stress that ACM cladding is not of itself dangerous, but it is important that the right type is used. If you identify that a cladding on any of your buildings over 18 metres, including your ALBs and wider sector, is made of ACM then a sample will need to be tested. However, this needs to be prioritised and we have explained this in Annex A.

DCLG embarked on testing ACM cladding used above 18 metres in social housing last week. It is obvious that the problem of unsafe cladding may not be unique to social housing or residential buildings, and as the Secretary of State set out in his statement on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> June, we are asking other departments to conduct additional checks on a precautionary basis. As you are aware the

GPU have established a cross-Government response group to support the work of DCLG and are working with the Building Research Establishment (BRE), the recognised experts in this field.

To ensure that we can be confident that the wider public estate is safe we are asking you to do three things:

- 1. Identify which of your buildings and those in your wider sector have ACM cladding and whether they are in the first priority.** (A technical advice note which DCLG sent to local authorities and housing associations last week is included in annex A)
- 2. Send ACM cladding samples for testing in accordance with the table at Annex A.**
- 3. Arrange for the survey at Annex C to be completed on each building where testing is necessary and returned to GPU by close Friday 30th June. GPU will work with those of you who already have surveys in train.**

If you do find non-compliant ACM panels on your buildings Annex B also sets out how to respond. It is essential that the fire-service is informed and carries out an inspection.

This is a sensitive subject and it is obviously important that we are co-ordinated and consistent in our messaging. DCLG can provide standard lines to press teams and significant departures from these should be cleared with DCLG and copied to GPU. Please copy all responses to [Grenfelltower-team@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Grenfelltower-team@communities.gsi.gov.uk) and [GPUGrenfellresponse@cabinetoffice.gov.uk](mailto:GPUGrenfellresponse@cabinetoffice.gov.uk).

Thank you very much for your work on this. DCLG and GPU will continue to hold regular meetings to share information as the picture emerges across the public and private sector estates as well as the Devolved Administrations.

Yours sincerely



**John A Manzoni**



**Melanie Dawes**

**Annex A - Identification of buildings for testing of ACM and what to do if they fail.**

**Annex B - GPU Survey Overview**

**Annex C - Survey (excel document)**

## Annex A – Identification of buildings for testing of ACM and what to do if they fail.

### How to identify which buildings need samples of Aluminium Composite Material Cladding sent for testing

If a building has ACM you should consult the table below which is based on relevant approved document B and departmental guidance:

<b>Trigger heights for investigation of ACM Cladding Systems</b>			
<b>Building Use</b>	<b>Overnight accommodation</b>	<b>Trigger Height/storey*</b>	<b>Test?</b>
Schools	Yes	Any height	Yes
	No	18 metres or more	Yes
Health care facilities (including Hospitals)	Yes	2 storeys or more	Yes
	No	18 metres or more	Yes
All other buildings	Yes	18 metres or more	Yes

*\* Height is measured from ground level at its lowest point to the upper surface of the top storey (excluding plant rooms)*

Please ensure that you communicate this to the relevant people in charge of the buildings in your wider sector and all of your ALBs which meet the criteria above and ask that they send samples off immediately. HMT have confirmed that any costs involved will fall to departments or their ALBs.

### How to take a sample and send for testing

Where the surveyor undertaking assessment of a composite panel determines that it is necessary for cladding to be subjected to laboratory screening they should follow this process:

1. Cut out two samples of at least 250x250mm in size from each location sampled. Take photographs as necessary to identify the location of the sample. You should take samples from above and below 18m above ground level as appropriate and check multiple panels where you have concern that material specification varies.
2. Using an indelible ink pen, note the building name / number, postcode and a unique identifier (i.e. initials of your organisation followed by unique sample number e.g. ABC/001) traceable to the specific location within the building of

each sample. Add the name of the relevant organisation that manages the building and a direct dial telephone or mobile contact number to be used in the event that there are any queries on the sample.

3. You must make good by closing the hole using a non-combustible sheet such as steel fixed with self-tapping screws or rivets.
4. Complete the survey at Annex B and return to [GPUGrenfellresponse@cabinetoffice.gov.uk](mailto:GPUGrenfellresponse@cabinetoffice.gov.uk) in an email headed "ACM:[ORGANISATION NAME]" You should provide as much information as is readily available, but not if this will delay submitting samples for testing.
5. Place one of the samples from each location in a padded envelope with a copy of the data return form (attached with this letter). Clearly mark the envelope URGENT – CLADDING TEST SAMPLE.
6. Send the test samples by recorded delivery or courier to:  
BRE  
Bucknalls Lane  
Garston  
Watford  
Herts, WD25 9XX
7. For any testing related queries please email [material.screening@bre.co.uk](mailto:material.screening@bre.co.uk)
8. Keep a second sample from each location for your records/in case samples are lost in transit.

### **What to do if a sample fails a test or you suspect that it will fail**

If it is determined that the insulation within Aluminium Composite Material (ACM)<sup>1</sup> is unlikely to be compliant with the requirements of the current Building Regulations guidance, it is essential that you **immediately** implement the following interim mitigating measures to ensure the safety of residents, pending replacement of the cladding.

### **Interim measures recommended by independent panel of experts**

Notify the Fire and Rescue Service. Inform your local fire and rescue service fire safety/ protection department. Failure to do so may put fire-fighters as well as occupants at risk. The fire and rescue service will carry out an urgent inspection with the 'responsible person' to ensure that they are identifying and introducing appropriate interim measures, as set out below. The fire service will carry out a further inspection once the interim measures have been completed:

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<sup>1</sup> For the avoidance of doubt; the core (filler) within an Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) is an "insulation material/product", "insulation product", and/or "filler material" as referred to in Paragraph 12.7 ("Insulation Materials/Products") in Section 12 "Construction of external walls" of Approved Document B (Fire safety) Volume 2 Buildings other than dwelling houses. (The important point to note is that Paragraph 12.7 does not just apply to thermal insulation within the wall construction, but applies to any element of the cladding system, including, therefore, the core of the ACM).

- Check that the fire risk assessment has been carried out within the previous 12 months and that the recommendations within the action plan of the assessment have been completed; also, confirm that there have been no material changes (to the building, the fire safety measures or the occupancy) that could, potentially, undermine the validity of the fire risk assessment. If no fire risk assessment has been carried out, you must immediately arrange for a fire risk assessment to be carried out by a competent person (e.g. by a person who is listed on a register of fire risk assessors operated by a professional body or certification body, or, preferably, by a company that is certificated by a third party certification body, that is, itself, accredited by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service to operate the certification scheme). Guidance on choosing a competent assessor is here <http://www.cfoa.org.uk/19532>
- Ensure that occupants fully understand the emergency fire procedures in the building, particularly. Ensure that fire procedure notices are accurate.
- Check that, at ground level, or on any balconies, there are no combustible materials (eg storage of refuse) in the vicinity of the cladding. Ensure that there are measures to prevent combustible materials in such locations (eg by temporary barriers or instructions to occupants). Instruct occupants e.g. that they must not have any barbeques on any balcony.
- Check that all entrance doors, and doors that open onto escape corridors and stairways, are fire-resisting and effectively self-closing against any resistance of a latch (or, for example, in the case of plant rooms or cupboards, are kept locked shut.) For advice on these doors, consult the Local Government Association guidance on fire safety in purpose-built blocks of flats - <https://www.local.gov.uk/fire-safety-purpose-builtflats> - but, in general, doors that were deemed to be fire-resisting at the time of construction of the block will be satisfactory. Replace any non-fire-resisting doors (such as non-fire-resisting upvc doors) immediately with doorsets (i.e. doors and frames) that are third party certificated as providing at least 30 minutes fire resistance.
- Check all walls that separate, plant and store rooms, etc from escape routes to ensure there are no obvious routes for fire or smoke spread (e.g. holes where services, such as pipes and cables, pass through walls).
- Check that any smoke control systems, including associated fire detection systems, are operating correctly.

- Check all facilities provided for fire-fighters, including fire-fighting lifts and dry or wet rising mains. If you have **ANY** concerns you should contact your local fire and rescue service, who will, if they have not already done so, carry out an inspection to ensure functionality.
- Ensure that there is sufficient roadway access and hardstanding for firefighting vehicles attending incidents and to be set up to fight any fire externally.
- Check that insulation or other materials that form the façade meet all relevant standards.
- If the building is protected by an automatic sprinkler system (or equivalent fire suppression system) you might not need to take any further interim measures before replacement of the cladding.
- If the building is not protected by a suitable suppression system you must consider the need for interim measures. The measures adopted need to be based on an assessment of the risk by a competent person, but the following must, at least, be considered:
  - Closure of car parks in which a vehicle fire could impinge on cladding.
  - Provision of a temporary communal fire alarm system, comprising smoke detectors in circulation areas and plant rooms, and fire detectors (possibly heat detectors, rather than smoke detectors) in conjunction with fire alarm sounders in each flat (where relevant). This will enable all occupants to be evacuated simultaneously in the event of fire. This option is unlikely to be suitable for tall blocks, in which a large number of people would need to use escape routes at the same time. The system may comprise a wireless system, using radio to link devices.
  - Provision of a fire watch by appropriately trained patrolling security officers/wardens.
  - In the case of the most serious risk, consideration must be given to not using the block until satisfactory remedial work has been done.

## Annex B GPU Survey Overview

You and your ALBs should complete the Building Information Checklist survey at Annex C (excel document). This should include details of your organisation and key contacts, and details of all buildings you identify as containing ACM and meet the following criteria:

<b>Trigger heights for investigation of ACM Cladding Systems</b>			
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	No	18 metres or more	Yes
All other buildings	Yes	18 metres or more	Yes

*\* Height is measured from ground level at its lowest point to the upper surface of the top storey (excluding plant rooms)*

This has the advantages of:

- collecting key information and other details that we may need in coming weeks; and
- ensuring that the outcomes of tests from building samples are sent to the contact for the building, to you and to GPU and DCLG.

The survey will enable each department to have their own overview and for GPU and DCLG to monitor the entire picture.