



Department for
Communities and
Local Government

*Department for Communities and
Local Government*
4th Floor, Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF
www.gov.uk/dclg

11 August 2017

Dear

SAFETY OF LARGE PANEL SYSTEM BUILDINGS WITH PIPED GAS

You will be aware of media interest in the safety of four tower blocks in the London Borough of Southwark. I am writing to you today to ensure you are aware of the factual situation and to outline action you may want to take, as your area is thought to have a building with a similar system.

In four blocks in the London Borough of Southwark, residents raised concerns about cracks in their building. Structural engineers were instructed to investigate by the council, to find the cause of the cracking. This work has identified a separate historic issue about the piped gas supply in the blocks, which may be relevant to other buildings across the country, with large panel systems.

The issue of concern related to the gas explosion at Ronan Point in Newham in 1968. This caused a partial collapse of the block. Following the Griffith Review that year into Ronan Point, the government wrote to local authorities giving advice about the need for urgent appraisal and, where necessary, measures for the strengthening of existing blocks. Records of the buildings affected, and any work undertaken are therefore likely to be held at a local rather than national level.

Reports after the event suggested that the Southwark blocks, and other large panel system buildings across the country, had been strengthened. This would have been in order to make them safe to carry a piped gas supply and withstand the type of explosion that took place at Ronan Point.

The structural engineers investigating the blocks in Southwark were not able to locate records of the blocks' construction or any remedial works. It is not at this stage clear whether any previous recommended assessments or remedial works have or have not been carried out. Southwark Council has decided, as a precautionary step, to turn off the gas supply.

In light of these findings from Southwark, you should ascertain whether buildings with large panel systems in your area also have piped gas. If they do, you should take action to ensure that these buildings can carry piped gas safely. You may want to take expert advice to assure yourselves of this.

If there are buildings in your area that are owned by a Housing Association or another building owner, please contact them regarding this immediately. My colleagues will be in touch with you to follow up. However, in the meantime, if you have any questions or concerns then please contact the DCLG Tower Casework Team on 0303 444 1119 and towercaseworkteam@communities.gsi.gov.uk .

Yours sincerely,

Tamara Finkelstein

Director General for the Building Safety Programme