

REVISION OF APPROVED DOCUMENT B – FIRE SAFETY

The following notes present the BWF's proposals for consideration during the next review of Approved Document B.

Independent Certification Schemes

The current version identifies the acceptance of Independent Certification of Installation and Maintenance Schemes. The BWF proposes that this acceptance should be extended to the use of products that are covered by Third Party certificated Accreditation Schemes.

Emergency Egress Windows and External Doors

It is common to fit safety restrictors on windows to provide safety against falling. Confusion exists as to this need where windows must also provide an emergency egress facility. A note clarifying that the use of releasable restrictors is acceptable **on** emergency egress windows would be useful.

Possible wording:

Note: When a risk assessment carried out in accordance with BS 8213 Part 1 recommends that a child safety restrictor should be fitted this will be acceptable provided that when release the requirements of 2.11(a) are met.

Additional provisions for houses with a floor more than 4.5m above ground level

Emergency egress windows are required where floor levels are "below 4.5m" but not where floor levels are "above 4.5m". Presumably where a single dwelling contains a protected stairwell, because of the "above 4.5m" requirement, the need for emergency egress windows is reduced. Is it possible to add a note to clause 2.13 to propose this relaxation?

Possible wording:

Note: Where a room on floors not more than 4.5m above ground level have direct access to a protected stairway as described in 2.13(a) the recommendations of 2.7 need not apply.

Clause 2.13 note

BWF consider that the use of rising butts can impair the fire resistance performance of a fire door and should be discouraged. If it is intended that the use of rising butts will be maintained by ADB, a warning should be given regarding the difficulty of maintaining the integrity of the door due to the reduction at the top of the door.

Possible wording: Add to 2.13 Note

The fitting of rising butts can impair the fire resistance performance of due to the ‘shaping’ of the top of the door. Care should be taken to ensure that the intumescent seal fitted can expand sufficiently to fill the wider void created.

Fire doors general

Self-closing fire doors in dwellings can often be disabled or held open by homeowners, which can suggest that these doors are ineffective. The BWF would propose that this requirement should be retained. The need to keep doors closed, particularly at night, improving their effectiveness should be promoted by a Government campaign similar to the campaign to maintain the fitting of batteries in smoke detectors.

There are very few 20 minute fire doors now available. The BWF would propose that the 30 minute fire door should become the minimum requirement.

New proposal

Generally fire doors are not required within dwellings of one or two storeys. However kitchens are often a significant source of fire in dwellings. It is proposed that the door(s) to the “kitchen area” should be fire doors to reduce the risk of the spread of fire.

Possible wording:

x.xx Where a kitchen has direct access to a stairway or sleeping accommodation separation should be provided including a fire door with the appropriate fire resistance given in Appendix B

Accepting that the use of rising butts will be maintained by ADB, a warning should be given regarding the difficulty of maintaining the integrity of the door due to the reduction at the top of the door.

Replacement

Recent changes to Approved Documents have brought refurbishment/replacement within scope of the Building Regulations. The performance of fire doors is also dependent on the correct specification and installation of the doorframe. In New Build this is covered by the practicality of

fitting the full assembly. Where doors are replaced as a result of damage or refurbishment, AD B should contain guidance on replacement of the doorframe as well as the door leaf.

Possible wording:

yy.y Where refurbishment or replacement requires the fitting of a fire door the existing doorframe should be replaced unless it can be shown that it complies with the specification of the fire door manufacturer.

Note: Where the frame does not need to be replaced the installation should be checked to ensure that the seal between the frame and the constructional opening provides sufficient fire resistance.

Maintenance

In most non-dwelling situations fire doors can be damaged impairing their fire resistance. The BWF would propose that the introduction of a maintenance regime should be included in the Approved Document.

zz.z For buildings other dwellings a regular maintenance schedule should be prepared to ensure that all fire doors are checked at a frequency not greater than 12 months, and ensuring that any approved repairs are carried out within 4 weeks.

Prepared by

John A Hedgecock

Technical Manager

British Woodworking Federation