



**Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government**

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***Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local
Government***

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Dear All,

You may be aware that there have been a number of important announcements made recently relating to progress that has been made in response to the Grenfell Tower fire. These will be important to you and others in the community, who have been so affected by this tragedy.

Inquiry Panel Membership

The Government is determined that there will be justice for all the victims, and for their families. It is vitally important that survivors and those bereaved have confidence in the Public Inquiry into what led to the tragedy. As a result the Prime Minister recently announced that she will appoint an additional two panel members to support Sir Martin Moore Bick's chairmanship for phase 2 of the Inquiry's work. In taking this decision the Prime Minister was mindful of the views of the survivors and bereaved who felt it would be beneficial to have additional panel members for phase 2, to ensure the necessary breadth of skills and diversity of expertise to meet the increasing scale and complexity of the work. Work is underway to identify the right people to fulfil this role and we will update you once this has happened.

As well as the criminal investigation and the public inquiry into the fire at Grenfell Tower, the Government wants to ensure that everyone living in similar buildings across the country, feel safe in the homes they live in.

Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety

As part of this wider response Dame Judith Hackitt was asked by the Government to undertake an independent review into building regulations and fire safety. She published her interim review in December and has published her final report last week.

The Government welcomes the report, and the broad principles set out within it. Dame Judith has been clear that there needs to be stronger accountability during construction,

refurbishment and on-going management of high-rise buildings, alongside greater oversight to incentivise the right behaviours and stronger powers to tackle irresponsible behaviour.

Dame Judith Hackitt has been explicit that any new system must ensure that residents are safe, and feel safe, in their homes. The Government agrees that residents must be empowered and that we must do more to ensure that people are given access to relevant information and can act to make their homes safer.

This review has implications for Government as a whole and, Dame Judith has acknowledged it will need time to deliver in practice. We have committed to bring forward legislation that delivers meaningful and lasting change and gives residents a much stronger voice in an improved system of fire safety. Changing the law will take time. But as Dame Judith acknowledges, we must start changing the culture and practice right now. As a first step, we are asking everyone involved to have their say on how we can achieve this by contacting us by the end of July via HackittResponse@communities.gsi.gov.uk.

We are already demonstrating a strong response in the areas we can act on sooner. First, the cladding believed to be on Grenfell Tower was unlawful under existing building regulations and should not have been used. The Government will ensure that there is no room for doubt over what materials can be used safely in cladding of high-rise residential buildings. Having listened carefully to concerns, the Government will consult on banning the use of combustible materials in cladding systems on high-rise residential buildings.

Second, the Government is clear that the inappropriate use of “desktop studies” is unacceptable. We have therefore started a consultation on significantly restricting or banning the use of “desktop studies” to assess fire performance of materials, products and structures. This consultation closes on 25 May (<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/approved-document-b-fire-safety-amendments-to-statutory-guidance-on-assessments-in-lieu-of-tests>). The Government will not hesitate to ban “desktop studies” if the consultation does not demonstrate that they can be used safely.

Finally, we will also be consulting on clarifying building regulations statutory guidance on fire safety, what is known as ‘Approved Document B’, which will open in July.

An update on Fire Door Testing

You may also be aware that a door recovered from Grenfell Tower marketed as meeting a 30-minute fire resistance standard, failed the test after approximately 15 minutes. The Government has run an investigation into ‘flat entrance 30 minute fire doors’ supplied by Manse Masterdor, a company that ceased trading in 2014.

The Government sought advice from the independent Expert Panel on Building Safety and on 16 May made a statement confirming that the Expert Panel has concluded that the ‘flat entrance 30 minute fire doors’ supplied by Manse Masterdor do not consistently meet the 30 minute fire resistance standard they were marketed as providing.

The Expert Panel, supported by the National Fire Chiefs' Council has also advised that while the risk to public safety remains low, owners of affected buildings should review their building's fire risk assessment and consider how quickly these doors should be replaced. We have contacted customers of Manse Masterdor identified in the company's records as having been supplied with the affected doors. This includes Kensington and Chelsea Council, who will be writing to affected residents in light of this news.

Independent investigation into fridge freezer model

As part of the Metropolitan Police Service investigation, a Hotpoint fridge freezer was identified as being involved in the Grenfell Tower fire. As part of the Government's response to the Grenfell Tower fire, Business Secretary Greg Clark ordered an immediate examination of that product by independent technical experts. Based on the findings of that investigation, independent experts have concluded that the product met legal safety requirements and that the risk associated with the model is low. This conclusion has been verified by the Government Chief Scientific Adviser who chaired a panel that considered the methodology and conclusions of the technical investigation.

The Government places huge importance on consumer safety and on January 21, 2018, we accepted all the recommendations made by the Working Group on Product Recalls and Safety to upgrade the UK system of product safety. We have also established the Office for Product Safety and Standards. As the manufacturer of this product, Whirlpool has co-operated with the investigation and has undertaken their own investigation in line with their legal obligations.

Making buildings safer

It is essential that the work to rectify buildings with unsafe cladding (Aluminium Composite Material, ACM) continues at pace. Interim measures are in place across all affected buildings in the social sector and work has already started on two thirds of those.

The Prime Minister is clear that this work should not be to the detriment of other responsibilities held by social landlords and therefore announced on 16 May that the Government will fully fund the removal and replacement of dangerous cladding on high rise residential properties owned by councils and housing associations.

We will also continue to work with local authorities to ensure they have the flexibilities they need to undertake essential fire safety work.

We have made available £400 million and want to allocate this funding as soon as possible so will announce more details shortly, including on how we will encourage landlords to continue to pursue other parties for costs where they are responsible or at fault. Within the next week, I, the Secretary of State for Housing, will be calling in representatives from industry and leaseholders to establish how building owners and developers can make sure residents in the private sector are safe and feel safe in their homes.

The fire at Grenfell Tower has led the Government to undertake a huge amount of work to ensure that nothing like this can happen again, and we feel it is important for us to update

you on this work and assure you of our determination to ensure this never happens again. We realise that this is a considerable amount of information to digest but know how important these issues will be to you and your community.

RT HON JAMES BROKENSHIRE MP

RT HON NICK HURD MP