

Advice for owners of buildings which are partially clad in Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding systems

This guidance note provides advice to building owners¹, their professional advisers and fire and rescue services when considering whether it is safe to leave small or partial amounts of Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding on a building.

Although written for those responsible for the safety of residents of high rise (over 18m) residential blocks of flats, the principles of this guidance may, in certain circumstances, be applied to other premises.

Introduction

1. The Independent Expert Advisory Panel considers that ACM with an unmodified polyethylene filler with any type of insulation presents a significant hazard on buildings over 18m; and ACM cladding with fire retardant polyethylene filler presents a notable fire hazard on buildings over 18m when used with rigid polymeric foam².
2. The Independent Expert Advisory Panel has issued [consolidated advice](#) that building owners with these systems should seek professional advice as to the appropriate steps to make their building safe. We have become aware that some building owners have received advice that indicates that it is acceptable to leave small or partial amounts of ACM cladding on their buildings.
3. Given the risk of fire spread posed by ACM cladding systems, the Independent Expert Advisory Panel's view is that leaving any amount of ACM cladding³ on a building would continue to pose a hazard to both residents and firefighters in the event of a fire. **The clearest way to ensure the safety of residents is to remove all ACM, including small or partial areas of ACM, and replace it with a safe material. This remains the most appropriate remediation solution.**
4. Where ACM cladding is identified, building owners should ensure that they implement the recommended [interim safety advice](#), for ensuring the immediate safety of residents until necessary remediation work has been completed. Interim measures are intended to reduce risk for a **limited period**. Local Authorities, as the lead enforcing authority, in conjunction with the local fire and rescue service will continue to work with building owners and their professional advisers to help ensure any necessary mitigation measures are in place. For further information on remedial works where a cladding system is potentially unsafe see the [information note on remediation](#).

¹ For the purposes of this document the term 'building owner' means the owner of the building or the person, group, company or other entity on whom duties are imposed or enforcement action could be taken under the following legislation: (i) the Housing Act 2004 in relation certain hazards; or (ii) under by the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 to ensure the safety of occupants of a building from fire (see Articles 3 & 5 of Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005).

² Unless the system has successfully obtained BR135 classification via a large scale BS 8414 test.

³ For the purposes of this document when 'ACM' is referred to it means the types of ACM that when used on the external walls of a building over 18m would not comply with current building regulations: ie category 3 ACM or category 2 ACM when used in a system with rigid polymeric based foam insulation (unless the system has successfully obtained BR135 classification via a large scale BS 8414 test).

Enforcement, insurance, valuation and warranties

5. In May 2018, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MCHLG) issued a statutory direction instructing local authorities to pay particular regard to cladding related issues when reviewing housing in their areas. Local authorities can take enforcement action against building owners, using powers under the Housing Act 2004 to ensure hazards in residential buildings in their areas are remediated as quickly as possible. This includes situations where a hazard is caused by the presence of small or partial amounts of ACM cladding
6. Building owners should also be aware that leaving ACM in place may impact on other matters including; insurance premiums, valuations and warranties. Building owners should also consider sharing any professional advice they receive with the providers of such services.

Factors considered by the Independent Expert Advisory Panel

7. In issuing this advice, the Independent Expert Advisory Panel considered a range of real-life scenarios where there are small or partial amounts of ACM on a building. We are aware that some building owners have received advice that the building is safe if there is significant distance between ACM panels, or there is a single isolated strip of ACM, or it is only on top or ground floors. However, given the potential hazard to residents and those involved in fighting any fire that should occur, the view of the Panel is that there needs to be sufficient assurance that the system as a whole operates effectively in the event of fire. It is highly unlikely that this assurance can be provided via a desktop assessment or fire engineered solution.
8. It is therefore the Panel's view that the only circumstance where ACM may be left on a building is where all the materials used in the external wall system are of at least limited combustibility⁴, or the installed system has successfully obtained a BR135 classification via a large scale BS8414 test, and has been installed appropriately.

Consultation with residents

9. In order to ensure residents of high rise buildings are safe and feel safe, building owners should keep the occupants informed and ensure they are engaged in the decision making process and fully informed of the decisions that are taken with regards to fire safety. Owners should share professional advice they receive with residents, particularly where they intend to leave the ACM in place on building. This should be provided in a form that is readily understood and is accessible by the residents. Residents concerns over their safety, and any impact such as a financial implications imposed by the retention of the ACM should be taken into account.
10. For further general fire safety advice, contact the local fire and rescue service.

⁴ Materials of limited combustibility would either include a material or product which is at least Class A2-s3, d2 in accordance with BS EN 13501-1:2007; or has achieved a national equivalent classification in accordance with Table A7 of Approved Document B volume 2.