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Press release

Government consults on proposals to toughen rules on building safety

Consultation will look at restricting or banning the use of 'desktop studies' as a way of assessing the fire performance of external cladding systems.

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From:

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-housing-communities-and-local-government>) and

The Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP (<https://www.gov.uk/government/people/sajid-javid>)



Tough new rules designed to strengthen fire testing for cladding systems on residential buildings were published for consultation today (11 April 2018) by Housing Secretary Sajid Javid.

The consultation, which aim to improve building safety, will look at restricting or banning the use of 'desktop studies' as a way of assessing the fire performance of external cladding systems.

The revisions come directly as a result of the recommendations made by Dame Judith Hackitt in her interim report from the review into building regulations and fire safety published last year. Government is also going further by asking whether 'desktop studies' should be used at all.

The consultation is seeking views on whether 'desktop studies' are appropriate for all construction products, wall systems (cladding) or for any other purpose.

If 'desktop studies' are deemed appropriate, the proposed changes include improving the transparency of assessments, enabling proper scrutiny of results and ensuring that the studies can only be carried out by properly accredited bodies that have the relevant expertise.

These proposals are subject to a full consultation that will end on 25 May 2018.

Housing Secretary, Sajid Javid said:

We have listened carefully to Dame Judith Hackitt and we are taking action to strengthen building regulations guidance, which could mean that the use of 'desktop studies' are either significantly restricted or banned altogether.

This demonstrates the tough measures we are prepared to take to make sure that cladding tests are as robust as possible and people are safe in their homes.

Further information

Desktop studies

Assessment in lieu of tests, also known as 'desktop studies' are an established part of the system for classifying the fire performance of construction products and systems set out in paragraph 1b of Annex A of Approved Document B (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-approved-document-b>).

Their use is being considered as part of Dame Judith Hackitt's independent review into Building Regulations and Fire Safety (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-review-of-building-regulations-and-fire-safety-interim-report>) established by government following the Grenfell Tower fire tragedy. Her final report will be published in the spring.

See further details of the consultation (<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/approved-document-b-fire-safety-amendments-to-statutory-guidance-on-assessments-in-lieu-of-tests>).

The deadline for consultation responses is 25 May. Once closed the department will consider all the comments received and provide a response as soon as possible.

New British Standard

Government has commissioned the British Standards Institution (BSI) to draft a standard for the extended application of BS8414 results. This will provide detailed rules for assessments relating to cladding systems, in support of the new proposed requirements. Once the new British Standard is introduced for cladding systems, following it would be the expectation.

Office address and general enquiries

2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

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