

Safety Checks Following Grenfell Tower Fire

Following the Grenfell Tower tragedy on 14 June, we have received a growing number of requests to provide some specific guidance for the sports grounds sector. This guidance is for those sports grounds that are reviewing their fire risk assessments with specific reference to external cladding.

We recognise that primacy for building regulations and product specification rests with the Department for Communities and Local Government. The SGSA provides advice and guidance in the Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds (Green Guide) [Chapter 15 Fire Safety](#) and also in Safety Management *Part 3 Safety Management procedures*. This guidance note should be read in conjunction with the Green Guide. For those sports grounds that require a General Safety Certificate further controls may be in place as conditions of the certificate.

The investigation into the tragedy at Grenfell Tower is ongoing and whilst the cause of the fire is unknown and there are many questions about how it spread so rapidly, the attention has focused on the external cladding on the building. We will not speculate on the causes, but feel it is opportune to send out this guidance note to assist sports grounds owners/managers in making informed judgements about the fire safety of their buildings.

It is important to note that sports grounds generally contain no sleeping risk, benefit from high levels of vigilance when in use and are often fitted with active and passive fire detection systems to help mitigate any fire risk. Whilst it is not suggested that no risk is present, it is the aforementioned significantly mitigate the risk.

In cases where sports grounds are adjoined by a residential complex, it is expected to see high levels of fire compartmentation (fire walls and floors, protected corridors and stairs etc.) between the buildings as part of the statutory regulatory process.

External cladding

Much of the discussion has focused around the external Aluminium Composite Material cladding that covered the tower block, and whether it was permitted for use on residential tower buildings.

Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) is a type of flat panel that consists of two thin aluminium sheets bonded to a non-aluminium core, typically between 3 and 7mm thick. The panels can have a painted or metallic finish (eg copper or zinc effects). It can be differentiated from solid aluminium sheet by looking at a cut edge whereby the lamination is visible. It may be necessary to cut a hole in a panel if a cut edge is not readily accessible.

Where assistance is needed in identifying the composition of panels it is suggested that contact is made with either the architect or builder involved in the fitting of the panels or alternatively with the building control body employed for the project, either local authority or private approved inspector.

Where ACM panels are identified, it is advisable to check that the material is of limited combustibility and to review fire risk assessments for the ground to ensure they reflect any change in risk. Where a safety certificate is in place, sports grounds should ensure the certifying authority is kept informed of any concerns.

It is important to stress that ACM cladding is not of itself dangerous, but it is important that the correct type is used in the appropriate location.

Further information

For further guidance on fire safety risk assessment for people responsible for large places of assembly and specifically on insulated core panels, see Part 2 section 1 - 1.10 of the guide linked below.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/14889/fsra-large-assembly.pdf

BRE report *Fire performance of external thermal insulation for walls of multi-storey buildings* (2013) explains the mechanisms of fire spread more fully.

<https://www.brebookshop.com/details.jsp?id=327137>

For further information on fire safety at sports grounds see Chapter 15 of the SGSA's Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds (Green Guide)

<http://www.safetyatsportsgrounds.org.uk/publications/green-guide>