



Department for
Communities and
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Chief Executives of Local Authorities and Housing Associations

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An update on the Building Safety Programme

The tragic events at Grenfell Tower on 14 June have shocked us all deeply. My fellow ministers across Government and I have heard devastating stories from people caught in the fire. We are all clear that this should never have happened and must not happen again.

I am writing to update you on the Building Safety Programme I have established in my department following the fire. The programme is identifying buildings which are of concern through a thorough checking and testing process. With the support of local Fire and Rescue Services and a panel of independent expert advisers, we are supporting landlords by providing advice on the immediate steps to ensure the safety of residents and in reaching decisions on any necessary remedial works. We are determined to work with housing providers, schools, hospitals and industry to develop building solutions and a co-ordinated approach to deliver those solutions.

You will already be aware of the Independent Expert Advisory Panel, chaired by Sir Ken Knight, established to recommend to the Government immediately any action it thinks we should take that will improve public safety and help us to identify the buildings of concern. The panel have a wealth of experience in fire and building safety, including testing processes. They are drawing in wider technical expertise as necessary to inform this advice.

Shortly after the fire at Grenfell Tower, experts met and advised us to undertake identification screening in accordance with building regulations on rain screen cladding. The purpose of this being to identify the type of ACM used, as it is

difficult to tell visually. Those checking tests began at the Building Research Establishment (BRE) the following week.

On 6 July, having also spoken to a group of technical experts from a wide range of professions and organisations, the Expert Panel recommended further testing of cladding systems. In part this was in response to feedback that you and other stakeholders gave to us and which we passed on to them. These [large scale tests](#) undertaken by the BRE will help establish how different types of ACM panels in combination with different types of insulation behave in a fire. On 20 July we issued an [explanatory note](#) on these large scale tests.

The first test undertaken by BRE which tested a wall system consisting of ACM with unmodified polyethylene filler (category 3 in screening tests) and foam insulation [failed](#) the test. This means that it did not adequately resist the spread of fire over the wall to the standard required by the current Building Regulations guidance. Based on the results, the Expert Panel's advice is that they do not believe any combination of these materials (ACM with unmodified polyethylene filler and foam insulation) would meet current buildings regulations guidance. This combination of materials therefore presents a significant fire hazard on buildings over 18m. We have issued [advice](#) to every building owner known to be affected, which gives instructions on the further actions and steps they should consider taking.

We are however aware that councils and other building owners are also seeking clarification of actions they should take in relation to other buildings, those with materials other than ACM, where cladding has been removed and where new construction has been halted because it was planned to install ACM. The expert panel will consider these issues after the systems tests are addressed, as stated in the 20 July [Explanatory Note](#) on large scale tests.

The Government has also asked the Building Research Establishment and industry to publish the results of previous large scale tests on ACM and other cladding systems. This will help inform building owners' decisions about what kind of remediation work is required, and if so what materials could be used as replacements. There is a general requirement in the building regulations guidance that only materials of limited combustibility should be used unless they are part of a system which has been tested and shown to be safe.

Recognising the potential scale of remediation work, my department has set up an Industry Response Group to help mobilise the UK industry if any major programme of construction work is needed.

On Friday I also announced an independent review of building regulations and fire safety. This forward-looking independent review, to be led by Dame Judith Hackitt, will look at current building regulations and fire safety with a particular focus on high rise residential buildings. It will report jointly to myself and the Home Secretary. The review will examine the regulatory system around the design, construction, and on-going management of buildings in relation to fire safety; related compliance and enforcement issues; and international regulation and experience in this area.

Underpinning all of this work is a comprehensive stakeholder engagement plan to ensure that we are listening to and responding to concerns being raised. If there is more we can be doing on engagement and communication please let us know.

I am, of course, aware that there is concern about the financial implications for Local Authorities and Housing Associations. Our expectation is that, as landlords, you will fund measures designed to make a building fire safe, and will draw on your own existing resources to do so. The Social Housing Regulator is also planning to write on this to Housing Associations; who should contact the Regulator if they have concerns about their ability to meet the cost of essential works.

Where a Local Authority has concerns about funding essential fire safety measures, they should approach us as soon as possible to discuss the position. Where works have been advised by local fire services to be essential to ensure the fire safety of a building, we will ensure that current restrictions on the use of financial resources will not prevent them going ahead. This does not include general improvements or enhancements to buildings which go beyond this.

Thank you for your ongoing support for and co-operation with the Building Safety Programme. The work of the Programme is of critical importance and signals our determination to make sure that all people can feel safe in their own homes.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Javid', with a small comma at the end.

THE RT HON SAJID JAVID MP