

Committee(s):	Date:
Planning and Transportation	December 2018
Subject: Change to Building Regulations following the fire at Grenfell Tower.	Public
Report of: Carolyn Dwyer, Director of the Built Environment	For Information
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Summary

The purpose of this report is to update the committee to changes in the Building Regulations that will take effect on the 21st December 2018, which are the first following the fire at Grenfell Tower on the 14th June 2017.

From the 21st December 2018, all cladding to new high-rise buildings that exceed 18m in height, that contain, flats, residential care homes, dormitories to schools, student accommodation or to new hospitals, must be constructed of non-combustible materials.

Recommendation

Members are asked to accept this report be received as information.

Main Report

Background

1. On the 14th June 2017, a fire broke out in the 24 storey Grenfell Tower, North Kensington, West London, which had catastrophic effects as the fire spread from a single flat to engulf the whole building. While 223 people escaped, the fire caused the deaths of 72 people with 70 further injured and has left numerous families homeless. Since this time, as the fire spread well beyond its initial source, speculation regarding failure of the building to restrict fire growth has been high, and the government has embarked on an investigation into the causes and after effects of the fire, and why such a fire should have such severe consequences.
2. Since the tragedy, the Government has been working with the construction industry to review the following:
 - The regulatory system covering high rise and complex buildings.

- The cladding system to external walls as the fire appeared to spread rapidly across the outside walls, contrary to the Building Regulations.
- 3. The government requested Dame Judith Hackitt to investigate the regulatory system, due to the questions relating to the cladding system and occupants of the tower complaining of fire safety failures and complaints going unanswered.
- 4. This has cumulated in the issuing of the Hackitt Report in May 2018.
- 5. The report found that the regulatory system had failed and that there were a number of key issues that are undermining the system. The report has made a number of recommendations to how the Building Regulations and the Regulatory Fire Safety Order are administered to ensure adequate levels of fire safety for high rise residential blocks. The Hackitt Report is currently being reviewed by the government and we await the outcome of that review.
- 6. At the same time as Dame Judith Hackitt was reviewing the fire safety procedures, the Government carried out tests on cladding systems, similar to the system that was used at Grenfell Tower, for all high-rise blocks of flats over 18m, to check their fire properties.
- 7. All cladding systems to blocks of flats over 18m in height are required to be constructed to resist the spread of fire over the walls (Building Regulation B4.(1)) and that insulation used in the cladding should be of limited combustibility, or meet the performance criteria given in BRE Report 135 for cladding systems using a full scale test data from BS 8414 part 1 or 2.
- 8. If no actual test data was available for the completed cladding assembly, a desktop study by a suitable UKAS accredited testing body could be submitted giving their opinion whether the criteria of BRE 135 would be met for the proposed system. This report would need to be supported by test data which the test house already had from the cladding's components from previous tests.
- 9. Of the tests carried out to a sample taken from high rise residential blocks in England, owned by local authorities or housing association, 159 failed the tests, and 289 high rise residential blocks in the private sector failed.
- 10. The Government is currently working with all building owners to rectify the situation and are agreeing remedial works to ensure adequate levels of fire safety within these blocks.
- 11. Of the local authority blocks, the latest figures stated that 114 of the 159 blocks had started remediation works.
- 12. Of the private sector buildings across England, 19 have completed remediation works and 21 have started.
- 13. The review carried out by Dame Judith Hackitt and the fire testing on similar cladding to that of Grenfell Tower indicated to the government that there has been confusion in the construction industry as to the routes to comply with Building Regulation 4. (1) and it has therefore taken steps to rectify the situation.

14. The use of all desk top studies to show compliance of Building Regulation B4(1) are now not permitted.

15. Secondly, an amendment to the Building Regulations will come into force on the 21st December 2018 requiring all materials in the external wall of a building which has a floor over 18m above ground level, and contains, a flat, an institution (hospital or school), or contains a room for residential purposes, excluding a hotel, hostel or boarding house, must be non-combustible. All materials will require to have a fire rating of A2-s1, d0 or A1 in accordance with BS EN 13501.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

16. There are no implications to the City Corporation.

Conclusion

17. This new Building Regulation now removes options from designers and ensures that all new high-rise residential tower blocks will be constructed with non-combustible external cladding systems.

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