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Dear colleague,

Building safety update: Consolidated Advice to Building Owners of multi-storey, multi-occupancy buildings.

Over two years on from the Grenfell Tower fire, one of the Government's main priorities is to ensure that residents and buildings across the country are safe. The Secretary of State last week announced a series of measures to help achieve this.

The announcement included an update to the Fire Safety Order, progress on establishing the Building Safety Regulator, and the launch of a consultation on proposals to lower the ban on combustible cladding from 18m to a new height threshold of 11m. Details of the statement can be found here www.gov.uk/government/news/new-measures-to-improve-building-safety-standards

I would like to specifically draw your attention to the publication of updated and consolidated Independent Expert Advisory Panel (IEAP) advice on building safety for building owners of multi-storey, multi-occupied residential buildings. The IEAP has, for some time, had concerns about the extent to which the construction and property industries have been acting on the published advice. Industry has also given feedback that the advice could be clearer to follow and implement.

As a result, the advice published last week from the IEAP consolidates 22 previous advice notes into one; clarifies some of the language and, most importantly, makes clear that the advice needs to be acted on by building owners on all of their residential buildings. Recent evidence shows that some building owners have not given enough consideration to the safety of buildings below 18 metres. This is despite the IEAP being clear that building owners must make sure that their buildings are fire safe, regardless of their height. The advice can be found here www.gov.uk/government/publications/building-safety-advice-for-building-owners-including-fire-doors

This new advice note reflects the IEAP view that cladding material comprised of ACM PE and other metal composites should not be on residential buildings of any height and should be removed from the exterior of buildings. The advice also clarifies that previous advice on High Pressure Laminate is applicable to all buildings.



The updated IEAP advice also makes explicit reference to buildings which are occupied by vulnerable residents, such as those in care homes and hospitals, who may need evacuation assistance. Finally, the consolidated advice note also makes clear the actions building owners should take in relation to fire doors.

All building owners of purpose-built blocks of flats should ensure they have an up-to-date and comprehensive fire risk assessment for their building, which includes an assessment of the safety of any cladding on the exterior walls.

Our screening programme for buildings with ACM remains open for testing at no cost. The Building Research Establishment (BRE) will now accept samples from buildings of any height for screening.

The Department is gathering additional data on buildings over 18m and will start to gather more information about buildings below 18m too. This data in turn will inform the work of the Fire and Rescue Service Protection Board in considering its programme of assurance and inspection and, in turn, the work and priorities of the new Building Safety Regulator. If you have information on ACM clad buildings, or other unsafe clad buildings across your portfolio below 18m I would be grateful if you could send information to towercaseworkteam@communities.gov.uk

The Department remains open to a dialogue and feedback from residents, building owners and industry on the implementation and use of the consolidated advice. In this way together we can ensure no one can be in any doubt about their responsibilities.

Neil O'Connor

Director, Building Safety Programme