

Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety

Dame Judith Hackitt's final report, Building a Safer Future: Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety, highlighted that there was a lack of evidence that what was being installed was, in fact, compliant and that there was a lack of competency in the industry.

The report highlights that the responsibility for building safety is often passed down to the sub-contractor level. This is where changes driven through 'value engineering' – described in the report as "a systematic and organised approach to providing the necessary functions in a project at the lowest cost" and "promoting the substitution of materials and methods with less expensive alternatives" – often go undocumented in what some have termed a 'build and design' culture.

The report recommends that permission to proceed with a project will only be granted when evidence is submitted through a series of 'Gateways' that the build will meet all the requirements of the Building Regulations.

Competence of everyone involved in the design, procurement, delivery and maintenance of the building is a key recommendation. Defining levels of competency for each of these disciplines will be challenging and will require cooperation across the sector to ensure they can be defined, evidenced and the correct training put in place over a transition period that is workable against a background of a skills shortage.

The recommendation for clear, permanent and transparent labelling of products should start to address confusing wording, such as 'fire proof' or 'fire resistant', that is used without clearly explaining the parameters within which the product can be used. It will also drive manufacturers to provide clear and complete test evidence which includes details of the test, its results,

configurations, parameters and installation details, rather than some single-page statements put out with scant information, leaving contractors vulnerable when challenged to provide evidence of compliance.

"The golden thread of building information" was alluded to as a key initiative in the interim report, and here in the final report it becomes key to providing evidence of compliance and provides building owners and operators with clear information about the asset, how to maintain it and how to make safe changes if required. In a similar way to the processes described in PAS 1192 parts 2 and 3, it will use digital files and data, which are searchable and usable.

To meet the recommendations will require a change in culture where 'good enough is not good enough anymore'. Specifications will have to be more detailed, tenders clear and unambiguous, the procurement process transparent with changes recorded and justified, product data and evidence of test reports submitted and evidence that products are correctly installed, especially where materials cover up the substantive elements such as studs or service penetrations. And, lastly, the need for a fully carded and trained to a recognised standard team to deliver these buildings.

Since the fire at Grenfell Tower and the interim report, FIS has been working with its members to address the issues of providing clear digital evidence of compliance and competence through an initiative called Product Process People (PPP). This is a process to evidence compliance by saving copies of test reports, product delivery notes and site images to show correct installation. Together with copies of the operatives' CSCS cards with relevant training recorded in the same file, this will provide current evidence of competency.

PPP

Product Keep records of the specification, test evidence, purchase orders and delivery notes

Process Keep dated site images of the installation, especially elements that will be covered up in the final build

People Record who installed the system using records from their CSCS cards and their relevant qualifications and training.