



Assurance Framework Appendix A – Assurance Guidance

Purpose

The Protection Board was announced on 5th September with the aim of supporting the Government's programme to accelerate the pace of inspection activity across high-rise residential buildings. This is in line with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government's commitment to ensure all buildings in scope have been inspected or assured no later than 2021.

NFCC's Building Safety Programme Team have been working with the other members of the Board from the Home Office, MHCLG and the Local Government Association (LGA) to design the new assurance framework for Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs). The guidance issued by the Board is designed to enable FRSs to provide assurance that the Responsible Person/s (RP) has effectively implemented changes to the fire safety arrangements in order to manage the risk in their buildings.

The Grenfell Phase One report has been issued and, along with other organisations, NFCC is considering the recommendations and guidance will be changed in future if appropriate. FRSs are encouraged to work with NFCC on any changes that are made.

This guidance is to be used for the following reasons:

- To assess whether the interim measures introduced by the RP/s are being properly maintained.
- To ensure any operational risk database specific to each FRS has been updated and that relevant operational information about the building is available to responding crews.
- To ensure an appropriate operational tactical plan has been developed for the building.
- To assist each FRS in providing assurance to the Protection Board and Fire and Rescue Authority as applicable.

Introduction

Since June 2017, FRSs have been notified of high-rise residential buildings (HRRBs) over 18m that have been identified as having Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) type cladding of the type that has, or may have, failed the fire tests carried out by the Building Research Establishment (BRE).

Those FRSs have then, through the provision of a range of information, provided a degree of assurance that the risk in those buildings has been assessed by the RP/s and where necessary interim measures have been established to allow occupants to remain in the building.

The Protection Board is now seeking further assurance on a 'building by building' basis for those c430 notified HRRBs. This assurance will be through the provision of a Yes/No response to the following assurance questions:

1. **In the context of your functions and duties under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 or other relevant legislation and guidance, as far as you can reasonably assess given your role and expertise, has the building owner/responsible person mitigated the risks posed by the ACM cladding to a sufficient level so that residents can occupy the building (pending remediation)?** YES/NO
2. **As far as you can reasonably assess, have you got an effective pre-planned response in place for this building to protect life and property in the event of a fire?** YES/NO

This guidance provides FRSs with a framework to collate information against which Chief Fire Officers (CFOs) can underpin the assurance that they are providing. The guidance is not exhaustive, many CFOs will already have these underpinning assurances in place alongside additional context or assurance that your FRS has already established over and above that suggested. For others the guidance can provide a framework to 'check and balance' the arrangements in place to support your assurance and is a means to provide additional consistency across FRSs.

The guidance has been agreed through the Protection Board, chaired by the NFCC Chair, albeit the guidance itself has largely been produced by the NFCC.

The LGA also sit on the Protection Board and the guidance has been developed on the basis that CFOs are likely to want to engage their Authority, whatever governance the FRS has in place, about the assurance being provided for notified buildings, and this guidance supports such an approach. Clearly that will be a matter for each individual FRS to decide.

Q1 does not absolve the owner or RP of any of their duties under any relevant legislation. The FRS are only providing assurance that, where practical, they are assured that the owner or RP have mitigated the effects of the ACM.

The following underpinning assurance does not have to be completed or returned. It outlines some areas you may want to consider when providing answers to the assurance questions.

Underpinning Assurance

1. **Notified building (name, address, details of the building).**
2. **Type/classification of ACM cladding on the building.**
3. **Extent of the ACM cladding on the building, for example:**
 - a) What is the approximate percentage of ACM cladding on the building?
 - b) What is the location of that cladding on the building?
 - c) What other external wall system is on the building alongside the ACM cladding?
 - d) What risk does that present?

All questions below need to be aligned to a date.

4. **Is the current fire risk assessment suitable and sufficient in the circumstances?**
5. **What interim measures are in place?**
6. **Under 'normal' circumstances what is the evacuation strategy for the building?**
7. **Has the evacuation strategy been changed?**

If yes, what has it been changed from and to? For example, from 'stay put' to simultaneous evacuation.
8. **Is there a common fire alarm and or waking watch?**

If yes, is it suitable to provide simultaneous evacuation?
9. **Are adequate systems in place to notify residents/occupants of the following:**
 - a) An evacuation strategy?
 - b) What to do in the event of a fire?
 - c) An escape plan?
10. **Is there adequate information/signage on site as appropriate?**
11. **Is there evidence, such as records, that a suitable system of maintenance for fire safety provisions is being undertaken?**

For example, smoke control, firefighting lifts etc.
12. **Is there evidence that a suitable system is in place to ensure that firefighting facilities are accessible and maintained in good working order?**
13. **Where possible, is there an available list of residents/occupants who have been identified who may need assistance to escape in the event of a fire and/or evacuation?**

Please note, the above question is referencing those who may not be able to self-evacuate and not a list of vulnerable persons. In the event of a fire, the waking watch staff should be assisting with evacuating the people on the list first and informing the FRS on arrival if they are all accounted for.
14. **What ongoing monitoring has been put in place by the FRS to ensure that the fire safety arrangements, including interim measures, continue to be appropriate until remediation is completed?**
15. **What ongoing monitoring has been put in place by the FRS to ensure the operational risk information/tactical plan is maintained and up to date for operational crews in the event there is a fire in the building?**

When answering this question, FRS want to consider some of the following. Have they easy access to:

 - Floor plan layouts of the building indicating isolation valves for FRSs?
 - Keys for ventilation controls with instructions?

- Access fobs or keys for staircases, lobby areas and plant rooms?
- Information on those who may not be able to self-evacuate?
- Early attendance of a fire safety officer?

Other issues they may want to consider are:

- How control staff will deal with fire survival guidance calls in these buildings.
- Access for high-rise appliances and effective water supplies.
- Plans for dealing with rapid and or abnormal fire spread.
- Managing mass rescue and evacuation versus firefighting.

16. What substantive work has taken place, is ongoing, or is planned, and when, to reduce the risk in the building?

For example, retrofit sprinklers, address compartmentation issues, partial or complete removal of ACM cladding etc.

17. Any additional information that is relevant to the assurance you are providing.

Additional Notes

Based on the pilots the Protection Board believes that responses to the assurance questions should be based on information gathered from a new site visit and audit or one carried out within the last 3 months. However, FRSs should base their inspections on a criteria that matches their understanding of the premises.

The Board request that a copy of any formal or informal enforcement notices served, as part of this current inspection, or any future enforcement notice served be sent in separate to your returns. This should also outline what further action is being taken and timescales.

Ongoing monitoring visits should normally be unannounced to ensure that issues are as found. Below are some of the areas you may consider.

Responses to the assurance questions should be returned on a building by building basis when completed, not as a single return.

Waking watch staff are required to have a clear understanding of what to do in the event of a fire. They should be clearly identified and have access to all necessary areas to evacuate the premises, including fixed installations, communications and the method of raising the alarm and calling the FRS. A hard copy of the waking watch procedure, including shifts with breaks, should be available. NFCC has provided a guidance document, which is linked below.

A waking watch **must** be able to provide:

- Early detection of a fire and warning to occupants.
- Management of evacuation.
- A means by which they can call the FRS.

Some affected buildings have a combination of common fire alarm and waking watch. The fire alarm covering the common parts must be able to:

- Give a warning of fire throughout the building, including within all flats and the common parts.

Responses provided for Q2 should be based on FRS use of National Operational Guidance and also any additional measures that have been put in place. This could include:

- Changes to Pre-Determined Attendance
- Additional training and operational risk gathering
- Wider FRS understanding of premises in area
- Specific crew and flexi officer guidance
- Resident engagement events
- Frequency of site visits and inspections
- Site Specific Risk Information gathered
- Deviation from agreed procedure specific to the premises based on identified risk or specific operational concerns
- Frequency of site training and awareness visits
- Processes in place for testing and validating your plan

Should a NO response be given to either of the questions the Board would ask that you provide:

- Clear indication as to the reasons why assurance cannot be provided
- What measures are being taken to remedy the situation
- Time scales for the rectification of the situation and provision of a positive response
- Do you require NFCC support to help remedy the situation

Guidance to Date

[Government – Guidance Note 12](#)

[NFCC – Simultaneous Evacuation Guidance](#)