



**Department for
Communities and
Local Government**

Melanie Dawes CB
Permanent Secretary

**Department for Communities and Local
Government**
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

20 June 2017

Safety checks on private residential blocks

This letter is intended for owners, landlords and managers of private residential blocks in England. Representative bodies for the private residential sector have kindly agreed to disseminate this letter to their members, and we are grateful for their assistance.

Following the horrific fire at Grenfell Tower in North Kensington last week, we want to ensure you are aware of help that is available in checking your buildings.

There has been much public concern and comment about potential flaws in the cladding that was on Grenfell Tower. While the exact reasons for the speed of the spread of fire have yet to be determined, we have concluded that there are additional tests that can be undertaken with regard to the cladding. We have asked local authorities and social housing providers to identify whether any panels used in new build or refurbishment of their own housing stock are a particular type of cladding made of Aluminium Composite Material (ACM). These checks will be relevant to privately owned and managed residential buildings too, so please can you consider carrying out these checks on your buildings.

More details on how to identify this cladding are in Annex A attached. It is important to stress that ACM cladding is not of itself dangerous, but it is important that the right type is used. If you identify that cladding on any of your buildings is made of ACM, then a sample can be tested. This testing facility is also being made available to blocks that are privately owned, and your local authority may already have been in touch to make you aware of this. The procedures for taking up this offer of testing, which will be paid for by DCLG, are set out in the annex. We are prioritising buildings over six storeys or 18 metres high. The offer is for the initial testing only and the cost of any remedial action will be the responsibility of the owner of the building. The information from the checks will be available to DCLG from BRE. Please contact us at PRShousingchecks@communities.gsi.gov.uk if you have any queries.

Where the entire block is not owned and managed by the same party, please ensure that only one sample is provided and that any necessary permissions are obtained for taking and sending off the sample. We would not expect individual leaseholders within a building to send off samples for testing.

As well as this work it is of course important that owners / landlords have robust fire assessments for their properties.

Thank you for your cooperation in this important work.

MELANIE DAWES

Annex A – Protocol for Sampling of Aluminium Composite Material Cladding

Identification of Aluminium Composite Material Cladding

Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) is a type of flat panel that consists of two thin aluminium sheets bonded to a non-aluminium core, typically between 3 and 7mm thick. The panels can have a painted or metallic finish (eg copper or zinc effects). It can be differentiated from solid aluminium sheet by looking at a cut edge whereby the lamination is visible. It may be necessary to cut a hole in a panel if a cut edge is not readily accessible.

On buildings with a floor over 18m above ground level, where ACM panels are identified, it is necessary to establish whether the panels are of a type that complies with the Building Regulations guidance ie the core material should be a material of limited combustibility or Class A2.¹

Testing of ACM

To allow for the identification of core materials, we are putting in place Government-funded testing capacity that will allow a small sample of the cladding to be tested and its type identified. If you wish to take up this offer, then you will need to submit samples for testing.

Where the surveyor undertaking assessment of a composite panel determines that it is necessary for cladding to be subjected to laboratory screening they should follow this procedure:

1. Cut out two samples of at least 250x250mm in size from each location sampled. Take photographs as necessary to identify the location of the sample. You should take samples from above and below 18m above ground level as appropriate and check different multiple panels where you have concern that material specification varies.
2. Using an indelible ink pen, note the building name / number, postcode and a unique identifier (i.e. name of building owner followed by unique sample number e.g. ABC/001) traceable to the specific location within the building of each sample. Add a direct dial telephone or mobile contact number to be used in the event that there are any queries on the sample.
3. You must make good by closing the hole using a non-combustible sheet such as steel fixed with self-tapping screws or rivets.
4. Complete the data return form attached to this letter and include a hard copy of it with the sample. You should provide as much information as is readily available, but not if this will delay submission of samples for testing.

¹ Material of Limited combustibility as described in Table A7 of Approved Document B (Vol 2) Class A2-s3,d2 or better in accordance with BS EN 13501-1

5. Place one of the samples from each location in a padded envelope with a copy of the data return form (attached below). Clearly mark the envelope URGENT – CLADDING TEST SAMPLE.
6. Send the test samples by recorded delivery or courier to:

BRE
Bucknalls Lane
Garston
Watford
Herts, WD25 9XX

For any testing related queries please email material.screening@bre.co.uk

7. Retain the second sample from each location for your own records or for testing in the event that samples are lost or misplaced in transit.