



Department for
Communities and
Local Government

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Permanent Secretary

**Department for Communities and Local
Government**
2 Marsham Street
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To: Local Authority Chief Executives &
Housing Association Chief Executives
Via email

Date: 18 June 2017

Safety checks following Grenfell Tower

Thank you for all the work you have done with the department since the horrific fire at Grenfell Tower. I know that you are urgently carrying out fire safety checks on your tower blocks and ensuring the appropriate safety and response measures are in place. The Grenfell Tower police-led investigation is underway, but it will be some time before we fully understand how the fire started or why it took hold in the way it did. We know that in the meantime there is significant anxiety amongst residents about whether their own blocks are safe.

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 are therefore asking local authorities and other registered providers of social housing to identify whether any panels used in new build or refurbishment are a particular type of cladding made of Aluminium Composite Material (ACM). More details on how to identify this cladding are in the attached technical note and the Homes and Communities Agency can offer expert support in surveying your properties if necessary. 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 will need to be tested. We have put in place a testing process for any samples, which will be at no cost to local authorities and housing associations. Please contact the department at housingchecks@communities.gsi.gov.uk if you have any queries. In addition, we will follow up with you individually on the morning of Monday 19 June to establish if you require any further assistance. We have been working closely with the Local Government Association, the National

Housing Federation and the Homes and Communities Agency who can also offer you support. We will provide further information on Monday.

We are making this testing facility available to any other residential landlords and you should ensure that they are aware of this offer.

As well as this work I would remind local authorities that they should be well advanced in checking they have robust fire assessments for their stock. I should point out that assessments carried out to comply with the Fire Safety Order are unlikely to have considered the building's cladding. The Local Government Association's *Fire safety in purpose-built blocks of flats* remains the most comprehensive guidance on ensuring fire safety in these types of buildings¹.

Once inspections are completed and necessary work identified, DCLG will work with housing associations and local authorities to identify the most appropriate options for supporting funding

Thank you for all you have done so far.

Yours sincerely



MELANIE DAWES

¹ <https://www.local.gov.uk/fire-safety-purpose-built-flats>

Annex A

Identification of Aluminium Composite Material Cladding

By the end of day on Monday 19th June, local authority and registered providers of social housing should:

- Identify and record the number of properties that are more than 18 metres high
- Identify and record the properties that have been clad with aluminium type panels
- Inspect those identified to establish whether they are panels made of an Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) and record this
- Use the enclosed return form - *New Build and Refurbished Building Information Check List* - to report all of the above findings for each building to DCLG at housingchecks@communities.gsi.gov.uk Please complete and return parts 1 and 2 by close 19 June and subsequent parts as soon as possible thereafter.

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 A2².

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. **From Tuesday 20th June onwards, where ACM panels have been identified, local authorities and registered providers of social housing should begin taking steps to establish that they are of limited combustibility, and to submit samples for testing. DCLG will provide further detailed information about the procedures for submitting test samples**

² Material of Limited combustibility as described in Table A7 of Approved Document B (Vol 2)

on Monday 19th June. If you have any queries, please contact
housingchecks@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Please get in touch right away if you require any further advice, or if you require expert support in surveying your properties.