



Introduction

In this Briefing Note we thought it would be helpful to provide a summary update of key changes / fire news items which have been published in the previous few weeks. The three topics we have chosen include:

- **Fire Safety: Approved Document B**
- **Improved fire safety for new flats and social homes (Scotland)**
- **Pre-legislative Scrutiny of the Building Safety Bill**



Fire Safety: Approved Document B

These documents have been updated to incorporate 2020 amendments. The documents cover building regulations for fire safety in residential homes, including new and existing dwellings, flats, residential accommodation, schools, colleges and offices.

Volume 1: Dwellings - main changes made by the 2020 amendments

The changes focus on the following fire safety provisions in blocks of flats:

- a. **Sprinklers:** a reduction in the trigger height from 30m to 11m.
- b. **Wayfinding signage for the fire service:** a new recommendation for floor identification and flat indication signage within blocks of flats with storeys over 11m.

In addition, a typographical error is corrected in both volumes. Purpose group number 2 is now included in reference to 'residential' buildings in the guidance on boundaries. The changes are set out in the May 2020 AD B amendments.

Volume 2: Buildings Other Than Dwellings - main changes made by the 2020 amendments

The changes focus on the following fire safety provisions in blocks of flats (Volume 1):

- a. **Sprinklers:** a reduction in the trigger height from 30m to 11m.
- b. **Wayfinding signage for the fire service:** a new recommendation for floor identification and flat indication signage within blocks of flats with storeys over 11m.

In addition, a typographical error is corrected in both volumes. The changes are set out in the May 2020 AD B amendments.



Improved fire safety for new flats and social homes (Scotland)

Guidance has been published for the house building industry ahead of new regulations on sprinklers coming into effect next year.

The changes mean all new-build social homes, flats, and shared multi-occupied residential buildings must be fitted with automatic fire suppression systems from March 2021.

Previously, this was only required in new high-rise blocks of flats above 18 metres. It comes after David Stewart MSP proposed a private members Bill to improve safety in new social housing following the Grenfell Tower fire in 2017.

A number of outreach events are being held with providers of new homes in the run-up to implementation next March.

Housing Minister Kevin Stewart said: "I am very grateful to David Stewart MSP for his work on bringing this important issue forward and gaining cross-parliament support.

"The increased requirements for automatic fire suppression systems will further improve fire safety for thousands of new homes each year. These systems have been proven to save lives and it is right that we now make these changes.

"We will continue to work closely with housing providers to make sure there is wide awareness of what is required ahead of the new regulations coming into effect."

Stuart Stevens, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Assistant Chief Officer, said: "The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service welcomes the amended regulations and the increased provision of automatic fire suppression systems. This provision is a significant step forward in fire safety and will increase the safety of our communities, residents and firefighters."

Building Standards Technical Handbooks 2020: Summary of Changes is available via the following link

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/>



Pre-legislative Scrutiny of the Building Safety Bill

The Government must improve on the detail if it is to demonstrate that its new building safety proposals will drive much needed reform in the sector.

The findings come in a report published by the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee following pre-legislative scrutiny of the draft Building Safety Bill.

The proposed legislation sets out the framework the Government intends to adopt to implement a new building safety regime and to remedy the flaws in the existing system identified in the Hackitt review.

Protecting leaseholders

The report finds that, in its current form, the draft legislation fails to provide sufficient protection against leaseholders paying the bill for work to remedy existing fire safety defects. The building safety charge should be a way of funding the cost of future work, not a mechanism for ensuring residents foot the bill for historic failures in fire safety construction or maintenance.

The Committee reiterates its long-standing call on the Government to provide sufficient funding for remedial work and develop mechanisms to recover these costs from those responsible.

Committee calls for more detail

Following pre-legislative scrutiny of the draft Building Safety Bill, the Committee found an over-emphasis on as yet unpublished secondary legislation and regulation left significant gaps in how the new regime would operate in practice.

It calls on the Government to provide much more detail when it publishes the final Building Safety Bill and remove any doubt on the scope of the legislation and the responsibilities on building operators.

The report recommends greater oversight of key professions in the construction and building management sectors, including new roles created by the Bill. The exact responsibilities and competencies of the newly established accountable person and building safety manager positions are not well-defined and should be clarified.

The Bill should also require building safety managers, as well as other professions involved in the design and construction of high-risk buildings, be subject to national accreditation and registration standards.



2020 has seen new fire safety guidance being published, predominately relating to high rise residential buildings, and the above new items are examples of this.

Looking forward, 2021 will see the introduction of new fire safety legislation which will increase the scope of risk assessments in residential buildings. The pace of change, therefore, is likely to continue in 2021 and also looking forward to 2022/23, when new building safety legislation is expected to become law.



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