

News story: First systems test reaffirms actions for landlords

The first of the 'systems tests', assessing the fire safety of whole buildings, has been taking place at Building Research Establishment (BRE).

These large scale tests will allow experts to better understand how different types of cladding panels behave with different types of insulation in a fire.

Immediately after the Grenfell Tower fire, the government began a testing programme on aluminium composite material (ACM) on high rise residential buildings, which is one element of a wall cladding system.

Following advice from the Independent Expert Advisory Panel, BRE has now started a further programme to test the wall system of a building in its entirety. Three different types of ACM cladding are being combined with 2 different types of insulation to test their combustibility when taken together, with 6 combinations being tested in total.

Each test involves building a 9-metre-high demonstration wall with a complete cladding system including cladding panels, insulation and cavity barriers. This is then subjected to a replica of a severe fire inside a flat as it spreads out of a window, to see whether it meets the requirement to resist vertical fire spread.

The first test was of a wall cladding system consisting of ACM with polyethylene filler (Category 3) and foam insulation, with fire breaks and cavity barriers in place.

The expert panel advise that the [results show](#) this combination does not meet current building regulation guidance.

- 82 buildings are currently known to have this combination of materials in their wall cladding systems – 47 of which are local authority or housing association owned or managed
- the government has [issued advice](#) to every building owner known to be affected and other interested parties

In a statement, the Independent Expert Advisory Panel said:

This next phase of testing provides further information for landlords to make informed decisions about what actions to take to ensure the safety of residents and reassure the public.

This reconfirms the advice already provided to building owners

about the immediate steps they should take to ensure buildings are safe.

Landlords of buildings with cladding using the same combination of materials as in this first full scale test must now act on the additional advice they have been given since this test, to seek professional advice about any necessary remedial work.