

Press release: Statement from the Secretary of State regarding the cladding testing failure rate

Ever since the appalling tragedy at Grenfell Tower on Wednesday 14 June, the government has been working very closely with local authorities, housing associations, and the private sector to ensure the safety of high-rise buildings.

We provided [advice to all social landlords on 22 June about interim safety measures](#) that should be taken immediately where it has been determined that a building has Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding that is unlikely to be compliant with the requirements of the current Building Regulations. This guidance was recommended by an independent panel of experts and includes advice on the 3 emerging findings from the Metropolitan Police investigation into Grenfell Tower.

A combustibility testing programme for ACM cladding is running around the clock at the Building Research Establishment (BRE). This is able to test 100 samples a day – and if needed, yet further laboratory capacity could be provided.

So far the cladding from 34 high-rise buildings, in 17 local authority areas, has failed the combustibility test. All landlords and fire and rescue services for those local authorities have been alerted to the results and we are in touch with all 17 areas to support and monitor follow-up action. The landlords for all the affected buildings are taking action to inform tenants and implement the interim safety measures needed. Areas affected include the city of Manchester, Camden, Plymouth, Hounslow, Portsmouth, Barnet and Brent.

The fact that all samples so far have failed the tests underlines the value of the testing programme we have set up with the Building Research Establishment to get samples checked properly in the laboratories.

It is therefore very important for local authorities and housing associations to continue to submit such samples as a matter of urgency.

In the meantime, local authorities are contacting fire and rescue services in their area to conduct fire safety inspections of these tower blocks to inform them on what remedial works might be required.

We expect that authorities and landlords are very sensibly giving the highest priority to buildings with which they have most concern. But we should not be in the position where buildings have such cladding on them. How this occurred – and preventing this from happening again – is likely to be a key question for the public inquiry.

We are now rapidly identifying buildings of concern: samples are being tested

very quickly; fire inspectors are checking the safety of the buildings as a whole; and we have issued interim safety guidance to help action that is being taken by local authorities, landlords, and fire and rescue services to mitigate risk and start addressing any defects that have been found.

It is important to stress that cladding itself is not dangerous, but it is important that the right type is used. Also, a failure in testing of the cladding does not necessarily mean that a building will have to be evacuated; the decision by Camden Council to evacuate 4 of the 5 towers on the Chalcots Estate was because the failed testing of the external cladding was compounded by multiple other fire safety failures which the fire inspection team found within the buildings.

Obviously, those residents in Camden who had to be asked to leave their homes at such short notice have had a distressing experience; I have to express deep admiration for the calm and stoicism with which so many have handled this.

I understand that the tragedy at Grenfell Tower, and now the evacuation in Camden, will be particularly worrying for those living in high-rise towers. However, fire safety standards are in place in buildings across this country and landlords are obliged by law to meet them – in both private rented and social housing. Individuals are no more likely to experience a fire now than before, but everyone should remain vigilant to the risk.

It is the responsibility of the landlords and freeholders to advise their residents what to do in the event of a fire in the building, based on the findings of their risk assessment. We are making sure that authorities and landlords have all the latest advice and support available as quickly as possible.