

Building safety The story so far

A photograph of a curved staircase with grey stone steps and a grey handrail. The railing is supported by vertical orange posts. The background is a plain white wall.

re:build
Britain

Building safety: the story so far

Changes to building safety aren't just about cladding. They're about creating a thread of responsibility for safety throughout a building's life.

However, the anticipated scale of building safety reform has widened over the last few years. Initial focus was on residential buildings 18m+, but the spotlight has widened to shorter buildings. And media coverage of Grenfell and its Inquiry has increased public awareness and scrutiny of building safety and social responsibility in construction.

Grenfell Fire

In June 2017, a fire broke out at Grenfell Tower, London. It was 24-storys high. 72 died. It's become a catalyst for building safety changes.

Grenfell Inquiry Phase 1

Examined the fire's cause and development [Phase 1 Report](#) (October 2019):

- said the fire spread quickly because of the building's ACM cladding
- made recommendations.

Grenfell Inquiry Phase 2

- Currently underway
- Examines the circumstances and causes of the disaster, including how Grenfell Tower was in the condition it was in
- Individuals and companies are generally protected from criminal prosecution in giving oral evidence
- Hopefully, completed this year
- [Inquiry website](#)

Grenfell has affected insurance; professional indemnity cover is harder and more expensive to get, with more conditions attached to policies.

Key terms

Cladding

Materials on a building's exterior

ACM

Aluminium composite material

Non-ACM

Not aluminium composite material

Residential

Property for living in

Remediation

Where something is remedied, repaired or fixed

Private sector

Business-controlled part of the economy

Public sector

Government-controlled part of the economy

Waking watch

Patrols to detect fire

Dame Hackitt

A leading figure in the post-Grenfell landscape

- Led the [Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety: Hackitt review](#) (2018), which made 50+ recommendations and led to a ban on ACM cladding on residential buildings above 18m
- Is a [Government adviser on the new Building Safety Regulator](#)



Funds

Private Sector ACM Cladding Remediation Fund

c.£200m to remediate unsafe ACM cladding on private sector residential buildings 18m or higher (closed December 2019).

Building Safety Fund

£1bn to remediate unsafe non-ACM cladding on private and public sector residential buildings 18m or higher (closes July 2021).

Waking Watch Relief Fund

£30m for installing alarms in private sector buildings 18m or higher with unsafe cladding, where leaseholders pay for waking watch.

New fund?

An extra £3.5bn, to replace unsafe cladding on residential buildings 18m and higher. Details awaited.

New laws

In place

Building (Amendment) Regulations 2018

Bans combustible materials in external walls (e.g. unsafe ACM cladding) in residential buildings 18m or higher.

Coming

Building Safety Bill

Proposes a new regime including a new Building Safety Regulator, new system of "dutyholders", registration of building inspectors and building control approvers, etc. Anticipated 2021.

Fire Safety Bill

Proposes making building owners and managers responsible for assessing risks of external walls and fire doors. Anticipated 2021.

New Building Safety Regulator

To be within the Health & Safety Executive, to raise building safety standards. Detail awaited.

New dutyholders system

(A Reformed Building Safety Regulatory System)

Dutyholders to support development of safer buildings, share information with the Building Safety Regulator, ensure compliance with building regulations. Residents will get information about their building's safety and be involved in safety decisions. Detail awaited.

New construction products regulator

To be within the Office for Product Safety and Standards. Detail awaited.

Note: the position around the UK differs e.g. the Building and Fire Safety Bills won't apply in Scotland.

Key consultations

Review of the ban on the use of combustible materials in and on the external walls of buildings

About whether the ACM cladding ban should be extended to cover residential buildings of 11m+ and non-residential buildings like hotels. It's ended – Government response awaited.

Sprinklers and other fire safety measures in new high-rise blocks of flats

This concluded consultation's outcome is that sprinklers must be provided in new residential blocks of 11m or higher, and wayfinding signage must be easily readable in low light from November 2020.

What to do next?

Reading this guide is a great first step in understanding building safety developments, but we expect many more changes – keep an eye out for these.

[Sign up for more information](#)



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