Cladding system passes independent building standards test

CLADDING systems used on four high-rise blocks in Swansea have passed building standards test carried out on them by independent experts.

Experts from the British Research Establishment (BRE) carried out the tests on cladding systems identical to those used on the buildings in Swansea. These tests have confirmed they are fully compliant with current building regulations.

The news is providing further reassurance to tenants at the blocks in Clyne Court and Jeffrey’s Court in the wake of the Grenfell Tower disaster.

Now Swansea Council and the local fire service are working together to ensure residents in the flats have the information and reassurance they need following the events of three weeks ago.

Clive Lloyd, the Council’s Deputy Leader, said: “Our first concern has always been the safety and security of our tenants and since the Grenfell Tower disaster the council has worked tirelessly to reassure them about fire safety and to keep them updated on developments.

“The latest news that the cladding systems in place at the four high-rise buildings conform to building regulations should provide more clarity and reassurance for residents about their homes.”

Cllr Lloyd added: “We have been asking for the whole-system tests for the last fortnight as we never believed that testing the cladding panels in isolation offered the complete assurance we required.

“We’ve now shared the results of these additional tests with the Welsh Government and we hope they will confirm our understanding of the situation as soon as possible in order that tenants are fully reassured.”

The new tests – known as the BR 135 test - were commissioned by the cladding suppliers, 3A Composites and carried out by BRE, who have also been doing the government's cladding testing. The tests involved examining identical cladding systems to those used at the four buildings. This approach tested fire resistance of the system as a whole - including the cladding panels, the mineral core, insulation and the specialist metal firebreaks which are also part of the system.

It is understood the previous test which failed samples from Swansea and more than 180 other locations in England, only tested the cladding panels and not the full system.
The system used at Clyne Court and Jeffrey’s Court is not the same as the one used at Grenfell Tower. In particular the mineral core used in Swansea has a much greater fire-resistance capacity than the polyethylene core said to have been used at Grenfell Tower.

Within hours of the Grenfell Tower disaster, Swansea Council staff visited every flat in its high-rise blocks to provide information and let tenants know what action it was taking.

These have included:

- Fresh fire safety checks in all high-rise buildings completed.
- Updates provided to affected tenants on June 14, June 29 and July 2
- Regular night-time patrols introduced
- Continuing weekly checks on all high-rise blocks by fire safety risk assessors
- Checks carried out to ensure fire doors and dry risers are currently in working order
- A commitment to installing sprinkler systems in the council’s high-rise residential blocks

Cllr Lloyd said: “We are still seeking clarity from the Welsh Government about exactly what was involved in the tests we failed. It is important our tenants and the tenants of other high-rise blocks around Wales have the right information.

“In the meantime I hope the results of the fresh whole-system tests we passed, the work we’re doing with the fire service and the extra measures we have put in place provide tenants with the clarity and reassurance they need.

“Our position remains the same as it always has been. We will do what’s necessary to keep our tenants safe and properly informed – our commitment to installing sprinkler systems in all our high-rise blocks is confirmation of that.

“We will also continue to work closely with the fire service, the Welsh Government and the UK Government as the situation develops in the weeks and months ahead.”

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