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The Institute of Fire Safety Managers
IFSM

Daedalus

AUTUMN 2025
EDITION NO. 65
OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE IFSM

A healthy flow of new recruits will safeguard the future of the sector

Talent pipeline

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Career progression
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2

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3

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4

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5

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6

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Autumn 2025

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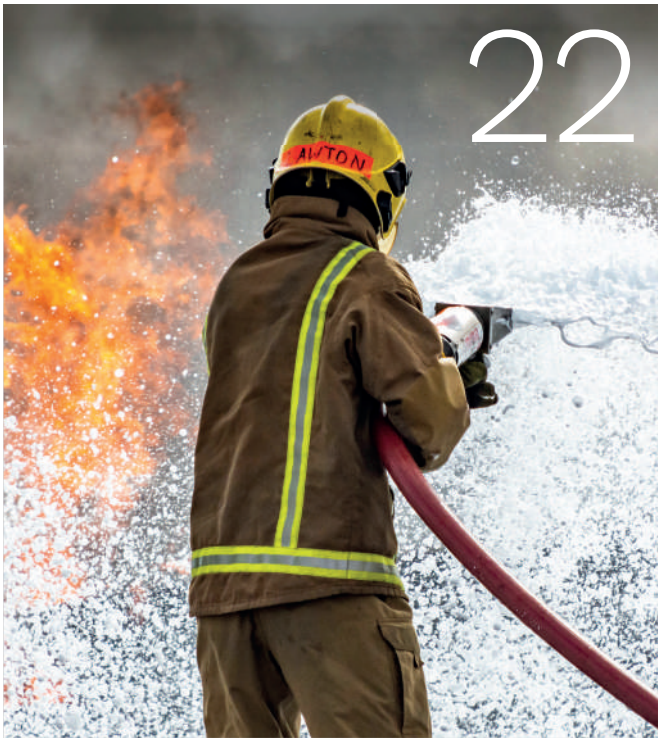

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Making progress

Our apprenticeship scheme, a professional competency register and a new British Standard have been keeping the IFSM busy over the summer

For this edition, more up-to-date photographs! The photographs are courtesy of RiskBase and Owen Tetley (photographer). My thanks to RiskBase for inviting me to their rooftop networking event in London in early August to talk to the attendees about the initiative which we are driving forward – fire risk assessor apprenticeships (more of which later).

The RiskBase event was a huge success, and it was good to network with many of their employees and clients and discuss the current trends and moves in the world of fire safety and fire risk assessment.

I gave a short update on where we are with the apprenticeship scheme, and IFSM council member Alex Aiston gave a talk on his own perspective of apprenticeships, having set up one within his own company. I also give thanks to Toby, the RiskBase office dog, for giving me his full attention (or was it me giving him my full attention?).

On the subject of apprenticeship schemes, we are now, together with the Fire Industry Association, and in conjunction with the Fire Service College, in a position to start to fill in the application for submission to Skills England. We will also share this with the Institution of Fire Engineers, who have indicated their interest in being part of the scheme.

Another significant work in progress is the background information gathering by a team of council members and myself to try and put together a professional competency-style register for fire alarm technicians, installers and engineers. We have made a start on this and are making steady progress, so I will keep members updated on the progress we make.

> “Our philosophy has always been that council and staff are here for the members, not the other way around

I can report that the new British Standard 8674 on competency of fire risk assessors has now been approved and is about to be issued as a formal British Standard. We have been involved with this from the very start, and it’s a tribute to our standing and success in the world of fire safety that all of us, including you as members, played a major role in the whole process. I hope it won’t be too long before it is accepted through Article 50 of the Fire Safety Order as the benchmark standard for the competence of all fire risk assessors.

Talking of British Standards, on behalf of all of you who are members of this great professional body, I extend our grateful thanks to our chair, Dave White. He took the decision some time ago for the Institute to pay the fees to BSI and make the relevant British Standards available to all members, from student to life fellow. Our philosophy has always been that council and staff are here for the members, not the other way around, and we continue to deliver with that in mind.

Once again, I thank all members for their continuous support.

Bob addresses the RiskBase networking event, a speech well received by one four-legged attendee

Dr Bob Docherty QFSM, PhD, CEng, FIFSM (Life), FIFireE, MEI
is president of IFSM

News

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW THIS QUARTER...

CODE OF PRACTICE

New BSI standards to boost competence and safety in sector

THE BRITISH STANDARDS INSTITUTION (BSI) has published a new standard designed to assess the competence of individual fire risk assessors working in the built environment.

BS 8674: 2025 Built Environment – Framework for Competence of Individual Fire Risk Assessors – Code of Practice – establishes three levels: foundation, intermediate and advanced. It outlines the behaviours, knowledge and experience required to be deemed competent at these levels.

It applies to a range of professionals, including individual fire risk assessors, Responsible Persons, employers and building owners or managers, and covers residential and commercial premises, care homes and education and healthcare settings.

BSI also released BS 9792: 2025 Fire Risk Assessment – Housing – Code of Practice, updating guidance for those conducting assessments in the housing sector. It attempts to determine proportionate measures to protect occupants from fire hazards and includes updated guidance for buildings with specific evacuation requirements.

The standard applies to residential settings including houses in multiple occupation, blocks of flats and student accommodation.

Anne Hayes, director of sectors and standards development at the BSI, said: "This updated guidance is designed to deliver clarity, consistency and assurance for housing providers, assessors and all those committed to protecting lives. It sets a new benchmark for safety planning and reflects a strengthened and collaborative commitment to transparency and the needs of diverse housing communities."

IFSM members receive access to BSI documents as part of their membership, and can access both standards **through their personal Member Library on the IFSM website**

Photography: iStock

EVENTS

AWARD WINNERS ENJOY SUCCESS

As *Daedalus* went to press, anticipation was building over the upcoming IFSM Awards, held at Old Trafford Cricket Ground on 1 October.

The awards bring the industry together to recognise best practice and celebrate success, as well as raising money for the Children's Burns Trust.

Categories for the evening included fire safety manager of the year, team and company of the year, as well as accredited course and fire safety project of the year.

The day also saw IFSM's annual general meeting and a technical meeting, which included talks from Matthew Humby on 10 steps to help mitigate lithium-ion battery fires and Vivian Halliday on emerging technologies in fire safety.

Services personnel can bring essential skills such as risk management and leadership to the fire safety profession

AWARDS

Proud to serve: IFSM wins ERS Bronze Award

IFSM HAS RECEIVED the Bronze Award from the Ministry of Defence's Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS). This acknowledges our commitment to supporting the UK's armed forces community, including veterans, reservists and military families.

Our pledge under the ERS is focused on turning our support into meaningful opportunities and resources. As part of this commitment, IFSM will:

- Promote inclusivity for veterans and reservists within the fire safety profession by actively encouraging their participation in the IFSM community
- Provide pathways for recognition and accreditation that reflect the unique skills and experience gained through military service
- Support resettlement and career transitions, helping service leavers understand how their capabilities align with fire safety roles and qualifications
- Collaborate with defence and veterans' networks, offering visibility and professional connections to those moving into civilian careers
- Champion the benefits of employing veterans and reservists across the wider fire safety sector through our publications, events and partnerships.

With transferable skills such as leadership, risk management, problem-solving and coming from a strong safety culture, ex-service personnel are well suited to roles in fire safety. IFSM is committed to highlighting these opportunities and engaging with service leavers through outreach, events and resources that demonstrate how a career in fire safety can be both fulfilling and impactful.

As an accredited training provider, we are also exploring registration with Enhanced Learning Credits Administration Services (ELCAS) to deliver Level 3 training courses, reinforcing our long-term commitment to professional development for the armed forces community.

Receiving the ERS Bronze Award marks a milestone in reaffirming our belief that the skills, discipline and values developed through military service have a vital place in the world of fire safety. We encourage all IFSM members to get behind this initiative and help unlock the valuable opportunities it brings to our profession.

MULTI-OCCUPIED BUILDINGS

Government issues fire safety update

THE GOVERNMENT HAS MOVED to clarify changes made to the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, which came into effect in England between 2021 and 2023.

The Fire Safety Order (FSO) *Supplement to guidance note 1: enforcement* document explains the parts of premises to which the FSO applies in buildings containing two or more sets of domestic premises.

It confirms this relates to the building's structure, external walls (including doors, windows and anything attached, such as balconies) and any common parts, as well as all doors between domestic premises and those common parts.

The guidance also details the duties of the Responsible Person (RP) around the recording of fire risk assessments, outlining that all RPs must now record their fire risk assessment in full.

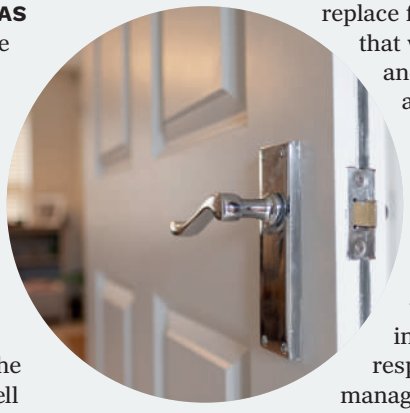
Additionally, it covers the recording of fire safety arrangements, provision of fire safety information to residents, and co-operation and co-ordination between Responsible Persons.

For more information, visit **b.link/FSO-enforcement**

REGULATIONS

Clarification around fire door guidance

THE GOVERNMENT HAS UPDATED the guidance on fire door safety requirements, as set out in the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022.



The guidance makes clear that the aim of the regulations is to implement the recommendations of the inquiry into the Grenfell Tower fire, which stresses the need for flat entrance doors to be self-closing.

It emphasises that this is not intended to mandate that existing flat entrance doors satisfy the current standards for flat entrance doors in new blocks of flats, as imposed under the Building Regulations. This follows concerns from leaseholders who have been advised to replace flat entrance doors that were not manufactured, and certificated, in accordance with current standards for new fire-resisting doors.

It also includes clearer explanations on how often checks should be carried out, what to look for during inspections and the responsibilities of those managing multi-occupied residential buildings.

The update is intended to help building owners, managers and Responsible Persons better understand their legal duties in relation to the inspection, maintenance and overall management of fire doors.

For more information, visit **b.link/FSR-fire-door-guidance**

Photography: iStockphoto

CLADDING

BUILDING REGULATIONS CHANGES IN WALES

The Welsh government has made several changes to the Building Regulations 2010, as well as issuing an amendment to Approved Document B (Fire safety) Volumes 1 and 2, and a new Approved Document 7.

As well as banning metal composite materials, such as those used in Grenfell Tower, on the external walls of all new or refurbished buildings in Wales, the legislation extends the ban on certain combustible materials to hostels, hotels and boarding houses.

It also reduces the height threshold for compliance with fire safety requirements from 18m to 11m where there is a material change in use, while solar-shading devices installed more than 4.5m above ground level will also need to meet specified fire classification standards.

The new rules will come into force on 20 December 2025. They will not apply to projects where a building notice or plans have been deposited with a local authority before that date, as long as work begins in the next six months.

Promoting the cause

Raising the profile of the Institute is an essential part of boosting membership and ensuring your views are heard at governmental level

I hope you are all keeping well and busy. As I write this edition of my thoughts, I find myself reflecting on how quickly the year is moving and how much we have already achieved together.

In early September, we held our charity golf day at Silverstone Golf Club. This was our first such event, and I am pleased to say it was a real success. A number of our members took part, enjoying not only a good day of golf and networking but, more importantly, raising money for a worthy cause.

All proceeds from the day went directly to the Children's Burns Trust, our chosen charity partner. Their work in supporting young people recovering from burn injuries is inspiring, and it is rewarding to know that we are contributing to such vital efforts. I extend my thanks to all who participated and helped make the day memorable.

Depending on when you read this, our very first IFSM Awards event, on 1 October at Old Trafford Cricket Ground in Manchester, will either be about to take place or have just done so. This landmark occasion brings together members, affiliates and partners to celebrate excellence across the fire safety profession. It recognises individuals and teams who have demonstrated outstanding contributions to the field, and I know it will be an evening to remember. It is particularly pleasing to see so many companies supporting the awards through sponsorship, which shows the strength of collaboration across our sector.

In terms of our technical work, I am pleased to report that we continue to make strong progress with British Standards. Over the past months, we have been directly involved in reviewing and adopting several new standards that will have a lasting impact on how fire safety is delivered and managed. Our partnership with BSI remains a priority, ensuring that we not only contribute to the development of standards but also help our members understand and apply them in practice. This is part of our wider commitment to maintaining and improving competency across the profession, something which becomes more vital with each new development in legislation and guidance.

> "Membership growth continues to be one of the strongest markers of our progress

Back in August, a small team from the Institute travelled to Orlando for the International Association of Fire Chiefs trade event. This was another milestone for us internationally. The event was extremely successful, allowing us to showcase the IFSM on a global stage, meet with fire professionals from across the world and, importantly, grow our membership.

I am delighted to say we gained several new members during the trip, strengthening our presence in the US and further cementing the Institute's role as a truly international body. My thanks go to all those who gave their time to represent the Institute abroad – the results speak for themselves.

Membership growth continues to be one of the strongest markers of our progress. Month after month we welcome new individual members, affiliates and assessors on to our registers. This growth allows us to strengthen our voice across the sector and ensures that our efforts – whether in education, standards, or representation – have greater impact. As chair, I remain committed to making sure this growth is matched by the professional consistency and values that have guided the Institute for over 25 years.

The president and I continue to represent you at all levels within the industry, both nationally and internationally. I must once again thank him for his tireless work on a number of committees, particularly those with the Home Office and other influential bodies. Together, we ensure the Institute's voice is heard and that your interests are well represented.

With so much happening – whether through our charity work, standards development, international reach or our awards – it is clear that the Institute continues to go from strength to strength. I look forward to meeting many of you at our future events in the months ahead.

David White FIFSM (Life), MIFireE, MIIRSM, LCGI is chair of IFSM

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HOW TO...

Influence people when not the loudest voice

Ensuring your voice is heard when you're not the most vociferous can be a challenge for anyone. But in the fire safety sector it's vital to find a way through, says **Jenny Jarvis**

Creating brands that stand out is what we do, but many of our clients are introverts. They really don't want to stand out in the crowd but understand that to achieve their goals, that's what's needed. Whether it's for our own business or our workplace, being able to influence those around us is an essential skill.

Feeling like you have no influence can be draining. I'm not often in this situation but I found myself there a few months ago, and I was surprised at what I discovered. I hope my story can help you to find your influencer voice so you can make a difference in your workplace.

I was sitting in a marquee with 250 people from over 20 different countries, and 32 of those were going to be my close community for the next four days, navigating challenges I wasn't sure I could manage on a self-inflicted warrior camp in the mountains of Spain.

Over the coming days, we were going to be pushed to our physical and emotional limits, yet none were going to be as hard to manage as choosing a tribe chant. Yes, you heard that right, 33 people with differing personalities, first languages and goals for the week had to come up with a warrior cry that was going to inspire us through the toughest moments.

It was a total disaster. As we started the process, many of the outspoken members started screaming at each other while the quieter ones took a big step back (including myself). We glanced at each other nervously, knowing it was not going well.

After the first full day together, we had to demonstrate our chant. While the seven other tribes seemed to have it all together, we sounded like a drunken sing-along after the football. It was embarrassing.

Someone had to take charge, but who was going to be brave enough to step into the lion's den? As we took part in a drumming workshop late into the night, an idea formed. I got a rhythm and then some words came, and it sounded good! But how was I going to get this group of people who had, so far, paid no attention to me at all to listen?

I had to create a strategy to influence this new team with very little background information. Here is what I did:

Illustration: iStock

1 Form your idea

Sit and work out your plan. What is your idea? Why is it good? Why should people know about it? For my situation, the idea was to come up with a couple of lines. They were simple and easy for everyone to say, meaning that the next time we demonstrated a chant, we could deliver it without total embarrassment.

2 Identify the influencers

Work out who in the team is standing out. It might be the funny person; it might be the calm but commanding one; it might be the biggest. Or it might be the highest ranking or the one who complains the most. Who are people looking towards for guidance? After one day, it was easy for me to see each of these characters. I chose one from each category.

3 The quiet approach

Speak individually to those people you have just identified. Ask for their thoughts and advice. Tell them your idea; if you know it's a good one, you can be confident they will take it on board. Show them how it benefits them and the rest of the group.

Letting them feel they were the first to know and part of the decision-making process made all the difference in the idea being accepted by the rest. If I'd done this loudly, it would have felt threatening and probably shut the idea down.

4 Bring the whole group together

Now it's time to present your idea to the whole group. By this point, ideally, you'll have several people on your side. If the idea benefits the collective, you'll get the buy-in you need. Now you have influence. People will listen to you when you have other ideas.

You may worry that someone else might take credit for your idea. That can happen, but if it's for the collective good, don't worry too much. However, if you're in a work situation and you have genuine concerns, fight for your credit. Let people know it was your idea, even if someone else takes the spotlight.

When I followed this process for our warrior chant, I was given a round of applause the following morning. I explained that leaders don't have to be the loud ones at the front. For the rest of the week, if I said I had an idea, people listened. It was great learning for me and for those I shared it with because they saw a real-life example of how it can work.

Jenny Jarvis is head of human transformation at Q Branch Consulting


Talent
Pipeline

With demand for fire risk assessments set to grow over the next few years, the need to bring more new recruits into the profession has never been so urgent. **David Adams** reports on work to develop an apprenticeship programme and fulfil career pathways for fire risk assessors

The fire risk assessment industry is still a relatively new profession, yet the average fire risk assessor is likely to be an older individual: 2024 Home Office research found that almost two-thirds of assessors were aged 50 or over. In part, this is because about a third of assessors (35 per cent of those surveyed by the Home Office) have taken up the role after a fire service career – the 'traditional' route into the profession.

The most experienced assessors are the foundation of the sector and possess an invaluable store of expertise. But with demand for the services of formally certified assessors set to increase significantly during the next few years, there is an urgent need to increase the supply of new talented recruits. In particular, much more must be done to increase awareness among young people of the opportunities that working as a fire risk assessor can offer.

Iain Bowker, owner and director of Ensure Safety & Compliance, and a Fire Industry Association (FIA) member who sits on the panel of apprenticeship contributors, thinks the sector needs to meet three challenges: "To upskill the existing workforce, to encourage assessors who are not yet members of one of the industry schemes to obtain third-party certification, and to provide career paths that are attractive to a young and diverse workforce."

The demographic profile of the sector, and the fact that some of its most experienced assessors have no formal or recognised qualifications, are both products of its history. The 2006 Fire Safety Order created a demand for people who could complete fire risk assessments for complex, higher-risk buildings, but did not stipulate minimum levels of competence.

Organisations within the sector sought to self-regulate, with these efforts resulting in the creation, in 2011, of what became IFSM's Tiered Fire Risk Assessors Register (TFRAR).

In more recent years, following the 2017 Grenfell Tower fire, the fire safety industry has responded to Dame Judith Hackitt's independent review of building regulations and fire safety. The Fire Safety Confederation (FSC) convened a Fire Risk Assessment Working Group to write an Approved Code of Practice, a framework for fire risk assessor competency.

This has informed the drafting of a new British Standard, BS 8674: Built Environment – Framework for Competence of Individual Fire Risk Assessors – Code of Practice, by members of the Fire Risk Assessment Competency Council (FRACC), including IFSM.

Meanwhile, the 2022 Building Safety Act and 2021 Fire Safety Act and 2022 Fire Safety (England) Regulations have created a new building safety regulatory regime in England and Wales, overseen by the Building Safety Regulator. This new regime has added to the responsibilities of fire risk assessors, and will continue to boost demand for their services, particularly in assessing higher-risk buildings, over the next few years.

But ever-increasing responsibilities and regulatory requirements could also push some older assessors out of the profession, and the supply of assessors, particularly of those who can assess higher-risk buildings, is not increasing quickly enough.

The current definition of higher risk, based on building height, is problematic. The government has said previously that plans for an ongoing review of this will be unveiled in 2025, but at the time of writing this has not yet happened. Whatever definition the government settles on, there will be a shortage of assessors who can assess higher-risk buildings – and that problem is likely to become more acute if regulatory conditions continue to tighten.

"If the government keep piling all this responsibility onto fire risk assessors, increasing the possibility they may end up in court, then some people are going to say: 'Right, I'm just doing the low-risk buildings'," warns IFSM president Bob Docherty.

Dedicated apprenticeship

This makes it even more important to attract more younger people into the sector. Perhaps the most important change under way at present is the creation of a fire risk assessment apprenticeship programme. There are apprentices being trained in the sector

Illustration: iStock

today, but a standardised apprenticeship, offering a fully accredited, government-funded route into the industry, could make a huge difference in attracting more young people.

IFSM and the FIA have led the development of the apprenticeship, alongside other industry stakeholders and a varied group of 10 'trailblazer' fire safety industry employers, in accordance with the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (now Skills England) requirements.

The trailblazer employers will employ the first cohort of apprentices, who will first work towards a Level 2 fire risk assessor qualification if they have not already attained this. During their three-year apprenticeship, they will work on assessments of lower-risk buildings and will be eligible to join IFSM's TFRAR at entry level Tier 1. At the end of the apprenticeship, they will have achieved a recognised Level 3 qualification/award and be eligible to join Tier 2 of the TFRAR.

"We're hoping this will open up more opportunities for younger people and people new to the sector, including those fresh out of school, college or university," says IFSM education and qualification manager Steven Newton.

At the time of writing, IFSM, the FIA, the FSC and other stakeholders are preparing to submit the formal application for the apprenticeship programme to Skills England and the government. "I'm hoping that by the end of the year, when we've got the British Standard up and running as well, we should have an apprenticeship scheme available for the trailblazers to pick up," says Docherty.

If the proposed apprenticeship programme is approved, the next task for IFSM and its partners will be to spread their positive message about a career in this sector to young people still in full-time education and within further education colleges and schools, ahead of a full launch of the apprenticeship programme with the trailblazer employers at some time in 2026.

Malcolm Thomas, a building surveyor, training consultant, IFSM council member and chair of the IFSM skills sub-group, believes the apprenticeship programme will be attractive to many employers. He stresses the benefits they can gain by taking on apprentices, including instant access to a pipeline of potential new employees, who can contribute fresh enthusiasm, energy and ideas.

"Once this has been adopted and there is financial support available, I would love to see 10 per cent of the Institute's membership taking on apprentices," he says. "I would have thought it would be quite easy to reach 500 new apprentices in a year."

Warm reception

Alex Aiston, managing director at AFC Fire and an IFSM council member, is likely to be among the employers taking on more apprentices. At present, new recruits at AFC Fire complete an apprenticeship or training programme developed in-house, leading to attainment of Level 4 diplomas in fire risk assessment.

"My experience is that you can train skills but you can't train attitude," says

> "The demand for fire risk assessments is never going away, and there are opportunities across the country

Aiston. "You have to have someone who cares about what we do as a business." The company's current apprentice, Ethan McNichol, is a neighbour of Aiston's who knocked on his door looking for a job when he was younger and was asked to come back when he was 18. He started his apprenticeship in September.

"He's been able to come out with me and any of the other Tier 3 assessors to see lots of different buildings," says Aiston. "What's next for him is honing the skills he's learned, and mastering them for residential properties and maybe some small office spaces. It's not just about passing an exam. Fire risk assessment is complex. You need at least 12 months' experience to have a good grasp of it."

The new apprenticeship programme will form one route into a proposed three-stage career pathway for fire risk assessors that has been designed by IFSM. New recruits would begin at Stage 1 of the pathway, technician or beginner level, working on less complex buildings and developing their skills and knowledge while working towards Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications; and supported by a national or local mentoring scheme.

They could then progress to Stage 2, as certified competent assessors, eligible for Tier 2 of the FRAR and able to work on normal-risk buildings, including some requiring more specialised knowledge. The top level, Stage 3, would be reached by the most experienced, third party certificated competent assessors.

The proposed pathways design assumes an individual would progress from Stage 1 to Stage 2 within four years, but there is no set timetable for further progression. Continuous professional development (CPD) programmes should run through each pathway.

The pathways could also help fire risk assessors who are competent and experienced, but do not have full formal qualifications. IFSM has applied to UKAS for formal recognition as a certifying body. It is also now an accredited training centre with recognised awards from FireQual that these assessors can take to fulfil those requirements.

The sector could also recruit individuals currently working elsewhere, including some who may have acquired relevant skills while working in fire and rescue services, in the armed forces, in health and safety or other risk assessment roles, or elsewhere in the wider built environment industries. 2024 Home Office research showed that around half of the assessors surveyed (49 per cent) had worked previously in a health and safety consultancy or advice role.

Experienced talent

"There are a lot of people out there with transferable skills," Docherty says. "Part of being a fire risk assessor is understanding the building, so anyone with architectural or construction skills can develop from there." He also suggests that people who have been unsuccessful in applying to join the fire service might consider becoming an assessor.

Aiston says, wherever new recruits come from, they will need to be able to work within the systematic approaches needed to assess fire risks in a wide range of buildings. They also need an open mind and to be able to adapt with the industry as the professional requirements of a fire risk assessor continue to change.

"I love this job – I love the travel, the people and the different architecture – and you get to explore all sorts of different buildings," he says. "And I love the challenge of finding the right approaches to different scenarios you come across. I've done 6,000 assessments and even I still sometimes have to stop and think 'I don't think I've seen this before'."

"It's a career that allows you to develop your skills over time as much as you want," says IFSM's Newton. "The demand for fire risk assessments is never going away, and there are opportunities across the country."

That's the message that everyone in the sector can help to spread to potential new recruits, to safeguard the future of the sector – and of the people who live in and use the buildings and places where fire risk assessors do their work.

David Adams is a freelance journalist with a strong background in the built environment

> "I would love to see 10 per cent of the Institute's membership taking on apprentices

Photography: istock

Recovery mode

An effective business continuity plan needs to consider a fire strategy, ensuring organisations can respond quickly should an incident occur. **Melissa Fazackerley** looks at how integrating ISO 22301 and ISO 45001 can enhance resilience

The intersection of fire safety and business continuity within construction and the built environment has never been more critical. With complex buildings, high-risk environments and extensive stakeholder involvement, ensuring safety while maintaining operational resilience is paramount.

Fire incidents can result in devastating human, financial and reputational losses. Therefore, integrating robust fire safety strategies into a comprehensive business continuity framework, grounded in recognised standards, is necessary, not just best practice, for businesses in this landscape today.

Let's explore how ISO 22301 (Business Continuity Management Systems) and ISO 45001 (Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems) can be practically implemented in a range of businesses in

Illustration: iStock

the construction and built environment sector. We will look at legal obligations, British Standard guidance, international standards and best practice strategies for enhancing organisational resilience, safeguarding lives and minimising downtime after fire-related events.

Business continuity, although not always a legal requirement, is supported by growing expectations from regulators, insurers and clients, especially so in higher-risk sectors. The Civil Contingencies Act 2004, while primarily focused on public bodies, underscores the national importance of continuity planning.

It's vital that organisations seek competent advice on business continuity and review the need for in-house or external resource to develop and maintain continuity plans. They must also engage with insurers and regulators to align continuity planning with expectations and gain insights into risk mitigation.

ISO 22301: a framework for business continuity

ISO 22301: 2019 provides a structured approach for developing, implementing and maintaining a business continuity management system (BCMS). It ensures that an organisation can properly plan to respond effectively to disruptive incidents, such as fires, and continue critical operations with minimal interruption to activities.

> A third-party certification body will test your systems and provide an independent assurance that you are meeting the standards

Key components include:

- **Context of the organisation:** Understand internal and external issues, interested parties and the scope of the BCMS. This can often be done through a PESTLE and SWOT analysis with input from key stakeholders.
- **Business impact analysis (BIA) and risk assessment:** Identify essential functions, potential fire risks and the impact of disruptions. Other aspects, such as fire strategies, fire risk assessments, understanding the use of the building or local area crime rates can help develop this.
- **Continuity strategies and solutions:** Develop plans for evacuation, relocation, remote working and communication, during and after a fire event. It is important that these are widely communicated with the relevant people, and that people are trained in the procedures and any equipment to be used.
- **Incident response structure:** Establish teams with defined roles and responsibilities. Review this on a regular basis to take into consideration various factors such as workplace absences, changes in technology and so on.
- **Testing and exercising:** Regular fire drills and business continuity exercises will ensure that the plans work, and people are aware of any follow-up action to take. It allows any gaps in the procedures to be identified and rectified before the potential for a real-life event occurs.

There are several steps for companies looking to achieve this. Begin with a gap analysis to compare current practices against ISO 22301 requirements. Being honest within the organisation might seem daunting at first, especially if you see a lot of gaps, but it is a great opportunity for improvement and to set a business strategy to action previous blind spots.

Next, develop a BIA with stakeholder input to identify priority services and processes. As part of this process, it is a good idea to map your stakeholders. You can then create scenario-based response and recovery plans. This should be clear once you have the gap analysis and stakeholder input. Your insurance company may have specific requirements so it is important to liaise with them during this process.

Schedule regular simulation exercises and update plans based on the outcomes of the drills. The aim is to get it right; this can mean learning something new each time and communicating any findings and changes with the appropriate stakeholders with a view to continually improve based on findings.

When you are ready, engage a certification body for third-party validation. You can work towards the standards, but a third-party certification body will test your systems and provide an independent assurance that you are meeting the standards.

ISO 45001: a systematic approach to occupational health and safety

ISO 45001: 2018 specifies requirements for an occupational health and safety management system (OHSMS). Its application in fire safety management is vital, especially in high-risk construction environments.

Key elements relevant to fire safety include:

- **Hazard identification and risk assessment:** Systematic identification of fire hazards and evaluation of associated risks is achieved through various mechanisms such as fire strategies, fire risk assessments, activities carried out on site and local crime statistics in relation to trespass and arson.
- **Operational controls:** Fire prevention strategies, safe storage of flammable materials and robust site management are just some of the key components to effectively manage fire on construction sites. Clear roles and responsibilities are vitally important during both the planning and construction phases and, with the dynamic nature of construction, regular effective planning and review is necessary.
- **Emergency preparedness and response:** Planning for fire-related emergencies, including evacuation plans, alarm systems and first-aid arrangements, is essential. Roles and responsibilities are an important element of emergency preparedness response from planning to execution and reflection. Organisational and individual learning is a huge part of recent legislative changes in the higher-risk construction industry. Integrating this into all aspects of the business is not only good practice but necessary in the evolving landscape.
- **Worker consultation and participation:** This involves engaging workers in developing fire safety protocols and reporting unsafe conditions. This is usually the part, in my experience, that businesses find difficult, but it needn't be. Transparent conversations and appropriate roles and responsibilities, with associated authorities, can go a long way to help develop that trust with employees. Start small, be realistic, don't over-promise and always deliver. If you can't deliver, that must be communicated in a timely manner.
- **Monitoring, auditing and improvement:** Routine inspections, incident investigations and performance evaluations are usually performed as part of routine site walk-arounds to pick up health, safety and fire issues. It is vitally important to recognise and document good practice not only for morale but to demonstrate that this is taking place within the organisation and that standards are being met.

> “Schedule regular simulation exercises based on the outcomes of the drills

Organisations must integrate fire safety into overall occupational health and safety

strategies. This means avoiding silo working and instead introducing relevant professionals to each other to promote a collaborative approach to successful risk management.

They must also make use of risk registers to track hazards and mitigation measures. This can be via existing web-based tools or using a simple Excel spreadsheet but it is important to make a start and monitor actions being taken. It's important to encourage open communication through toolbox talks and safety committees, and to keep various stakeholders informed as per the stakeholder identification heat map.

Another imperative is to use audits and key performance indicators (KPIs) to monitor performance. Setting out a strategy with KPIs can help keep focus on key areas and allocate appropriate resources to ensure the changes can be effectively implemented. Remember, too, to invest in accredited training for employees and to employ competent persons to carry out various roles and provide advice.

Integrating fire safety into business continuity

The real value emerges when organisations integrate fire safety management directly into their business continuity plans. This integration can be approached through several practical steps:

- **Unified risk assessments:** Combine fire risk assessments and health and safety risks with BIAs to understand cascading effects.
- **Cross-functional planning:** Involve the relevant stakeholders from various departments, consultants and other areas to ensure there is synergy in the strategy.
- **Critical supplier co-ordination:** Ensure contractors and supply chain partners have aligned continuity measures and are aware of their role to play in any continuity plan.

How companies can implement this:

- Form a multidisciplinary response team to oversee planning and testing.
- Require evidence of continuity capabilities in supplier contracts. This can be accompanied by supply chain audits and reviews on a regular basis.
- Map and prioritise dependencies to ensure continuity of key services based on impact.
- Ensure all plans are accessible and communicated to relevant stakeholders.

BEST PRACTICE IMPLEMENTATION

To embed fire safety and business continuity effectively, UK construction and built environment organisations should consider the following best practices:

- **Leadership commitment:** Senior leaders must champion fire safety and continuity planning, allocate resources, define strategic objectives and provide sufficient resource
- **Integrated management systems:** Align ISO 22301 and ISO 45001 under a unified management system, reducing duplication and enhancing coherence
- **Training and awareness:** Deliver regular training on fire prevention, evacuation and continuity protocols tailored to roles. Do this regularly to avoid complacency
- **Use of technology:** Implement digital tools for risk assessments, asset tracking and incident communication
- **Third-party certification:** Achieve ISO certification to demonstrate commitment to stakeholders and improve audit readiness
- **Regular reviews and updates:** Keep fire and continuity plans current, in line with changes to operations, legislation and lessons learned

Build a resilient and safe future

In a sector as dynamic and risk-exposed as construction and the built environment, the integration of fire safety with business continuity is not optional, but a strategic imperative.

By aligning with legislation, adopting best practice and embedding resilience into organisational culture, companies can not only protect lives and assets but also sustain operations and reputation in the face of fire-related disruptions.

Melissa Fazackerley is founder of Dimension H&S Ltd

Low-rise lowdown

Portal frame and other low-rise steel frame structures are common in retail, warehousing and factory environments and require consideration of steel framework, compartmentation and means of escape, says **Malcolm Thomas**

Following on from previous *Daedalus* articles on the seven common building structural types, this article will explore portal frame and other low-rise steel structures, adopted for retail stores, warehouses, factories and many other building uses that are subject to the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order (RRFSO).

A portal frame can be described as a structural system using columns and beams to create a strong and stable frame with joints fixed by bolts or welding; the fixed joining between columns and beams allows the frame to act as a single structural unit by reducing the bending moment in the beam.

This pattern of columns and beams is repeated down the length and across the width of a large multi-spanning build. The skeletal frame is stiffened by wall and roof steel purlins and bracing ties. A pitched roof is used, so the building has gable ends. Single, multi and curved spans can be adopted, depending on the size of building.

The frame is designed to resist the loads imposed by the roof and winds. The very strong and rigid joints allow some of the bending moment in the rafters to be transferred to the columns. This means that the size of the rafters can be reduced, or the span can be increased for rafters the same size.

Since the 1960s, portal frames have proved to be a very efficient construction technique to use for wide-span buildings requiring open floors, which benefits a range of purpose groups. Although generally used for single-storey buildings, you will see upper floors incorporated, commonly located against an external wall and used for offices and ancillary uses.

Steel frame structures

Steel frames are advantageous because of their high strength-to-weight ratio, speed of construction, design flexibility, durability and low maintenance. An alternative steel frame to a portal structure is where trusses or beams might simply be supported on the H-section steel columns.

An example is illustrated in the photo of the sports hall (image 5), where castellated steel beams bear onto steel columns. Steel framing might also be incorporated in a hybrid type of structural system, where other elements of the structure comprise pre-cast or cast in situ reinforced concrete.

> “Lightweight cladding would be carried on sheeting rails spanning between the columns of the portal frames

1 Steel frame distribution centre with upper-storey offices arranged against the external wall

2 Steel columns and beams exposed, plasterboard party wall between retail units supported on high bay light steel framework SFS. Note sprinkler installation

3 Frame structure with castellated steel beam supported on columns; external walls in cavity masonry to 3m and insulated cladding panels above

4 Brick/block at ground level for security and appearance, with insulated composite panels bolted back to subframe. Note brick encasement to steel columns

5 Steel trusses – series of triangles – supported on columns, with lightweight steel roof sheeting

You will recognise these types of steel structures in your local retail or commercial park. This solution lends itself to tall ceilings and large column-free spaces where limited internal column interference is preferred. External walls are non-loadbearing and generally clad with insulated composite panels. Often the low pitch roof is disguised by parapet walls, when viewed from ground level.

Over the past 20 years or so, we have seen the inexorable rise of large warehouses and distribution centres with tall, clear working internal space. A typical steel warehouse comprises welded steel H-beam frames, galvanised purlins, bracing systems, anchor bolts and insulated roofing and wall panels. Steel frames need not be portal frames, but columns and beams are bolted together; one or two-storey steel frame offices may be incorporated along the perimeter, either within the building envelope or adjoining externally.

The most popular solution for the non-loadbearing external walls is some form of lightweight, insulated metal cladding with cavity masonry work to the bottom 2m of the wall to provide security and impact resistance. The lightweight cladding would be carried on sheeting rails spanning between the columns of the portal frames.

Fire safety measures

Passive fire safety measures for fire risk assessors to be mindful of include protection to the steel framework, compartmentation and means of escape. If the steel frame supports compartment or separating walls, galleries, mezzanines or upper floors, then fire protection may be required. The walls and structure of buildings close to the site boundary may also require protection.

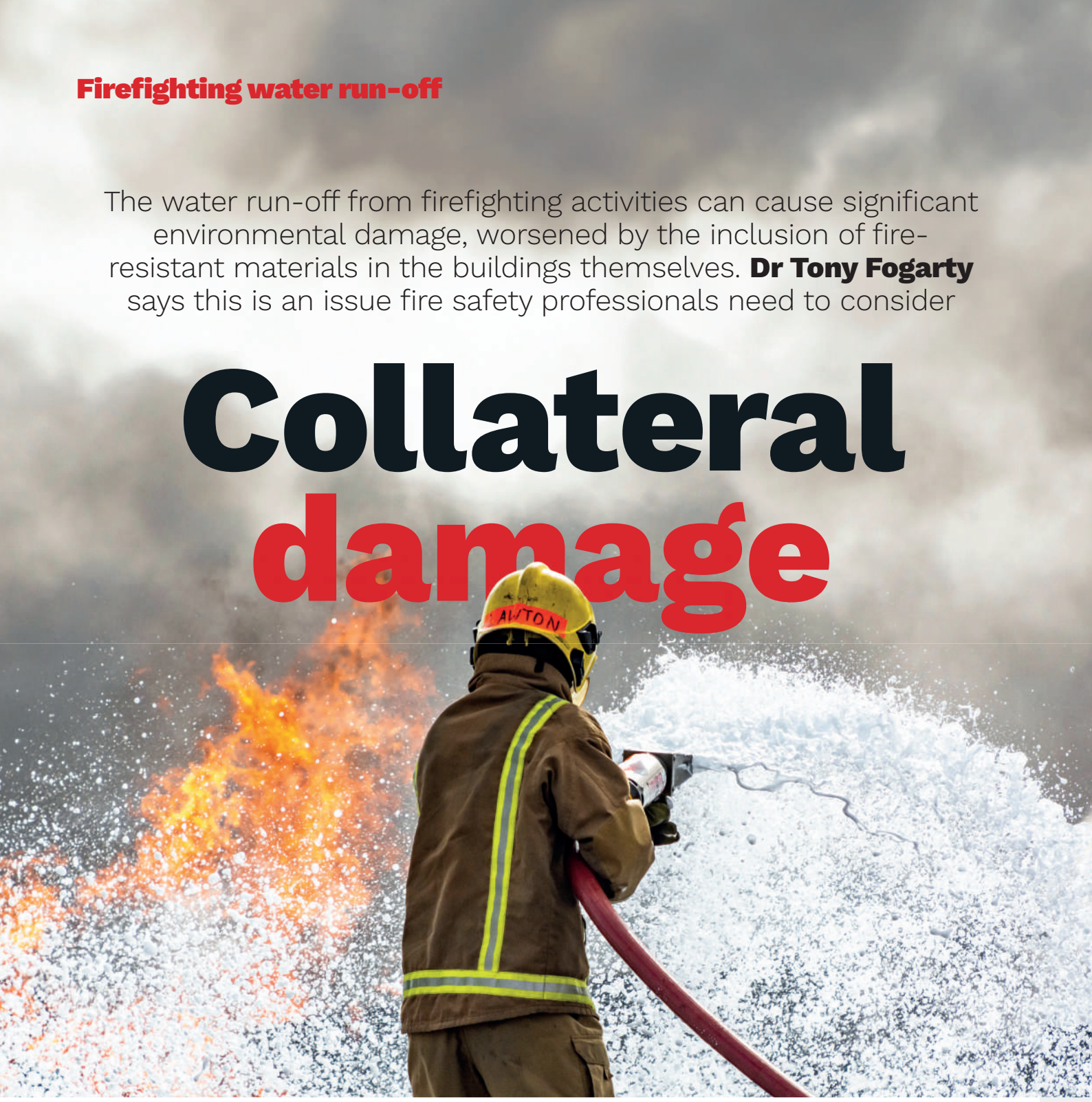
Sprinklers may be installed to offset fire protection requirements. Fire protection to steel could be intumescent paints or fire-resistant boards. Apart from sprinkler installations, you may also see high-level fire curtains. Means of escape from such buildings can be more challenging with the installation of mezzanine floors.

A fire in May 2025 arising from alleged arson at a Northampton retail park, when fire appears to have spread to adjacent units through the roof and/or party walls, has highlighted the importance of soundly specified and constructed compartmentation along party wall lines.

Malcolm Thomas BSc (Hons), DipTP, MIFSM is a building surveyor and training consultant, an IFSM council member and Skills sub-group chair. He will be delivering the IFSM accredited CPD course ‘Essential design and construction for fire safety professionals’ during December at venues in Warrington, Birmingham, Bristol and London. Tickets are available at **ifsm.org.uk/events**

The water run-off from firefighting activities can cause significant environmental damage, worsened by the inclusion of fire-resistant materials in the buildings themselves. **Dr Tony Fogarty** says this is an issue fire safety professionals need to consider

Collateral damage



Firefighting water run-off (FWR) refers to the excess water used to extinguish a fire, which can become contaminated with hazardous substances from the burning materials. This then flows off the site into the environment, potentially polluting waterways, soil and groundwater if not properly managed.

Fire effluents can range from relatively benign to extremely hazardous, depending on the materials that are burning. However, the environmental impact of FWR can significantly harm communities and local ecosystems.

A wide variety of eco-toxicants are emitted in fire effluents, posing risks to both people and wildlife. The degree to which these eco-toxicants are divided into different phases depends on several factors, including their source, burning conditions, weather and physical characteristics.

The environmental costs of fires are often under-reported, as media coverage typically focuses on loss of life or property damage. Pollutants can affect the environment in various ways, including direct discharge of FWR into water bodies, infiltration into the ground or entry into drainage

systems. This contamination can impact rivers, lakes, groundwater or sewage treatment works.

The chemicals in these liquids or foams can lead to de-oxygenation, resulting in the death of many organisms. Oxygen depletion disrupts the natural balance of aquatic ecosystems, allowing harmful bacteria to thrive and adversely affecting aquatic species.

Even fire-resistant materials used in buildings, designed to reduce fire risks, may contain harmful chemicals that can negatively impact the environment. These materials have gained attention because of their potentially dangerous effects.

Non-fire-resistant construction materials and furnishings can also release harmful compounds under extreme conditions and require analysis after a fire. For example, some wooden structural elements are chemically treated to prevent rot, but these chemicals can leach into FWR.

Additionally, furnishings such as cushions in chairs and sofas can produce hydrogen cyanide because of fuel-bound nitrogen in polyurethane foam. Polyvinyl chloride (PVC) pipes used for water and sewage transfer can generate significant amounts of hydrogen chloride when burned.

> A typical warehouse fire requires millions of gallons of water just to contain the blaze

Flushed away

In the event of a warehouse or industrial fire, water may be used for approximately four hours on a large fire and around two hours on a smaller one. After this initial firefighting phase, a process called cooling or 'damping down' typically occurs, which can last up to 24 hours.

During this cooling phase, water is applied at a flow rate of about 4,000 to 5,000 litres per minute. Exact figures depend on the specific circumstances related to the fire and the firefighting strategy adopted.

When a fire occurs in an area with multiple materials, it becomes nearly impossible to quantify the composition of the FWR, as it is expected to consist of a complex mixture of unburned chemicals, partially combusted substances, combustion by-products and firefighting foam.

The main pathway for FWR is through the drainage system, either via surface water drains or foul water drains. FWR can be contaminated with pollutants from sources such as extinguishing foams, burned materials and even from sprinkler systems designed to suppress fires. A typical warehouse fire requires millions of gallons of water just to contain the blaze, not including the additional water needed for damping down and preventing re-ignition, which can take several days.

Sometimes, even warehouses designed with containment measures such as bunds or isolation valves can go unchecked or unmaintained, particularly when the premises are sold and the new owner is unaware of this equipment because of a lack of site plans or handover documents.

Operation manuals often outline and explain procedures for critical equipment, which can become misplaced, resulting in essential maintenance being neglected and testing regimes overlooked. At present, UK fire risk assessments (Fire Industry Association, 2014) typically do not mandate containment and prevention of FWR.

Instead, there is an expectation that FWR prevention will be addressed through business continuity plans or other regulations such as Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH). Best practices for completing a fire risk assessment follow five steps that do not include any references to environmental issues.

Preventative measures

When the local fire and rescue service (FRS) arrives at the scene of a warehouse fire, the commander will conduct a dynamic risk assessment to develop a strategy for preventing and retaining FWR.

The most effective methods employed by the FRS include using clay seal putty, leak-sealing devices, wedges and containment drums. These methods aim to retain FWR before it contaminates drains and local watercourses.

Contaminated firewater should be kept as close to the fire scene as possible. However, without robust measures in place – such as a toggle block valve that can close within 10 seconds – pollution can quickly leak into the watercourse through drains.

Many property owners fail to grasp the severity of a fire at an industrial property and are poorly prepared for such situations. Essential items like drainage plans are often unavailable, and drains may not have been regularly inspected or maintained, leading to the risk of FWR leaking into groundwater.

I recommend referring to CIRIA C736 and seeking professional advice on installing the correct valves. This involves a site survey and hydraulic modelling and drainage surveys. However, a review of the threshold for installing sprinklers would appear to be the natural starting point for change that would substantially reduce the risk of FWR and the damage to the environment.

Dr Tony Fogarty is managing director of RM Risk Management and a fellow of IFSM

Photography: Alamy

Years of decoration and cosmetic alterations could unintentionally create fire hazards in buildings. It's time the fire safety sector wakes up to this danger and takes steps to assess and mitigate the risks, says **Neil Edwards**

Clear and present danger

Except for love and its effect on happiness, it's hard to think of anything else that can cause, cure and disrupt in quite so many ways. I'm talking about something that's probably within arm's reach right now. Something you've glanced at 100 times today without a second thought.

So, what is it, this thing hidden in plain sight that:

- When it's good, prevents fire spread, protects structures and aids wayfinding
- When it's bad, helps fire spread and produces smoke and flaming droplets
- When it's ugly, hides danger and stops sprinklers and intumescent strips from doing their job

What I'm talking about is surface coatings, paint layers, decorative finishes and protective treatments that line walls, ceilings and structures in almost every building. Often taken for granted, these layers can either support a fire-safe environment or quietly undermine it.

When applied correctly with the right specification and maintained, coatings can help compartmentalise, limit the spread of fire and preserve structural integrity. But when misapplied, poorly maintained or left to build up over decades, they become something else entirely: a combustible legacy risk, capable of accelerating fire, producing toxic smoke and interfering with life-saving systems.

For Responsible Persons and fire risk assessors, the challenge isn't always knowing what should be there but recognising what's already in place and whether it's helping or hindering fire safety.

Decorative coatings, varnishes, intumescent upgrades and combustible substrates can often blend into the background. Yet these substrates may be completely unprotected, can have layers of paint applied decades ago, been altered through refurbishment, or built up in unknown thicknesses and combinations over time.

Fire risk assessors and safety professionals are no strangers to complexity. They are trained to interrogate structure, test compartmentation and validate systems from alarms to doors. What makes it hard is that there's no universal training requirement or competency benchmark for identifying when a coating is unlikely to meet its fire classification or may interfere with other passive fire measures.

Spotting the danger

Unless someone has specialist knowledge of coatings and systems performance, the signs – discolouration, cracking, incompatible finishes or excessive thickness – can easily be missed or misunderstood. Worse still, assumptions may be made based on appearance or reassurance from earlier undocumented works. This leaves a hazard that can evade scrutiny not because it is rare, but because it blends seamlessly into the background.

Fire risk assessors and Responsible Persons (RPs) are not trained in coating science or fire testing. Nor should they be. Expecting them to judge complex multi-layer assemblies by sight or by incomplete documentation is unrealistic.

The Hackitt report, however, demands a culture change – improvements in competence, products, building information and maintenance throughout a building's life. Legislative updates have followed and it's certain that with expanded fire risk assessment expectations, and greater public scrutiny, now is the time to embed both coating evaluation into standard fire safety practices and fire safety into all cyclical decoration programmes.

The key to this is comprehensive documentation that can be referenced, updated and checked throughout the lifetime of a building. To do this, fire risk assessors and RPs must be the gatekeepers.

But they can't be expected to confirm fire performance with their eyes alone. Guidance, training and continuing professional development needs to evolve to build awareness around coating systems and classification.

> “Decorative coatings, varnishes, intumescent upgrades and combustible substrates can often blend into the background

A fresh approach

Performance and escalation criteria need to be established for anyone undertaking a risk assessment to enable them to be proactive in commissioning testing where required and ensuring assessments don't stop at the surface.

The performance criteria should enable the evaluation of internal and external surfaces to identify when painted surfaces, combustible linings, exposed structural elements and external timber cladding are safe or need to be assessed. This approach can then spark better documentation, clearer reporting and targeted commissioning of specialist assessments.

Escalation should not be seen only as a legal duty but as the catalyst to breaking the cycle of poor maintenance and documentation that leads to increased risk, the undermining of safety and expensive resolutions.

RPs and fire risk assessors should not hesitate to involve third-party coatings, fire door or sprinkler system specialists when faced with unknown coatings or where paint has overcoated passive fire protection measures.

These professionals bring the testing methods, material knowledge and forensic insight needed. In the case of coatings assessments, they know what's really on the surface, whether it meets current standards like EN 13501-1 classifications for spread of flame and what actions can be taken to address the problem.

What's needed is clarity. Defined escalation criteria, access to competent coatings specialists, and a professional

Photography: iStockphoto

culture that values knowing when to refer, as much as knowing what to assess.

Multi-layer paint risk sits at the junction of passive protection, compliance and competence. It's not something you can tick off with a yes/no checkbox. And with guidance now calling for verifiable evidence of compliance, any assumptions based on appearance or manufacturer claims alone could leave RPs exposed, both legally and morally.

That's not to say every site demands a specialist survey, and this is where the fire risk assessment is critical in identifying where surfaces are demonstrably non-combustible, and documentation is sufficient and complete.

Equally, there are tell-tale signs that should prompt escalation, such as excessive paint build-up, visible delamination or peeling; the age of a building hinting at the potential presence of legacy coatings such as solvent-based or lead paints and textured surfaces; or stairwells and escape corridors with no fire classification data to back them up.

Regulatory weaknesses

The shift from the old National Class 0 classification system to the European standard BS EN 13501-1 Class B may be a step forward in harmonisation, but it has presented an unexpected consequence. Clients, and indeed assessors, still reference Class 0 and believe the transition is purely cosmetic in relation to safety standards.

In fact, the new standard comes with implications because of the weaknesses of the testing regimes now in use. Under Approved Document B, communal area linings must meet Class B-s3 d2 and while this ensures a level of resistance to fire spread, it does allow for significant smoke production (s2) and flaming droplets (d3) factors that may directly impact evacuation and survivability.

In addition, the use of the Warrington Blue Board – a multi-layer painted substrate designed to stress-test fire retardant systems under a worst-case scenario – has left manufacturers to test on a patchwork of substrates, from non-combustible bare plaster, plywood and boards painted in various types and layers of paints. This renders real-world comparison nearly impossible without detailed specialist knowledge of the condition and build-up of existing layers on site.

In the past, with fire risk assessors and RPs unable to evaluate painted surfaces, assumptions have been made or fire risk assessments completed with a cursory "decorate to meet UK Building Regulations" note added. Painting is deferred to the cyclical decoration programme, leaving the level of risk under-assessed, and testing and specification left to a manufacturer.

Painting is then undertaken without the necessary disciplines, and we see instances of inappropriate products,

ESCALATION CRITERIA FOR PAINTED OR COATED SURFACES

Trigger condition	Description	Escalation required?	Recommended action
No documentation on wall/ ceiling fire classification	No known testing, certification or install records available	Yes ✓	Refer to coatings specialist for assessment and adhesion test
Evidence of excessive paint build-up or textured layers	Surface appears uneven, cracked or built up through multiple refurbishments	Yes ✓	Refer to coatings specialist for assessment and adhesion test
Decorative coatings applied over fire doors, seals or sprinklers	Paint may interfere with passive protection or detection/ suppression systems	Yes ✓	Notify Responsible Person and escalate to fire door/ sprinkler specialist
Surfaces in escape route with unknown coatings	High-risk area lacks fire classification for surface linings	Yes ✓	Raise non-compliance and request formal evaluation
Surfaces clearly marked or documented as Euroclass B or better	Confirmed compliant with EN 13501-1 Class B-s3 d2 or better	No ✗	Retain documentation, monitor condition during inspections
Visual signs of failure (peeling, delamination, blistering)	Coating integrity visibly compromised	Yes ✓	Immediate referral for coating specialist failure analysis
Non-combustible substates	Documents and evidence satisfy compliance	No ✗	No action required beyond standard maintenance

> Relying on verbal assurances, manufacturer recommendations or inherited assumptions is no longer acceptable

overpainting of seals and sprinkler plates and under-application of fire-resistant coatings. The new competency requirements demand escalation to a specialist when appropriate and the need for individuals to confirm and evidence their skills, knowledge, experience and behaviours (known as SKEB).

In the paint industry, this increase in liability has seen manufacturers leave the market and others restate their legal position that specification is not 'design' but 'guidance' made in 'good faith'. Some manufacturers no longer certificate installation in any form and their employees in the main have knowledge limited to flame spread and their own branded solutions.

Escalation is not about shifting responsibility; it's about securing clarity. And with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order and Building Safety Act embedding strict expectations around accountability and evidence, relying on verbal assurances, manufacturer recommendations or inherited assumptions is no longer acceptable.

Taking action

The moral is that paint is not passive even if, to the untrained or unquestioning eye, it appears benign. A freshly redecorated corridor or a stairwell showing only cosmetic signs of wear and tear rarely trigger any real concerns when, in fact, they could either actively fuel and spread a fire or react and intumesce to slow it.

As our buildings age, the accumulated layers of decorative history are becoming more than just cosmetic. They're combustible, and beneath those clean finishes lies a fire risk requiring no less attention than a poorly maintained fire door. It's real and measurable and, as fire safety professionals, we must go beyond what's visible and ask better questions, embrace new knowledge and embed coatings assessment into routine practice.

So next time you walk a corridor or check a stairwell, ask yourself not just what you see, but what might lie beneath. Fire doesn't care about appearances. And neither should we.

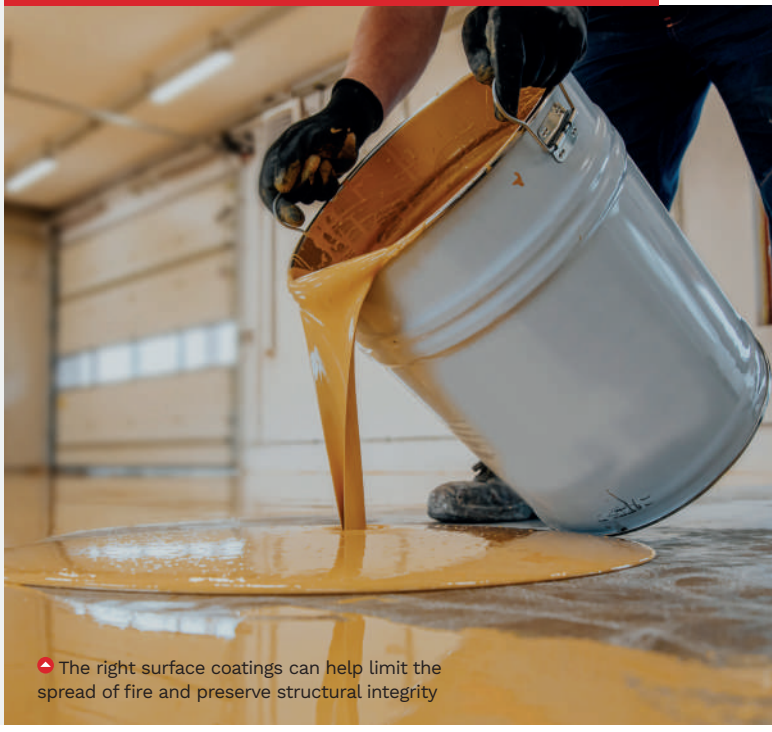
Neil Edwards is director of Evolution Management. This article is a summary of a longer white paper, *Hidden in Plain Sight: The Forgotten Flame Pathway in Multi-layer Paint*

DOCUMENTATION CHECKLIST

To support both immediate decisions and long-term compliance, the following information should be gathered and retained as part of the building's Safety File Golden Thread:

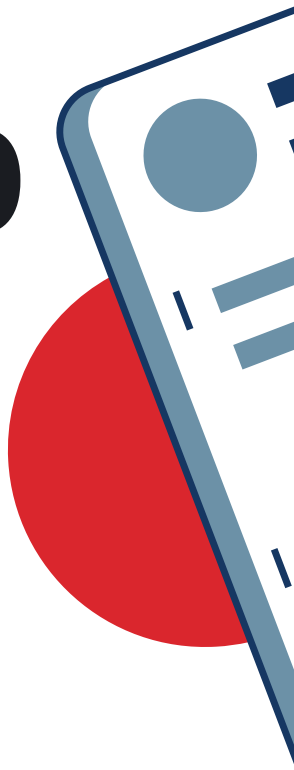
- Product data sheets and fire classification reports for any known coatings
- Installation or application records
- Site testing reports confirming surface fire performance (e.g. flame spread testing)
- Risk assessment records documenting concerns or limitations around unknown coatings
- Specialist reports and recommendations following any third-party inspections
- Ongoing maintenance or reapplication schedules

The information trail not only supports current compliance but also equips future assessors and duty-holders with the context they need to maintain fire safety standards.



The right surface coatings can help limit the spread of fire and preserve structural integrity

Membership benefits



IFSM is a professional body for individuals and companies working in the fire industry. Whether you're just starting out or have years of experience, joining the Institute offers numerous benefits

The Institute of Fire Safety Managers (IFSM) is a recognised body dedicated to promoting high standards in fire prevention, protection and risk management. Membership can enhance your career, offering access to resources, networking and ongoing professional development.

The great thing about IFSM is that applications are open to anyone, at any level, working within the fire industry. Whether you're a fire risk assessor, facilities manager, fire alarm installer or involved in fire safety in any other capacity, IFSM membership provides the structure and support to help you grow and develop your expertise.

The following are just some of the main reasons people are joining IFSM:

A recognised mark of competence

One of the key reasons to join IFSM is that membership is recognised as a mark of competence. By becoming a member, you demonstrate that you have the qualifications, knowledge and experience at the level of membership you hold and pledge to meet the Institute's high professional standards.

Members receive a digital downloadable certificate, can use the IFSM post-nominals and display the IFSM logo on their website, marketing materials or email signature, signalling their commitment to quality and professionalism.

IFSM has a range of memberships, many of which come with post-nominal letters. These include:

- Student (SIFSM)
- Technician (TIFSM)
- Associate (AIFSM)
- Member (MIFSM)
- Fellow (FIFSM)
- Life fellow (FIFSM (Life))

This is the highest grade of membership of the Institute and is by way of nomination only.

Continuing professional development (CPD)

CPD is essential for staying up to date in your profession. Through highly discounted technical events, workshops, trade shows, quarterly journals and online CPD events, IFSM helps you stay at the cutting edge of fire safety knowledge and practices. Additionally, IFSM strives to share valuable updates on industry news.

IFSM facilitates attendance at annual technical events that are CPD-accredited, online on-demand webinars, online access to presentations from IFSM technical meetings and regular news bulletins.

IFSM also accredits training centres and courses. A full list of accredited providers can be found at **ifsm.org.uk/training-courses**

> IFSM works closely with government bodies, regulatory authorities and industry leaders to represent the views of its members

Members' library

Members can use their login details to gain access to the members' library section of the website. This hosts numerous technical documents, presentations and 17 British Standard documents.

The Fire Risk Assessors Register

For those involved in fire risk assessments, IFSM membership offers the opportunity to be listed on the Tiered Fire Risk Assessors Register (TFRAR). This recognises the different levels of knowledge and competency that each individual holds ranging from entry-level assessors just starting out in their career (Tier 1) through to nationally accredited, highly experienced professionals (Tier 3).

The TFRAR will help you locate and choose a registered fire risk assessor, individual or company in your area with the requisite skills, knowledge, experience and insurance to carry out any fire risk assessment(s).

Access to affiliate members

Affiliate members are businesses and companies that are associated with the Institute, which offer a range of fire-related services to help your organisations. If your organisation operates in and around the fire safety space, you may decide to apply for affiliate membership. Find out more at **ifsm.org.uk/affiliates**

Ensure your voice is heard

IFSM works closely with government bodies, regulatory authorities and industry leaders to represent the views of its members. In an ever-changing regulatory environment, having a professional body that advocates for you is crucial. IFSM ensures that your voice is heard, influencing policies and standards that impact the fire safety industry.

Joining the Institute is much more than a transaction; it's an investment in your future. From enhancing your professional reputation with a mark of competence to offering invaluable CPD opportunities, the benefits of membership go far beyond the tangible.

No matter your level of experience or your role in the fire safety industry, IFSM is there to support you, advocate for you and help you achieve your career goals. If you want to take the next step in your fire safety career, becoming an IFSM member is a smart and rewarding choice.

NEXT STEPS

If you're interested in joining IFSM, please get in touch through any of the below channels:

info@ifsm.org.uk

0330 355 1286

ifsm.org.uk

New and upgraded members and registrants

Congratulations to the following members and registrants

TFRAR | Tier 3 Nationally Accredited Fire Risk Assessors Register

- Karl Johnson
- Thomas Pashby
- Robert Turley
- Neil Johnson
- Mark Loach
- James Pratt
- Keith Morris
- Kamil Shahzad
- Christopher Jones
- Stuart Granger
- Richard Parker-Wood
- Steven Allan
- Matthew Willis
- Ian Dukes

TFRAR | Tier 2 Competent Fire Risk Assessors Register

- Rachel Badrick
- Stephanie Rampton
- Philemon Sentongo
- Neil Harris
- James Hansford
- Mark Fitchet
- Greg Bennett
- Leo Medley
- Kathryn Cardillo
- Malcolm Park
- Christopher Power
- Liam Dray
- Michael Williams
- Gregory Theophanides
- Paul Brunt
- Paul Hargreaves
- Dean Carr
- Amanda Evans
- Jack Clarke
- Mark Cunningham
- Martin Norman
- Harry Lock
- Tracy Tully
- Kevin Howard Perry
- Geoff Kirwan
- Stephen Patten
- Nicholas Myatt
- Stefan Papeshkov
- Angel Estevez Rosado
- Robin Whittington
- Ryan Morgan
- Victoria Sigrist
- Lisa Walker
- Brian Goulding

TFRAR | Tier 1 Entry Level Fire Risk Assessors Register

- Amari Mogre
- Greg Mintern
- Callum Sills
- Andrew Mclaren
- Mike Watts
- Paul Freeman
- Kennedy Nwokedi
- Pramodh Pasindu Fernando Kalumarakkalage
- Stuart Clamp
- Ian Jones
- Christian Bruno
- Naomi Jones
- Etienne Smith
- Charlie Keeble
- Linsey Muchene
- Adam Doherty

Member grade

- Adam Steed
- Adam Thirkell
- Adam Weston
- Adam Wood
- Adrian Jones

- Afraseyab Khan
- Alan Hudson
- Alan Keay
- Alan Robinson
- Alice Ibbotson
- Amanda Brint-Smee
- Andre Sandiford
- Andrew Burgess
- Andrew Priest
- Andrew Wilson
- Andy Kelleher
- Andy Waters
- Anthony Kent
- Anthony O'Shea
- Archie McKay
- Arek Jasieniecki
- Azhar Iqbal
- Ben Smith
- Benjamin Waring
- Bob Harvey
- Brian Godson
- Cambell Park
- Carl Taplinm
- Chris Pearce
- Chris Wilson
- Christopher Bendall
- Christopher Harrison
- Christopher Wilkes
- Christopher Williams
- Claire Childs
- Colin Bassnett
- Colin Moorcroft
- Colin Whalley
- Connor Palmer
- Craig Clark
- Craig Shaw
- Dale White
- Daniel Navarrina
- Danny Patel
- Darren Clemie
- Darren Woollard
- Darrin Witcher
- David Bridgewater
- David Lamb
- David Mead
- David Taylor
- David Warlow
- Dean Bird
- Dean Gazzard
- Debbie Howell
- Derek Castel
- Gary McIntosh
- Gavin Hammond
- Gemma Dunnett
- George Thacker
- Gerson Rodrigues
- Giovanni Morini
- Graham Hickey
- Harry Lock
- Ian Kennedy
- Ian Mansfield
- Ian Skillen
- Ian Tonner
- Iqram Patel
- Jack Dennis
- Jade Makarski
- Jagannatan Sowrirajan
- James Axell
- James Ulyatt
- Jamie Morgan
- Jeff Cooper
- Joao Rafael Dias
- Joe Levey
- John Cashmore
- John Clark
- John Owen
- John Rees
- Jonathan Billington
- Jonathan Evans
- Jonathon Navarrina
- Joseph Vinten
- Josh Taylor
- Justin Benson-Ryal
- Karl Hodgkiss
- Kennedy Nwokedi
- Kevin Anderson
- Kevin Bartlett
- Kevin Howard-Perry
- Kevin Towler
- Kris Murray
- Kyle Pim
- Laura Chisholm
- Lee Hawes
- Lee Mathew
- Lee Neale
- Lee Nichols
- Leonard Newman
- Linda Kirby
- Lisa Faulkner
- Luke Hughes
- Marc Owen
- Mark Lye
- Mark Speight
- Mark Woodward
- Martin Bromley
- Martin Watson
- Michael Brearey
- Michael Williams
- Neil Budd
- Neil Martin
- Neil Yeomans
- Nicholas Nuttall
- Nicholas Summerhayes
- Nigel Sowden
- Oliver Kisby
- Paige Weekes
- Patrick Flatley
- Paul Curwood
- Peter Adams
- Peter Harper
- Rachael Hunns
- Raymond Amoah
- Richard Wilson
- Richard Wyatt
- Rob Nowak
- Robert Hamill
- Samuel Biggs
- Sarah Durkin
- Sarah Merchant
- Sarah Turner
- Sean Conrad
- Seth Why
- Simon Bullock
- Simon Cataldo
- Simon Deane
- Simon Eley
- Stella Mushayavanhu
- Stephen Brown
- Stephen Cook
- Stephen Cox
- Stephen Doyle
- Steve Milchard
- Steven Andrews
- Steven Beckwith
- Stuart France

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IFSM

Member update

- Taye Emmanuel
- Tendai Chimutso
- Thomas Platt
- Tiago Pedrosa
- Tom Reddington
- Tom Williams
- Trenton Graham
- Trevor Duggan
- Vas Georgiou
- Wayne Hayward
- Wayne Norris
- William Murdoch
- Zainuddin Mohammed

Associate grade

- Adrian Bailey
- Alan Bright
- Alan Daly
- Alan Peirson
- Alex Kay
- Alexandra Smith
- Andrew Griffiths
- Andrew Twells
- Andries Vermeulen
- Andy Eaton
- Antony Gall
- Ara White
- Cathcart Ironside
- Chinedu Nnamani-Milton
- Christian Silver
- Colette Appleby
- Connor McLeod
- Daniel Youngs
- Darren Stagno
- David Allen
- David Holland
- David Maxwell
- David Sanders
- Dawn Ward
- Dean Harker
- Deirdre Aspell
- Dominic Clarke
- Emily Clarke
- Evangeline Francis
- Freddie Eyre
- Gaige Oakley
- Gary Berry
- George Parkinson
- Gidon Rosen
- Jack Stevens
- Jacob Evans
- James Paul
- James Trevelyan
- Joannah Rye
- Joel Higgins
- Jonathan A Buckley
- Kathryn Gard
- Kenneth Hankinson
- Kerry Barkworth
- Kyle Scott
- Lamarr Bonaparte-Myers
- Liam Graves
- Malcolm Cross
- Mark Hanks
- Martin Walker
- Mike Watts
- Muhammad Ali
- Neil Beasley
- Neil Bergin
- Oliver Tennant
- Paul Freeman
- Paul Simpson
- Peter Brown
- Philip Jessop
- Rob Hudgell
- Roger Hayward
- Ronnie Archer
- Roy Paul Welsh
- Sam Cox-Desai
- Samuel Barker
- Samuel de Ville
- Sean Costello
- Simon Brown
- Steve Hutchinson
- Stuart Jones
- Terence Bergin
- Thomas Southern
- Tiffany Mallett
- Tim Gunton
- Trevor Williams
- Zaid Khan

Technician grade

- Adam Dean
- Alanis Howarth
- Allison McGregor
- Andrew Hall
- Andrew Mckenzie
- Andrew Tonkin
- Ashley Lavis
- Callum Sills
- Carlos Archer
- Catherine Nightingale
- Charlene Oliver
- Charlie Jones
- Charlie Keeble
- Cherie James
- Claire Collins
- Dasa Smith
- Emma Lukins
- Etienne Smith
- Farai Mhlanga
- Gerry McCormick
- Gordon Williamson
- Hayley Connelly
- Helen Borino
- Jack Lent
- Jacob Llewellyn
- Jamie Reed
- Jenny Crosby
- Joanna Kurczak
- Jolanta De Souza
- Jordan Robins
- Jordan Smith
- Kelvin Enwereobi
- Kevin Howard
- Liam Brown
- Mathew Oldham
- Mattia Tinfena
- Miabiye Amapakabo
- Michael Beresford
- Michael Hembury
- Michaela Perry
- Mike Davies
- Mohammad Ali Chaudhry
- Naomi Jones
- Nick Elliott
- Oli Green
- Paul Costen
- Peter Coe
- Peter McGinty
- Peter Phillips
- Robert Dickinson
- Roger Palin
- Sam Pickles
- Sam Watts
- Soner Zelkif

- Stephen Greenall
- Stephen Ward
- Steve Lloyd
- Stuart Walker
- Sunita Cooper
- Tia Mather
- Umer Bin Dilshad

Student

- Callum Doolan-McCullough
- Charlie Weatherall
- Emiel van Beusekom
- Hafiz Abdul Haseeb Jamal
- James Olagbegi
- Lauren Daly
- Matthew Holdstock
- Melvin Appleford
- Muhammad Abu Bakar
- Robert Hinkley

Affiliates

- AAI Selby Ltd
- APM Fire & Security
- Arion Training and Development Ltd
- Assured Fire Safety Consultancy Ltd
- Atlas Safety Management Ltd
- Bracklea Fire Ltd
- Brearey Building Experts Ltd
- Delta Force Group Ltd
- Errigal Sustainable Solutions
- Expyro Fire Safety Group
- Fire Risk Engineers Ltd
- Fire Safe DNA
- Firesmart Solutions Ltd
- Good Skills Training Ltd
- Howatt Consulting Ltd
- Ignis Risk Management
- MAGG Fire Services
- Newport Safety Ltd
- One Surveyors
- Orbis Environmental Ltd
- Pollen Maddox Ltd
- Projectfiredoors Ltd
- RD Safety Services
- Red One Ltd
- Revinson Fire Ltd
- Safe-tc Ltd T/A Safe-t Consulting
- SEI Tech International
- Skills for Security
- Soldi Group
- Speedy Energy Ltd
- Sureserve Compliance Fire Ltd
- Temple Management Training Ltd
- Truline Innovative Building Solutions Ltd
- Vertex Fire Inspections Ltd
- Walker Walker and Walker Ltd
- Warburton Services Ltd

Upgrades

STUDENT TO TECHNICIAN

- Adam Dean
- Finley Evans
- Paige Davis
- Laurence Brownlee

STUDENT TO MEMBER

- Domenico Pace
- Israeli Remigio

TECHNICIAN TO ASSOCIATE

- Anton Plummer
- Antony Jaques
- Aziz Ur Rehamn
- Craig Iveson
- Daniel Green
- Darren Wray
- Dean Harker
- Fraser Whitaker
- Jack McCormick
- James Milton
- Jamie Tooke
- Jennifer Burke
- Justin Eveleigh
- Kamil Cabaj
- Lesley Russell-Dean
- Nicholas Ward
- Penny Edwards

TECHNICIAN TO MEMBER

- Arthur Kurczak
- Dmitrijs Zaharovs
- Jonathan Owen
- Leanne Walkinshaw
- Mollie Richardson
- Paul Cleaver
- Scott Lawson
- Steve Ibbertson

ASSOCIATE TO MEMBER

- Adekunle Daniel Komplafe
- Adetokunbo Bajulaiye
- Anett Nemes
- Dale Barton
- Eleanor Wilkinson
- Eminae Johnson
- Grant McGill
- Ivan Guy
- James Ballantine
- Julian Whiting
- Kenneth O'Connell
- Kevin Barber
- Lee Thorne
- Michael Gardiner
- Nathon Freezer
- Nicholas Ansell
- Nicholas Greenwood
- Oliver Sheridan
- Paul Canavan
- Paul Evans
- Rajpal Masih
- Scott Crichton
- Simon Cataldo

60 SECONDS WITH...

Could you feature in '60 seconds with'? Email **daedalus@redactive.co.uk**

James Buckley

James Buckley, who works in the fire section of Zeta Services in Bicester, recalls how a lucky break working for his dad helped kickstart his career

Q How did you first get into the industry?
Through my dad. It developed out of necessity after moving closer to home and needing employment. I was fortunate enough that he was willing to take me on!

Q Why did you feel this was the career you wanted to pursue?
I didn't leave school saying 'I want to be a fire risk assessor', but I have found it to be a fulfilling job and one that, should I do it correctly, helps to keep people safe. I am always meeting new people and seeing new environments and buildings, and this keeps me constantly engaged.

Q How has your career developed to date?
I began my career just over two years ago and have progressed faster than I expected, achieving my IFSM TFRAR Tier 2 earlier this year. I am no longer working with my dad and have moved onto a different company. This has given me significant exposure to a wide range of building types, both residential and commercial. Having just turned 22, I am quite proud of my development so far, being able to complete assessments across this broad spectrum of building types.

Q Can you run me through a typical day?
I prepare for the coming week's assessments on the prior Friday, allowing me to head straight to site on the day of assessments. When arriving on-site, I like to structure the assessment in a way that best fits the premises and the client's needs, whether this be the site assessment and walkaround first or going through their documentation, policies and procedures.

Depending on the building type, size and location of the assessments, I will typically have two commercial or three-plus domestic assessments a day to complete so I then head home to finish the write-up.

> "I am aiming to progress on to the IFSM TFRAR Tier 3 within the coming year

Q What's the oddest situation you've encountered?
Being asked for my student identification card when completing an assessment on a college. I had my work-issued ID clipped to my trouser pocket, so I admit I wasn't immediately identifiable, but it made for a funny encounter when I had to say I was not a student.

Another one that comes to mind was doing an assessment on a retail unit in an airport, when I was required to go through the staff security. Seeing behind the scenes in-person was really interesting so that was unlike any other assessment I have done.

Q What gives you the most pleasure from your career?
The fact that I am helping to keep people safe. It provides meaning to my work. Another, and slightly different, reason is the driving, which I use to listen to podcasts!

Q How would you like your career to develop in future?
I am aiming to progress on to the IFSM TFRAR Tier 3 within the coming year, so that I am competent across all building types, specialising in high-risk ones. I would like to develop into fire engineering further down the line, but this is something for the far future!

Q What piece of advice would you have for your younger self?
There isn't any specific advice. I have learned from all the events that have occurred in my life so far so I guess it would be something like keep learning, do your chores and clean your football boots!

Q What do you get up to outside of work?
I am a big football fan and long-suffering supporter of Reading FC. I enjoy travelling to European grounds and experiencing different cultures and playing styles; the best ones for me would either be Lech Poznan or Athletic Club Bilbao. Beyond this I enjoy horse racing, my art, history and food.

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