



Federation Newsletter

Autumn 2023

Making sure your voice is heard

Number 52

EVENTS

- Fire Safety Event
30 April-2 May
2024
- Firex 2-4
December 2024

Member's Meeting

Directors

John Spencer (Chair)
Dave Russell
Dennis Davis
Niall Rowan
Tom Roche
Ólöf Jonsdóttir
Steve Hamm
Steve McGuirk
Howard Passey

Links

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Progressing Fire Risk Assessor Competency

This Newsletter provides an update regarding ongoing work towards achieving a verified accreditation system for fire risk assessors. Following [Dame Judith Hackitt's Report](#), government has progressively introduced the new building safety regime.

A fire risk assessors work group, led by the Federation, has since 2017 reviewed, written and published industry guidance ([fire risk assessment web page](#)) and has worked with the wider construction industry, who published their final report in 2020 to improve competency.

Fire Risk Assessment-a fundamental part of regulatory system

In the new regime the Home Office has focused on fire safety improvements in occupied buildings, where the underpinning law remains the [Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005 \(FSO\)](#).

Fire risk assessment, as emphasised by the 'Fire Minister' Rt Hon Chris Philp MP in his [17 October 2023 letter](#), is a fundamental part of this regulatory system.

Other fire safety improvements are the [Fire Safety Act 2021](#), clarifying the FSO covers external walls, flat entrance doors and structure, so must be accounted for in fire risk assessments; the [Fire Safety \(England\) Regulations 2022](#), requiring Responsible Persons to routinely check fire doors; and on 1 October 2023 FSO amendments made by Section 156 of the [Building Safety Act 2022](#)

Section 156 of the Building Safety Act 2022

[Section 156](#) of the Building Safety Act is particularly important as Fire and Major Events [Director Sarah Gawley](#) has outlined. Although not yet in force, 156(4) places a new legal duty on Responsible Persons not to appoint a person to assist them with making or reviewing a fire risk assessment unless that person is competent. Once fire risk assessor competence is clearly defined, standardised and capable of verification 156 (4) will commence and, coupled with Article 50 FSO statutory guidance, will effectively almost mandate that only risk assessors meeting these standards can fulfil the duty.

Fire Risk Assessor Group Preparations

Previous preparations by the working group, an [Approved Code of Practice](#) and an industry [Benchmark Standard for Fire Risk Assessors](#), have given launch pad for this formal verification process by describing in detail the necessary standards of essential skills, knowledge, experience and behaviour (SKEB) and by defining three distinct tiers of competency - foundation - intermediate - advanced. The tiers aid career growth and support Responsible Persons and industry practitioners assess suitability for the specific assessments.

Next Steps: Fire Risk Assessor Competence Strategy Group

Industry and Home Office have now established the Fire Risk Assessor Competence Strategy Group (FRASG), jointly chaired by Home Office and the Federation, to advance a strategy to provide the robust system required to verify fire risk assessor competence.

Next Steps: British Standards Institution

The British Standards Institution has also established a new committee, CPB/1, to produce standards relating to '[Competence in the Built Environment](#)'.

FRA Steering Group's Strategy

FRASG's position is that, to secure the clarity and essential public confidence required in the fire risk assessor competency process, assurance requires verification through a conformity assessment system founded in international and national standards. FRASG is therefore currently developing, using ISO and BSI standards, a system for schemes and certification bodies accredited by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS).

Introducing this third-party assured conformity assessment system is initially being undertaken by the industry's established fire risk assessment schemes owners, certification bodies, qualification and training organisations, who are part of the FRASG.

An important part of the development is expansion to allow both new growth, through career entrants and apprentices, and existing proficient and experienced fire risk assessors, who lack formal recognition of their competence and need to transition.

FRASG Next Tasks

Tasks presently active through the FRASG therefore include:

- Commencement of the Technical Committee work for CPB1/-/2 CoP
- Definition of Minimum Standards for Certification Schemes
- Production of a Principles based Code of Ethics
- Development of an Experienced Worker Route
- Future Governance and Oversight Arrangements

In addition to these actions the FRASG remains connected to other more widely based competency activities, for example the Building Safety Regulator's Industry Competency Committee, to ensure its work is coordinated, avoids duplication and benefits from other construction and fire industry advances.

Summary

There has been significant progress over several years to establish a formal system of recognition for fire risk assessment competence. Introduction of a yet to be commenced legal requirement to demonstrate competency adds further impetus to these advances. Having a conformity assessment system underscored by UKAS and based on a specific BSI standard will be a necessary way forward. Assisting experienced workers in the established workforce transition into this system will be an important step. Sharing information is part of the greater engagement needed

Questions for Fire Risk Assessors

If you are a fire risk assessor you can prepare by checking you have or are:

- Qualifications or Certificates (UKAS or regulated by Ofqual or SQA)
 - Part (or employer) of an assured UKAS Fire Risk Assessor Scheme
 - Member of a Professional Body
 - Listed on a Professional Register
 - Signed up to an Code of Ethics
 - Appropriate Professional Indemnity Insurance
 - Participate in Continuing Personal Development
 - Maintain a knowledge and experience portfolio
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