

“Fire Risk Assessors: Investigating the Safety of External Walls”

Synopsis

The scope of fire risk assessments has changed with the introduction of the Fire Safety Act 2021. The Act has made inclusion of the buildings’ structure and external walls, and anything attached to the exterior of those walls an integral part of an FRA under Article 6 of the FSO, where the building contains two or more sets of domestic premises.

Linked to this, PAS 9980:2022 states that there are cases where an FRAEW is NOT required – traditionally built masonry blocks and “cases where the quantity of combustible material within the external wall construction or on facades, is so small that it can be discounted”.

How then, does a fire risk assessor confirm that a full FRAEW is required or not?

Fire and Rescue Services are going to be inundated needlessly with thousands of blocks of apartments flagged up to them, RPs and leaseholders will spend avoidable money and Fire Engineers distracted from the primary Government objective of appraising medium/high risk buildings.

This course is aimed at fire risk assessors to give them the knowledge and skills to help make professional judgements about the risks presented to fire development and spread across different external walls in apartment blocks below 18m high.

Learning Objectives

This one-day course will raise your confidence in undertaking FRAs and in making recommendations on external walls, and specifically provide you with:

1. Updating and refreshing your knowledge on fire safety law, codes of practice and guidance.
2. An understanding of the different types of external walls and materials used in construction.
3. An insight into practical aspects of investigating external wall construction.
4. A methodology for appraising risk in external walls, based on PAS9980.

Session 1 – Fire safety and building control - legal background

- a. Brief history of standards, codes of practice and guidance
- b. Fire Safety Act 2021 and regulations
- c. PAS 9980:2022; FSF, FIA and Home Office guidance
- d. Changes to Building Regulations Approved Document B

Session 2 – Construction of external walls

- a. Evolution of design and specification of purpose-built blocks of flats
- b. Typology of external wall construction methods
- c. Traditional construction
- d. Understanding all components and materials used in external walls.

Session 3 – Investigating external wall types through case studies.

- a. Gathering documentation, information, and research for determining the external wall construction.
- b. Simple visual and tactile Inspection methods and techniques
- c. Case studies to demonstrate a variety of external walls within and beyond the competency of the fire risk assessor.

Session 4 – Methodology for appraising risk posed by external walls Using PAS9980 Step 1

- a. Introduction to the PAS9980 approach
- b. Explanation of a simple approach by use of a specifically designed template.
- c. Determining the risk rating: fire performance factors, façade configuration and hazards/fire strategy
- d. Risk ratings posed by different external wall construction
- e. Assessing whether external walls pose a low-medium-high risk
- f. Case studies using the simple template approach

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