

Avoid paying the price for poor fire door maintenance

Fire and smoke control doors must be properly maintained as poor upkeep of fire and smoke control doorsets can lead to injury, loss of life and destruction of property and business.

There is also a legal requirement to do this under the Fire Safety Order 2005 and breaches (with or without a fire) are being aggressively prosecuted. Breaches of the FSO result in the issue of an enforcement and/or prohibition notice and further non-compliance could result in closure of the premises, significant fines and even imprisonment for the responsible person or persons.

A new BRE Fire Doors Digest (DG 524) emphasises the importance of adequate testing of fire and smoke control doorsets as well as the importance of third-party certification for their manufacture, installation and maintenance.

Enforcement

The two examples detailed below demonstrate how inadequate maintenance of fire doors and fire protection systems can lead to enforcement notices and significant fines.

Following a fatal fire at a Lewisham Council tower block in Deptford, Lewisham Council was issued with an enforcement notice on 15th February 2011 because of serious breaches of the FSO.

A London Fire Brigade spokesman said the breaches of fire safety regulations included: “inadequate maintenance of fire doors” and “inadequate protection of an emergency route”.¹

The fire brigade served the notice on the arm’s-length management organisation, Lewisham Homes Limited, which manages the homes for the council.

The recent Chumleigh Lodge Hotel case demonstrates the significant costs of breaches of the FSO including inadequate fire door maintenance.

¹ London Evening Standard. *Tower block where two mothers died was in breach of fire safety laws:* <http://lydall.standard.co.uk/2011/03/tower-block-where-two-mothers-died-was-in-breach-of-fire-safety-laws.html>

Following a fire at the premises in 2008, London Fire Brigade fire safety inspectors visited the hotel and raised a number of serious fire safety concerns, which included defective fire doors.

In February 2012, the The Chumleigh Lodge Hotel Limited in Finchley, north London and its sole director, Michael Wilson, was ordered to pay over £260,000 in fines and costs in what is believed to be the first jury trial of a case under the FSO.²

Importance of fire doors

Fire doors have three main functions in the event of a fire. When they are closed they maintain fire separation to protect individuals from the spread of fire and smoke, they limit the air available to the fire and they provide the means of escape.

In order to make sure fire doors perform these tasks effectively, regular servicing and maintenance in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations is vital. This is explained in more detail in the new BRE digest.

The third party certification body, LPCB, now incorporated into BRE Global, offers the approval scheme LPS 1197: Issue 3.0 (*'Requirements for the LPCB Approval and Listing of Companies Undertaking the Maintenance and Repair of Doorsets, Shutters, and Active Smoke/Fire Barriers'*).

Many specifiers and building designers insist on the use of third-party approved products as it helps towards confirming they meet the guidance to national building regulations under the FSO. As with any fire protection product, fire doors will only perform properly if they are correctly installed and maintained.

LPCB offers the following schemes in relation to the manufacture and installation of fire doors:

- LPS 1056 Issue 6.1 (*'Test and Evaluation Requirements for the LPCB Approval and Listing of Fire Doorsets, Lift Landing Doors and Shutters'*).
- LPS 1271 (*'Requirements for the LPCB Approvals and Listing of companies installing fire and security doorsets and shutters and smoke barriers'*).

Red Book listing

² London Fire Brigade. *Hotel owner fined in landmark fire safety trial* http://www.london-fire.gov.uk/news/LatestNewsReleases_PR2940.asp

Approval (or certification as it is known) by an independent third party such as LPCB confirms that a product or service meets the appropriate standard.

Once LPCB is satisfied that a product meets the necessary standards, a certificate is issued and the company is listed in the Red Book and online at www.redbooklive.com.

The LPCB standards include regular Factory Production Control (FPC) audits to ensure that the product or service continues to meet this specification.

For details of BRE Global testing of fire doorsets or for third party certification of manufacturers, installers or maintenance contractors please contact: Stephen Howard: howards@bre.co.uk.

The new BRE Digest '*Fire Doors*' (DG 524) is available from IHS BRE Press at www.brebookshop.com.