

Grenfell Tower Inquiry: 'Government knew that cladding shouldn't have been used from September 2002'

4 years ago



Central government knew that the type of cladding used on Grenfell Tower should “never ever” have been used above 18 meters from the middle of September 2002, evidence at the Grenfell Tower Inquiry confirms.

Former Building Research Establishment director Debbie Smith gave evidence to the inquiry today in which it was put to her that her evidence to the inquiry was that government was in “no doubt” that ACM panels with a Polyethylene core should “never ever” be used above 18 meters from mid-September 2002. She confirmed that this was her evidence, within the context of the development of a large-scale test for cladding systems. ACM panels with a Polyethylene core were used in the refurbishment of Grenfell, and played a key role in the fire spreading.

In September 2002 the results of fire tests of ACM Polyethylene cladding permitted under guidance at the time were delivered to government by the Building Research Establishment, which [according to](#) Deputy Editor at Inside Housing Peter Apps showed ACM systems to have “utterly disastrous failure” here. According to Apps government nonetheless did not issue any warning to industry not to use it and did not alter guidance in a manner which should have prevented its use on tall buildings.

Commenting, Matt Wrack, general secretary of the Fire Brigades Union, said: “It is sickening that central government knew of the risks of this cladding 15 years before the disaster at Grenfell. They did nothing for one and a half decades. Westminster governments are the ones responsible for this failure to regulate properly.

“We also have to ask why it has taken almost five years to start to get to these key facts. This highlights much that has gone wrong with this inquiry so far.

“Whilst this is appalling, it isn’t a shock. Everything we know about Grenfell and governments’ attitude to fire safety over past decades suggests that priority was always given to the demands of corporate interests above the needs of people.”

Image credit: Shutterstock