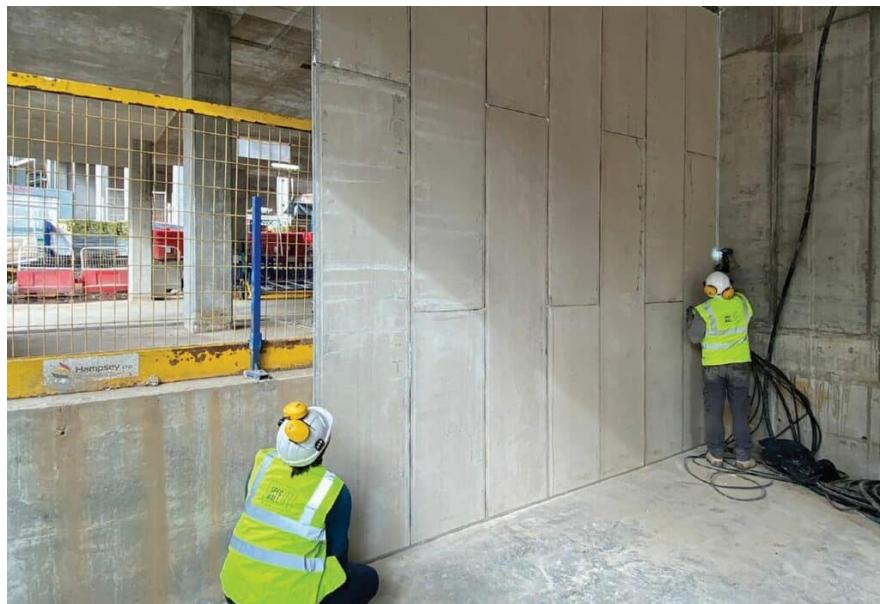


Specwall A1 fire rated panel launches to construction market

4 years ago



Following recent fires in high rise buildings, the need to do more than meet the minimum building control requirements on fire safety has become clear.

A government review of the Building Regulations and fire safety is underway, with a particular focus on high rise residential buildings following the Grenfell Fire tragedy. Previous deregulation and complacency around fire safety, along with the irresponsible behaviour of suppliers which put profits before people, led to a situation where combustible materials were being specified on tall buildings despite the obvious dangers.

The awful results of this have led to a renewed focus on fire safety in order to prevent similar tragedies happening again. One of the most important recommendations resulted in a ban on combustible materials in the external walls of buildings above 18m (or 11m in Scotland).

Consequently, all materials and/or products used in the external wall build-up of tall buildings comprised of one or more dwellings are required to meet European fire classification A1 or A2-s1, d0.

The definitions of A1 and A2 standards are as follows:

- A2 – If construction products produce no contribution to fire, but have the potential to produce some smoke or flaming droplets
- A1 – Materials that cannot contribute to fire at any stage, including a fully-developed fire

This means that developers, architects, contractors, sub-contractors and others involved in construction need to start considering the materials they are using now to stay in line with future legislation.

To class as an A1 product, stringent tests must be passed to ensure that they are completely non-combustible in all circumstances. These include:

- BS 476-1: Fire tests on building materials and structures
- BS EN 13501-1: 2018 Fire classification of construction products and building elements

The range of products which meet these standards is small, especially when it comes to external wall build-ups. The vast majority of current solutions used widely across the industry do not meet the A1 standard which is set to be required by law on buildings over 18m in height in the near future, and therefore those involved with construction are going to have to change their approach.

Specwall A1 fire rated, panel

In order to provide safe places for people to live, future-proof properties for funders and investors and mitigate the risk of expensive remedial works, Specwall proactively looked to provide an A1 fire rated walling system for the construction industry.

As well as going beyond safety requirements now, this panel will also satisfy further tightening of the fire safety regulations down the line if the government requires A1 standards for all external wall build-ups on buildings 18m tall or higher once its review is complete.

Our A1 fire rated panel has come out of research and development, which was undertaken in response to this anticipated market need. Key technical information about our A1 panel is as follows:

- No flammable material in the panel
- Cannot contribute to a fire at any stage
- Same weight and strength as standard A2-rated panel
- 100mm depth, single-layer system
- Simple, integrated, stand-alone
- Price competitive with SFS or blockwork alternatives

This is in addition to all the benefits of the existing Specwall A2-rated panel, which all still apply, including:

- Reduction in labour
- Time saving
- Reduction in cost
- Water and mould resistant
- Highly sustainable and reusable on-site
- Increased efficiency

Image credit: Specwall