

DHF reflects on legislative change on the 7th anniversary of Grenfell

2 years ago



On the seventh anniversary of the Grenfell fire tragedy, which resulted in the loss of 72 lives, Door & Hardware Federation's General Manager & Secretary, Michael Skelding, looks back on the ensuing legislative change. The high-rise fire which broke out in the 24-storey Grenfell Tower block of flats in North Kensington, West London, on 14th June 2017, was one of the UK's worst modern disasters. It remains the deadliest structural fire in the United Kingdom since 1988, but has resulted in change.

The Building Safety Act introduced the most significant changes to building regulations in England and Wales since the Building Act 1984. It contains provisions intended to secure the safety of people in or about buildings, not solely high-rise blocks. It became law in April 2022, but some of the necessary legislation has only recently come into effect.

"Duty holder responsibilities came into force in October, with the act introducing new duty holder roles, impacting all stakeholders involved in a construction project. This includes the client, the principal contractor and the principal designer. There is also a list of general duties for all contractors and designers that must be met."

A 'Golden Thread' of information is required for each Higher-Risk Building in scope of the new regime; this introduces detailed, extensive requirements in relation to the maintenance of contemporaneous records regarding the design and carrying out of the works, and the provision of information, to the Regulator. The digital record of building information will continue throughout the building's life-cycle. The greater proportion of these requirements are the responsibility of the client (as opposed to the contractor or designer). Non-compliance risks refusal by the Regulator to grant a completion certificate for the works.

In the same month, it came into force that New High-Rise Residential Buildings must be registered, including Key Building Information (KBI), before they are occupied and amendments to the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 came into force. These changes enhance cooperation and coordination among responsible persons, improve the recording and sharing of fire safety information, simplify enforcement against non-compliance and ensure residents have access to comprehensive fire safety information.

"In December 2023, The Building Safety Regulator (BSR) published its enforcement policy," continues Michael. "This statement sets out the BSR's approach to enforcement and action to enforce the law when non-compliance, hazard or serious risk during the building or alteration and management of higher-risk buildings have been identified. Unfortunately there is currently no confirmed date for a new regulatory framework for construction products.

"Looking ahead, The Grenfell Inquiry Phase 2 Final Report is expected in September 2024," concludes Michael. "This phase examined the causes of the fire, including how Grenfell Tower came to be in a condition which allowed the fire to spread. With a focus on the responsible person, DHF continues to help raise standards across the industry with regards to accurate installation and maintenance, and recently introduced a new short awareness course for owners and managers in a commercial setting. By equipping them with the necessary knowledge and understanding of legal obligations and maintenance practices, we hope to be able promote a safer environment for all."