

New fire safety research shows more safeguarding needed as high-rise building plans in short supply

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New [research](#) has revealed high-rise fire safety measures are still falling short of required regulations, with one-third of vital details still missing.

On average, fire and rescue services in England are waiting for 32 per cent of building plans and 31 per cent of external wall plans, for high-rise buildings in their jurisdictions, as required under the UK Government's updated fire safety regulations.

The updated regulation, [Fire Safety \(England\) Regulation 2022](#), which came into force on 23 January 2023, made it a legal requirement for responsible persons of high-rise residential buildings, of [7 storeys or more](#), to provide local fire and rescue services with appropriate safety information, including up-to-date building and external wall plans.

The research from signage specialists, [FASTSIGNS UK](#), analyses the percentage of building plans and external wall plans submitted by qualifying high-rises across England since the introduction of the regulation, comparing data from a series of Freedom of Information Requests (FOI), made to 24 fire services against the number of high-rises in each location.

Leading the charge, Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service had the highest number of submissions for its 42 high rises, with a total of 157 per cent of up-to-date building plans and 164 per cent of up-to-date wall plans submitted.

Staffordshire beat out second-place Lancashire by an average of 41 per cent, as Lancashire Fire & Rescue

received a total of 108 per cent of up-to-date building plans and 118 per cent of up-to-date wall plans.

In the middle of the table, ranking 12th, Leicestershire received a total of 55 per cent of building and 50 per cent of wall plans for its 460 high-rise residential buildings.

Comparatively, Avon Fire & Rescue Service, in South West England, ranked bottom of the table for the amount of up-to-date building plans, with just 10 per cent received for its 239 high-rises. Similarly, Bedfordshire ranked bottom for the number of up-to-date wall plans, with the Fire and Rescue service receiving just 22 per cent for the 65 high-rises in its area.

The regulation was implemented following the Grenfell Tower tragedy in July 2017, where emergency response teams on-site [reported](#) challenges navigating the complex residential building, due to a lack of clear directional signage, hindering their ability to perform their duties.

Consequently, it was recommended that signage, along with building and external wall plans, should be legally required, in multi-occupied high-rise residential buildings. Using the information, fire services are able to plan an effective response in case of an emergency in the future, while also enabling residents to exit following clear, signposted instructions.

FASTSIGNS UK's research also analysed inconsistencies among fire services across the UK, in conducting audits and inspections of high-rise residential buildings.

While 50 per cent of respondents confirmed audits are carried out, the research reveals a lack of clarity regarding the frequency of the inspections. Reported timeframes varied significantly, ranging from annual assessments to every four years, with some following a risk-based approach or instead aligning with national guidance.

The breakdown of region-specific findings includes:

FIRE STATION	Number of high rises residential 2024	Total building plans since January 2023	Total Building plans %	Total wall plans since January 2023	Total Wall plans %
Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service	42	66	157%	69	164%
Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service	49	53	108%	58	118%
Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service	28	29	104%	34	121%

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service	5	5	100%	5	100%
Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service	15	15	100%	15	100%
North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service	15	15	100%	15	100%
Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service	4	4	100%	4	100%
Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service	10	10	100%	9	90%
West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service	50	47	94%	46	92%
Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service	5	4	80%	4	80%
West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service	460	230	50%	296	64%
Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service	130	71	55%	65	50%
East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service	358	204	57%	154	43%
Essex County Fire and Rescue Service	157	77	49%	79	50%
South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue	206	105	51%	83	40%
Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service	236	124	53%	86	36%

Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service	672	277	41%	261	39%
Kent Fire and Rescue Service	114	45	39%	45	39%
Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service	67	27	40%	22	33%
Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service	146	39	27%	56	38%
Surrey Fire and Rescue Service	91	26	29%	26	29%
Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service	65	14	22%	14	22%
Avon Fire and Rescue Service	239	25	10%	73	31%
National Average			68%		69%

Commenting on the results of the research, John Davies, managing director of FASTSIGNS UK, added:

“The tragedy of Grenfell highlighted just how critical clear signage, proper planning and up-to-date safety measures are in ensuring control during an emergency. In the case of fire safety, certified and easily visible signage is essential for guiding both residents and emergency response teams through high-rise buildings when an incident occurs, helping to avoid confusion and save lives.

“Our latest research shows that while progress is being made, there are still some challenges to overcome. For example, on average, around a third of building plans remain incomplete and audit frequencies can be inconsistent. While it’s encouraging to see increased focus on regular, defined checks before and during the construction of high-rise residential buildings, it’s equally important to ensure these checks continue throughout the building’s lifespan.

“We’re continuing to work closely with our customers across England, ensuring that buildings meet the evolving fire safety requirements to safeguard everyone involved.”

Nicola John, managing director at FDM (Fire Door Maintenance) – Training and Development, said:

“This research highlights just how much work still needs to be done to ensure our high-rise buildings are truly safe. At FDM – Training and Development, we believe safeguarding lives starts with empowering those responsible, which is why we deliver training for the industry, by the industry, across every level of

the supply chain. Everyone involved, from manufacturers and installers, to responsible persons, needs the knowledge and confidence to meet their legal duties and protect the people living in these buildings.”