

We cannot enforce our way out of the building safety crisis, warn Fire Chiefs

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Fire Chiefs have warned that the remediation of buildings is being hindered by deep-rooted flaws in the building safety system. Ahead of the anticipated Remediation Bill, the [National Fire Chiefs Council](#) (NFCC) said relying on fire and rescue services to enforce a broken regime is unsustainable.

Launching its *Remediation Position Statement* this month, NFCC urged ministers to establish a centrally coordinated programme to tackle compliance, funding, accountability, and workforce shortages – stressing that anything less will leave critical safety gaps unaddressed.

NFCC welcomed the intent of the Government's *Remediation Acceleration Plan*, which aims to complete remediation of all high-rise (18m+) buildings by 2029, and medium-rise (11m+) buildings by 2031 (with progress expected by 2029). However, major barriers remain. The scale of the challenge and significant data gaps continue to hinder progress. Recent government estimates of affected buildings have fluctuated between 5,900 and 12,000, with nearly two-thirds of the 5,554 buildings in the public remediation portfolio still incomplete. The Government currently estimates the number to be approximately 9,000.

Funding is fragmented and inconsistent. Current schemes often cover only cladding, which NFCC says is leaving other serious defects unaddressed. With multiple funding streams and varying eligibility by tenure, height, and materials, many buildings remain in limbo.

Fire and rescue services face their own pressures. Depending on the final number of buildings within scope, NFCC estimates it would cost between £29.86 million (5,900 buildings) to £61.77 million (12,000 buildings), with a current working estimate of £46.11 million (9,000 buildings) to inspect all buildings that may require remedial work. This comes at a time when many services face real-terms budget cuts. This

could impact their ability to oversee other high-risk premises such as hospitals and care homes.

Workforce shortages are also stalling progress. Skilled staff are in short supply, with fewer than 30 fully competent fire engineers in English fire and rescue services. These roles take years to train, and capacity has been further reduced by staff moving to the private sector. Fire safety and building protection staff make up just 2.7% of the fire and rescue service workforce in England.

The wider construction sector is also under strain, with a shortfall of 250,000 workers according to the Chartered Institute of Building and rising demand for new homes and infrastructure. NFCC's calls for a cross-departmental Construction Skills Strategy to address shortages in key roles have gone unanswered.

National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Chair, Phil Garrigan, said:

"The Grenfell Tower fire was a national tragedy that exposed fundamental flaws in how we design, build, manage and regulate our homes. Fire and rescue services have played a vital role in making buildings safer, but enforcement alone cannot fix a broken system.

"Eight years on, progress is not where it should be. We must tackle the root causes - fragmented oversight, weak regulation, and chronic gaps in workforce, funding and data. Fire risk must be embedded into every stage of building safety, not left to emergency response.

"Underpinning all of this must be tougher regulation. The Grenfell Tower fire showed us, in the most devastating way, what happens when building regulations are too weak to protect people. We cannot allow that lesson to be ignored. The Government must implement the Grenfell Tower Inquiry recommendations in full and strengthen regulation to ensure no community is ever put at such risk again."

NFCC's Remediation Position Statement calls for the Government to:

- Create a centrally-led, risk-based remediation programme, with clear roles, responsibilities and timelines.
- Develop a construction skills strategy to tackle the shortage of fire engineers, surveyors, risk assessors and related trades.
- Keep funding under review to make sure it covers both internal and external defects, without passing costs to leaseholders.
- Urgently review building regulations guidance so that safety standards are realistic, enforceable, based on risk, and do not result in a future remediation crisis.
- Clarify recently introduced enforcement powers so that the Building Safety Regulator can coordinate action effectively.
- Implement the Grenfell Tower Inquiry's Phase 2 recommendations through regulation of relevant professions, a large-scale product testing regime, and publicly available compliance data.