



## EAPFP calls for robust qualifications for passive fire protection installers

Although passive fire protection (PFP) products play a vital role in protecting lives and property in the event of a fire, there is currently no known regulation in Europe that requires those who specify, install or maintain PFP products to demonstrate their competence.

While the importance of appropriate installation is recognised by many European states, who recommend the use of third party certificated products and installers, such requirements are generally not mandatory, nor are there many formal qualifications available. But could this be about to change?

In Spain, the Department for Housing, part of the Ministry for Construction, last year mandated the team responsible for regulations on fire safety in buildings to develop an installation code. A draft is now under development which includes installation guides for different products, and is complemented by the recent publication of a new standard on appropriate maintenance and inspection regimes (UNE 192005). The Code will also include necessary conditions for qualification as an installer of passive fire protection.

With the draft expected to be finished in two years, the European Association for Passive Fire Protection (EAPFP) asks if this could form a blueprint for other European states to follow.

'This move to improve the quality of installation and prove the competency of installers must be welcomed,' says EAPFP President Vicente Mans.

'The poor quality of specification and installation of passive fire protection products has been highlighted in a number of major fire incidents across Europe, many of which have resulted in tragic loss of life.

'Since passive fire protection is often installed by an allied trade that may not be a 'specialist', this can often lead to inappropriate installation, resulting in products failing to provide the expected smoke and fire performance.

'Formal recognition of the need for specialist skills and proof of competence would lead to significant improvements to fire safety within the modern built environment. The EAPFP welcomes this ground-breaking move by the Spanish government and encourages other European states to follow this example.'

Spain is not the only state to recognise the need for improvements in installation. In Ireland, the importance of ensuring that fire safety installations are fit for purpose was highlighted by a High Court ruling related to the Priory Hall Apartment Complex. The ruling resulted in the eviction of 249 residents from the complex, due to fire safety concerns related to the building's construction. It prompted an overhaul of the Irish Building Regulations.

The implementation of the Building Control (Amendment) Regulations 2013 on the 1st March 2014, backed up by a revised Technical Guidance Document B, creates a significantly more onerous



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environment for all involved in the specification, design, installation, certification, inspection, management and maintenance of passive fire protection in buildings.

The new regulations introduce Assigned Certifiers, who will inspect building works at key stages during construction, with both the Assigned Certifier and the builders both required to certify that a finished building complies with the requirements of the building regulations.

Similar changes to the building regulations in the Netherlands are proposed. These will introduce sanctions on poorly constructed building projects, with the aim of improving installation quality.

And, in the UK, although changes in regulation currently appear unlikely, the UK's Association for Specialist Fire Protection has obtained an award from the CITB-ConstructionSkills Growth Fund to develop a nationally recognised industry training scheme for passive fire protection.

The new ASFP training scheme aims to improve the knowledge of those in the supply chain involved in the installation of passive fire protection as well as raising the awareness of those involved in the design, supply, inspection and maintenance of passive fire protection.

It will target three main occupational groups across the sector, including: new entrants to the specialist contractor workforce; contractors within allied specialist trades, such as joiners, dry liners and electricians within the distribution supply chain; and other groups that need a greater understanding of PFP, such as site supervisors, inspectors of fire systems, and building control officers.

Another initiative in the UK is a proposal to create a National Fire Safe Register, where manufacturers and installers of proven competence could be listed, making it easier for specifiers and building managers to identify and appoint competent installers. The proposal, which would see all existing accredited schemes for the certification of installers, maintainers and registered fire risk assessors gathered in one place, is gaining strong support from all sectors of the UK fire community.

'While products go through extensive testing to demonstrate that they perform to the highest standards, the correct operation of these vital safety products is reliant on them being appropriately specified, installed and maintained.

'Any initiatives which aim to improve the standard of installation for such products should be welcomed,' declares Mr Mans.

For further information on the EAPFP, visit [www.eapfp.associationhouse.org.uk](http://www.eapfp.associationhouse.org.uk); tel: +44 (0)1420 471616; e-mail: [admin@eapfp.com](mailto:admin@eapfp.com)

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## **Notes to Editors**

EAPFP was formed in 1988 to act as a European voice on behalf of national associations representing manufacturers, contractors and other institutions involved in the fire protection to steelwork, timber, and other passive fire protection applications, including penetration seals and ductwork.

Countries represented by EAPFP members include Austria; Belgium; Cyprus; Denmark; France; Germany; Ireland; Netherlands; Russia; Spain; and UK.

The Association campaigns to raise the standard of fire safety in buildings and offers a range of publications and guidance notes in several languages. The EAPFP also has representation on the European Union Technical Committees involved in developing product standards across Europe.

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