

Our Reference  
High Rise/Letters/FSA Balconies 010719

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GREATER MANCHESTER  
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

All Greater Manchester  
Housing Providers

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Date 1<sup>st</sup> July 2019

Dear Sir or Madam,

**\*\*Fire Safety Alert: Balconies on Residential Buildings – Advice Issued\*\***

I am writing to draw your attention to the latest advice note from the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government regarding the potential fire risks arising from balconies on residential buildings. A copy of the advice note is enclosed.

The recent fire in Barking, London, has shown how balconies can provide a medium for external fire spread. In this instance the fire spread rapidly between balconies and over the external façade of the building causing significant fire damage to around 20 flats within a short space of time.

Any balcony made from a combustible material is a potential source of rapid external fire spread, therefore this risk should be considered in the Fire Risk Assessment for the building, along with any risks posed from combustible materials in the external wall system.

It is important that you familiarise yourselves with the information contained in the Advice Note on Balconies on Residential Buildings and seek professional advice from an appropriately qualified and competent person where combustible products are found within the external wall system, including balconies and deck access.

Advice Note 14 which is also enclosed with this letter, advises building owners to ensure they have assessed the risks with regards to external walls and their contribution towards external fire spread and take remedial action where necessary, this includes balconies and deck access.



Professional advice may be provided by an appropriately qualified and competent professional, (i.e. a fire engineer or construction professional with significant knowledge and experience of fire safety). Further guidance on how to find professional advisors can be found by visiting <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/information-note-for-landlords-and-building-owners-of-tall-residential-buildings-with-acm-cladding>.

The advice note is clear on the recommendations that the safest way to prevent external fire spread is to remove and replace any combustible materials with those that are non-combustible (classified as A1 or A2 –s1, d0), in the meantime you should make an assessment of the risks posed by combustible materials and take steps to reduce the risks posed.

It is important that you inform your residents about the risks arising from the presence of combustible materials on balconies. You should also take the opportunity to remind residents that smoking, storing combustible items and using barbeques increase the risk. Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service advice is that barbeques should not be used on balconies and this should be robustly enforced by building managers.

I hope that this information is useful.

Yours faithfully,



Tony Hunter  
Assistant County Fire Officer & Director of Protection  
Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service

Enc: MHCLG Building Safety Programme:  
Advice Note on Balconies on Residential Buildings  
Advice Note 14 'Advice on external wall systems that do not incorporate Aluminium Composite Material'