

NSI Bulletin - Issue 8:

Topic: Evacuation Alert Systems Update

BAFE's SP207 Evacuation Alert Systems Scheme, launched in October 2020, was developed in response to a recommendation from the Grenfell Tower Phase 1 inquiry report. The Scheme responds to the recommended need for blocks of flats higher than 18m to be provided with the means for fire & rescue services to initiate an evacuation alert signal within each flat, in a controlled and managed way.

NSI was one of the industry bodies involved throughout the Scheme's inception and development, and fittingly became the first Certification Body to be awarded accreditation by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) for its Evacuation Alert Systems Scheme.

The background

During the June 2017 Grenfell Tower fire, once the Fire & Rescue Service had decided to abandon the "stay put" policy, it proved almost impossible to implement a total evacuation due to the lack of an effective means of alerting residents, other than fire-fighters 'knocking on doors' which, in the Grenfell scenario, was an impossible task.

It had initially been expected the usage of evacuation alert systems would be somewhat limited but two significant developments occurred:

The Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 Report recommended that: 33.22(d) "All high-rise residential buildings (both those already in existence and those built in the future) be equipped with facilities for use by the fire & rescue services enabling them to send an evacuation signal to the whole or a selected part of the building by means of sounders or similar devices".

Secondly, following a review of Building Regulations in Scotland the country's Domestic Technical Handbook was amended to require facilities to be provided for use by the Fire & Rescue Service to initiate an evacuation alert signal by means of evacuation alert sounders within the flats, so obviating the need for fire-fighters to manually alert occupants.

Furthermore, an MHCLG (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) document [published in May 2020] regarding fire safety measures in new high-rise blocks of flats revealed 92% of respondents to the "Sprinklers and Other Fire Safety Measures in New High-Rise Blocks of Flats" consultation believed Buildings Regulations (for England) Approved Document B should include requirement for an evacuation alert system.

The document added that "Several respondents noted that an evacuation alert system being in place would provide both clarity and reassurance to residents."



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Latest developments

Following the outcome of the consultation “Approved Document B: Fire Safety (Volume 1)” has been updated and from 01 December 2022 all new Building Regulation applications in England need to include an evacuation alert system in all blocks of flats where an accommodation storey is more than 18m above ground level.

The role of Third Party Certification

To attain an NSI/BAFE Certificate of Approval valid for 3 years, providers are required to undergo ‘due diligence’ checks of financial stability, company directors’ verification and the competency of key individuals involved in the service provision, such as system designers.

An initial certification audit then covers aspects including the company’s office processes and procedures, checks on the competency and CPD records of those providing the system or service, and an examination of the processes for providing the product or service. Importantly, audits are also carried out on-site at premises with recently installed systems or where risk assessments are being conducted.

Currently 22 companies have gained certification to the BAFE SP207 Scheme Fire Register offering buyers good national coverage, of which 7 have gained certification with NSI.

Buyers, insurers and fire & rescue authorities can take comfort that the Evacuation Alert Systems Scheme where adopted in blocks of flats higher than 18m will deliver well designed, installed, commissioned and maintained systems that when called upon will help safeguard flat dwellers, the fire fighters who are called upon in the event of an incident, and help save lives.

Find NSI approved ‘[Evacuation Alert System Providers](#)’.

More information on the [NSI Evacuation Alert System Scheme \(BAFE SP207\)](#) and other NSI schemes.

BAFE fire safety register can be found [here](#).

If you have any questions or would like further information on this subject, please feel free to contact John Davidson, Approval Schemes Manager (Systems), on Email: john.davidson@nsi.org.uk / Tel: 01628 764864.

NSI News

Read our article in Facilities Management UK explaining the value of ‘Detector-Activated CCTV Alarms Versus Conventional Systems’ :

<https://www.nsi.org.uk/detector-activated-cctv-alarms-versus-conventional-systems/>



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NSI's article in the Federation of Small Businesses' First Voice publication highlights a range of site security measures that should be of paramount consideration for small business owners and managers:

<https://www.nsi.org.uk/first-voice-keep-your-business-safe-and-secure/>

Read our article In Football and Stadium Management to learn more about the resources available in support of the Protect Duty and how third-party certification could be a significant string to the bow in wider protection for the public: <https://www.nsi.org.uk/protect-duty-counter-terrorism-proposals-drive-fresh-thinking-guidance-and-practical-help/>

In City Security Magazine NSI highlights how NCP 119, a Code of Practice for the 'Provision of Labour in the Security and Events Sector', is addressing weaknesses in supply chain integrity:

<https://www.nsi.org.uk/security-standards/>



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