

# **Why International Fire Safety Standards (IFSS) Are Needed. Workshop With Real Life Case Study Of Grenfell Tower Fire London.**

**Gary Strong, United Kingdom**

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## **SUMMARY**

A global coalition of professional bodies, governments, academic institutions and others are coming together as a result of the tragic Grenfell Tower fire in London in June 2017, on a not-for-profit basis in the public interest to deliver a set of high level fire safety standards (IFSS) that all members of the coalition will adhere to and be ambassadors for the standards around the world to ensure consistency and adoption.

The growth in global population is driving the need for more and more high rise living vertical village towers which are mixed use, as well as more urban buildings which may pose a life safety risk. Occupiers, insurers and investors in these buildings need to be reassured the building complies with an international fire safety standard.

Fire safety has to be paramount in these and all other higher risk buildings. We are not so concerned by height but by risk - low level buildings could be high risk eg hospitals, care homes, student accommodation, hotels.

This workshop will examine what happened in the Grenfell Tower fire in June 2017 in London; what the government and industry response has been since; and what the lessons learned so far are.

The IFSS coalition will appoint a standard setting committee (SSC) of experts to write the standards and keep them under review and update them as necessary.

# **Why International Fire Safety Standards (IFSS) Are Needed. Workshop With Real Life Case Study Of Grenfell Tower Fire London.**

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## **1. WHAT IS IFSS?**

IFSS stands for International Fire Safety Standards. It is a new, high level international set of standards that aims to provide greater clarity and consistency globally in the application of fire safety to buildings at a project, state, national, regional or international level. It sets out high level principles that any person involved in the design, construction or managing of a building globally would be proud to be associated with.

## **2. WHAT PROBLEM IS IFSS TRYING TO SOLVE?**

Despite rapid globalisation, with investment funds flowing across borders and money pouring into built assets, and increasing number of different professionals operating across the world, the construction and real estate profession globally currently lacks a consistent set of high level principles for the design, construction, and management of buildings for fire safety. Differences in materials testing and certification, national building regulations/codes, and guidance on how to manage buildings in use, particularly higher risk buildings, means there is confusion, uncertainty and risk to the public. Multiple differing standards means there is no standard. For the first time at a global collaborative level, IFSS will introduce a set of standards that will bring greater consistency of minimum levels of fire safety and professionalism across the world.

## **3. WHAT IS AN INTERNATIONAL STANDARD?**

In the context of the work being undertaken by the IFSS Coalition, an international standard is something that is established and agreed at the international level and which is implemented and delivered locally. The standard itself will be owned by the IFSS Coalition and not by any single organisation. IFSS organisations subscribe to the shared international standard and commit to its use and implementation through their membership.

## **4. HOW DOES AN INTERNATIONAL STANDARD WORK?**

IFSS will set out universal rules that provide classification, definition, analysis and presentation of fire safety standards at a project, state, national, regional or international level. Professional institutions will incorporate these high level standards and rules within their guidance or local standards, and we expect governments to support and/or adopt these principles.

All organisations in the IFSS Coalition will participate in the implementation of the shared international standard through their respective memberships and staff.

## **5. WHY NOT STICK WITH THE ESTABLISHED METHODS OF REGULATION FOR FIRE SAFETY?**

At present, the many contrasting standards across the world have contributed to uncertainty and confusion in the testing, and approval, of construction methods, products and operation of buildings. Research has shown that inconsistent approaches to the assessment and regulation of fire safety can lead to loss of life in extreme cases through to a loss of confidence by governments, financiers, investors and the public in buildings.

## **6. WHERE WILL IFSS BE USED AND ADOPTED?**

IFSS will be used throughout the world both in developed nations and developing nations. Each of the organisations in the IFSS Coalition has committed to its adoption throughout its own professional membership.

Any building fire safety standard is usually purely voluntary unless it is referenced in the national construction code, where it would operate as part of a deemed to satisfy measure. Countries often currently reference a number of national, and industry standards for this purpose. Anyone wishing to have a standard referenced in a national code needs to be able to satisfy the protocols for referenced standards, which provides countries with a means to satisfy themselves of the rigour and bona fides of a standard. The Coalition aims to have such adoption by governments of IFSS.

Of course, a standard can exist outside of this regime and be used on a voluntary basis, but it is unlikely that a building designed and constructed to such a standard would receive building approval.

Managing buildings in use are often not subject to detailed codes or regulations. IFSS will address the safe use and management of buildings.

Our ultimate aim is that there will be a public display certificate of compliance with the International Fire Safety Standard in all higher risk buildings where the public have access.

## 7. WHAT IS THE IFSS COALITION?

The IFSS Coalition is a group of professional and not-for-profit organisations responsible for researching, developing, publicising, and implementing International Fire Safety Standards for the construction and real estate sectors. The Coalition was established in September 2017 after the awful Grenfell Tower fire tragedy in London in June 2017. The IFSS Coalition supports the creation, maintenance, and use of high quality international standards, developed using a transparent and inclusive standard setting process. Each of the Coalition organisations has signed a declaration of support and commitment to promote and implement IFSS, and to encourage world markets and governments to accept and adopt it.

The IFSS standard setting committee will *consider*;

(these are suggestions for discussion at the first meeting)

1. the desire for non combustible cladding on all high risk buildings - should this be mandatory
2. the desire for sprinkler systems in all high risk buildings
3. the desire for fire and smoke detection central systems in all high risk buildings
4. the essential need for measures to deal adequately with smoke in all high risk buildings
5. the essential need for compartmentation to limit the spread of fire
6. the essential need for a fire strategy in all high risk buildings
7. the essential need for a fire risk inspection and assessment to be conducted at least annually on all high risk buildings and at least every five years on all other buildings
8. the essential need for fire engineers/professionals to be engaged early in the design of new high risk buildings and to ensure the final building delivered complies with the design
9. the essential need for inspection during construction to ensure essential fire safety products and detailing is delivered as designed.
10. to consider the definition of *high risk buildings*
11. to consider extending the standards beyond life safety to building preservation in the interests of society (for certain buildings such as hospitals and historic buildings)
12. to consider the different building codes and regulations that already exist and to recommend changes to these as necessary to ensure consistency globally
13. to consider the different test standards for fire testing materials and combinations that already exist and to recommend changes to these as necessary to ensure consistency globally.

RICS with their experience of similar international standards offer to facilitate the meetings of the coalition and the SSC and to publish on behalf of the coalition the final agreed standards. Please contact for further information Gary Strong [gstrong@rics.org](mailto:gstrong@rics.org)

## 1. THE INTERNATIONAL FIRE SAFETY STANDARDS COALITION

The IFSS Coalition is a partnership of leading organisations from across the globe, committed to producing and supporting one shared set of publicly available standards for fire safety. The Coalition are creating a Standard Setting Committee (SSC) dedicated to realising the vision of shared and international standards.

Members of the Coalition so far;

AEEBC – The Association of European Experts in Building and Construction <http://aeebc.org/>

BCA – Building Control Alliance <http://buildingcontrolalliance.org/>

CABE – Chartered Association of Building Engineers <https://www.cbuilde.com/home/>

CEBC - Consortium of European Building Control bodies <http://www.cebc.eu/>

CIAT – Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists <https://ciat.org.uk/>

CTBUH – Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat <http://www.ctbuh.org/>

FIG – Federation International de Geometre, an international umbrella body of surveying professional bodies globally <http://www.fig.net/>

ICC – International Code Council <https://www.iccsafe.org/>

LABC – Local Authority Building Control <https://www.labc.co.uk/>

NHBC – National House Building Council <http://www.nhbc.co.uk/>

RICS - Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors <https://www.rics.org/uk/>

The WORLD BANK <http://www.worldbank.org/>

Each member of the Coalition nominates a Trustee, who are responsible for the correct governance of the Coalition and in whom is vested the IP of the publicly available free to download standards.

## 2. WHAT IS AN IFSS SUPPORTER ?

An IFSS Supporter is an organisation, which is not a professional body or association, that supports a collaborative approach to the development of international standards and commits, in principle, to the adoption of IFSS.

IFSS Supporters can include, but are not limited to, the following types of organisation;

- Academics
- Architects and designers
- Banks and lending institutions
- Construction consultancy firms
- Construction industry service providers
- Construction materials testing firms
- Construction companies (eg multinational firms with international construction portfolios)
- Construction products firms
- Construction-related software providers
- Construction cost data service providers
- Engineers
- Facilities management firms
- Fire engineers
- Fire consultancy firms
- Fire risk assessors
- Governments
- Property agents
- Property investment firms and developers
- Surveyors
- Test laboratories

Prospective IFSS Supporter organisations are asked to express their interest through any member of the IFSS Coalition, or by emailing [gstrong@rics.org](mailto:gstrong@rics.org) for further information.