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Title; Five Point Plan for Third Party Certification

The Passive Fire Protection Federation (PFPF) has set out criteria for assessing the suitability of third party certification schemes relating to fire safety products and their installation.

While welcoming the extended comments regarding third party certification in recent revisions to Approved Document B of the Building Regulations (Fire Safety), PFPF Chairman David Sugden points out that the lack of objective standards by which such schemes can be properly assessed is significantly undermining their effectiveness. The PFPF believes five key areas need to be addressed and has set out the following proposals for doing so.

- 1) Independence: the certification body must be independent so that they cannot be influenced by buyers, sellers or manufacturers, thus avoiding any conflict of interest.
- 2) Experience: the certification body must have demonstrable experience of product testing and evaluation, with access to appropriate and independent test facilities, and be able to show that it understands the products and installation requirements it evaluates.
- 3) Accreditation: the certification body must itself be accredited to deal with the product or service in question by a recognised international body, such as UKAS, to the applicable standards.
- 4) Publication: the technical requirements for certification and their method of evaluation must be published and publicly available.

5) Endorsement: the certification scheme and its technical requirements should reflect accepted industry principles and practice and, for passive fire safety systems, be endorsed by the Passive Fire Protection Federation as the passive fire industry's representative body.

“Third party certification has a vital role to play in improving fire safety,” explains Sugden. “However, currently some schemes fall short because they fail to meet the five fundamental criteria we have identified. We need to establish an objective system of assessing certification so that clients and Regulators know how to judge them. Until we understand how they should be judged their effectiveness will be seriously undermined and fire safety will be compromised.”

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Editors' notes: The Passive Fire Protection Federation (PFPF - www.pfpf.org) is dedicated to growing awareness and giving advice on fire protection, and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (RRO). Our members include the Chief Fire Officers Association, the Department of Communities and Local Government (previously the ODPM), the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors and the Building Research Establishment among others. Our website carries advice on what to check and best practice in all passive fire protection measures