

HAVE WE LIVED UP TO THE STANDARDS ON FIRE DOOR SAFETY?



How have attitudes changed over
third-party certification?

**BE CERTAIN
BE CERTIFIED**

Foreword

In response to the Grenfell Tower tragedy of 2017, a new fire safety regime is being introduced in the UK with the Building Safety Act and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 as its cornerstones. The new legislation aims to 'create lasting generational change' in the manufacture of building products, the construction and maintenance of buildings, and the management of safety risks. It sets out responsibilities for developers and landlords, and gives residents additional powers to hold them to account.

The majority of the Building Safety Act's provisions will not come into force until secondary legislation is introduced. This was due to be completed within two years of the Building Safety Act receiving royal assent in April 2022, but the government's timetable is slipping and we are still awaiting a response on the current consultation on Approved Document B. Nonetheless, it is essential that the sector understands its requirements under the Building Safety Act and is ready to respond to the vital changes that this raft of legislation will bring.

Third-party certified fire doors

Fire doors and doorsets will play a central role in meeting these tightened standards, with building designers, architects, landlords and building managers in both the public and private sectors expected to provide evidence of fire safety performance.

This is where third-party fire door certification is key: it demonstrates that a fire door, when installed and maintained correctly, complies with regulations designed to protect lives and property. Non-third-party certified fire doors may rely on a one-off test result, which means that only the specific door tested was fit for purpose, and many products claiming to be fire doors may not have not been tested at all.

Third-party certification means that the door manufacturer or processor is audited by an independent third-party organisation to provide evidence that the product is tested appropriately and produced to a consistent standard. This gives verification of product performance and reassurance over consistency and quality to occupants, the regulator, and all those responsible for the correct specification, installation or maintenance of fire doors.

In March 2022, the BWF Fire Door Alliance conducted a survey of 1,000 people with responsibility for fire door specification, installation and maintenance across the UK to assess understanding under the Building Safety Act. The results were published in our report, [Living up to the Standard on Fire Doors](#).

Just over a year later, in June 2023, we surveyed the same audience to understand if attitudes had changed, to learn if the new regime is bedding in and whether the industry's understanding of the legislation has improved. Since our last survey, the Building Safety Act has passed into law and the Health and Safety Executive has issued [factsheets](#) to provide further guidance.

This report outlines our main findings in detail, but it is clear that understanding of the new regulations has broadly improved since 2022, though some gaps remain. When it comes to the specific issue of third-party fire certification for fire doors, there is a growing understanding of their importance that goes beyond mere box-ticking. Despite this, too many housing professionals are still specifying doors that do not meet these standards. **This is most notable in the local authority social housing sector: in 2022, 23% of respondents said they would be likely to specify third-party certified fire doors, alarmingly this has seen a decrease, dropping to just 11% in 2023.**

The most likely cause for this dramatic decrease is rising costs and squeezed budgets. It is therefore imperative that housing professionals understand the true value of third-party certification, in terms of lives saved and property protected.

At the BWF Fire Door Alliance, our mission is to ensure that only third-party certified fire doors and fire doorsets are installed by fully trained, qualified and competent individuals in the UK. We hope that this report will increase understanding of the value of fire door third-party certification across the fire safety supply chain and the role it plays in saving lives, protecting property, and helping to avert another Grenfell-scale tragedy.

Helen Hewitt
Chief Executive,
British Woodworking Federation



The advantages of third-party certification for fire doors

At the BWF Fire Door Alliance, we believe third-party certification should be the minimum requirement for all fire doors and doorsets. It provides crucial evidence that a fire door, when correctly installed and maintained, is fit for purpose and complies with fire door regulations designed to protect lives and property.



Traceability: Third-party certified fire doors display labels or plugs offering traceability throughout the construction supply chain, including important information about the door's component parts.



Testing: All fire door designs should be tested to BS 476 Part 22 or the European equivalent BS EN 1634 Part 1 by a UKAS approved test facility. Each fire door design must be tested as a complete assembly at least every five years, and annually for high volume products.



Auditing: All members involved in the manufacture and conversion of fire doors or their associated components are audited annually by their Certification provider. The aim is to ensure that fire doors or components use the same materials identified in the original test for that specific design.



Quality Management: The order management, design and manufacturing processes are assessed. A quality management system following the principles of ISO 9001:2015 and a Factory Production Control System (FPCS) are requirements of the BWF Fire Door Alliance to ensure that standards are consistently maintained.



Training: All staff involved in the manufacture and sale of fire doors or components are required to undertake regular training to ensure they understand the latest Building Regulations and can offer correct advice to their customers.

SECTION 1

Awareness of fire doors and third-party certification

At the inaugural conference of the new [Building Safety Regulator](#) in March 2023, Lee Rowley, the Minister for Building Safety, said: “We need to ensure that those working in the building industry have the knowledge and confidence to properly engage with this new regime and make it a success.”

Knowledge of fire doors is key, and our data shows promising signs of improvement since 2022. Respondents are understanding not only how third-party certified fire doors help ensure legal compliance, but also their importance in improved fire safety performance generally.

In this section of the report, we explore how awareness is growing, but why this has not always translated into action. Professionals in some sectors (for example, landlords and housing associations) are falling behind their counterparts in other fields. Our research has also shown that deeper understanding is not always translating into behavioural change, and some barriers to specifying fire doors have actually risen since last year – resulting in reduced uptake.

Attitudes towards third-party fire door certification

While third-party certified fire doors are not stipulated as a requirement for compliance with the new regulations, they are the best way to ensure peace of mind that fire doors will perform as designed in the event of a fire.

One encouraging sign from our research is that respondents showed greater awareness of the real benefits of third-party certification. **In 2022, the top reason for specifying or using third-party certified fire doors was to meet responsibilities and to comply with fire safety legislation (47%). While 48% still cited this as a main reason, the robust proof of performance provided by third-party certified fire doors is now the top reason (49%), after being only the third priority in 2022.**

This is a positive indication that the benefits of third-party certification are being more widely understood. This is supported by 37% of individuals citing that they specify or use third-party certified fire doors to demonstrate commitment to high standards and best practice for fire door safety.

Perhaps due to the lasting effect of the Grenfell Tower tragedy, local authority social housing professionals are most interested in proof of performance (58%). They are followed by house builders and property developers (55%) and architect firms (52%). Contractors (45%), landlords (44%) and private housing associations (43%) rate this factor lower.

Proof of performance

For providing proof of performance, over half of all respondents (52%) look to third-party certification: a six-percentage point increase on 2022. While this is a welcome improvement, it must also be noted that an increasing number also look to fire test certificates for the same reason: 60% compared to 58% in 2022.

This suggests that many professionals have not yet fully grasped the distinction between third-party certification and fire test certificates. The former demonstrates that a properly installed and maintained fire door complies with fire safety regulations. The latter are one-off test results, and do not guarantee repeatability or manufacturing consistency. At Grenfell Tower, the Manse Masterdor flat entrance doors were supported by two test reports that did not actually apply to those doorsets¹.

¹ Grenfell Tower Inquiry expert report Appendix I section 14.5, “TMO tenant door replacement (2011)”

Choosing third-party certified fire doors

The data suggests a steady, positive shift in attitudes towards third-party certified fire doors. Concerningly, despite growing awareness of third-party certification, and greater intention to specify third-party certified fire doors, this hasn't yet translated to greater uptake. **In fact, whereas in 2022 respondents said that 56% of the total number of fire doors they are responsible for are third-party certified, this figure was slightly lower at 54% in 2023's survey.**

Perhaps unsurprisingly, third-party certified fire doors are most likely to be specified in public buildings: hospitals (39%), state schools (39%) and private schools (33%).

One particular area of concern is social housing (not all of which requires fire doors), where just 11% of respondents are likely to specify third-party certified fire doors, down from 23% in 2022.

Given strong understanding of the importance of third-party certification in this field, this alarming drop suggests that other factors are in play.

With pressure on social housing budgets, it might be unsurprising that cost is the main barrier for this sector by some margin, cited by 42% of respondents working

in social housing (up from 34% in 2022). In 2022, lack of understanding over third-party certification (34%) and lack of end client demand (34%) were viewed as equivalent barriers to cost, whereas cost now stands at 9% higher than the next biggest barrier (uncertainty surrounding the data needed to demonstrate fire door performance). This could well be due to rising inflation rates and other spending pressures. It indicates the importance of communicating the overall value

of third-party certified fire doors to this audience, including their ability to provide traceability throughout the supply chain and evidence that the responsible person has fulfilled their duties under the new regulations.

It's encouraging to see that end client demand appears to have increased as the new legislation takes effect along the value chain, with only 28% of respondents citing lack of end client demand as a barrier (down from 33% in 2022).

End clients are also interested in the traceability of a complete fire door assembly, according to 92% (89% in 2022). Third-party fire doors all display an identification label or plug providing full traceability back through the supply chain. This increased client interest is promising, and it is hoped that this change in attitude will translate into demand in the coming years.



Top barriers to specifying third-party certified fire doors

2022

 **35%**
Associated cost

 **33%**
Lack of end client demand

 **28%**
Uncertainty surrounding the data needed to demonstrate fire door performance

2023

 **42%**
Associated cost

 **28%**
Lack of end client demand

 **30%**
Uncertainty surrounding the data needed to demonstrate fire door performance



SECTION 2

Understanding and impact of the Building Safety Act

Our previous survey was carried out before the Building Safety Act received royal assent. We are now keen to learn how attitudes and understanding has changed since it has passed into law.

In this section, we explore how well those with responsibilities for fire doors understand the new regulations, and whether they are fully aware of their new responsibilities.

Guidance on new legislation

Our survey data shows that more respondents understand their responsibilities as outlined in the Building Safety Act. Confidence has risen 10 percentage points (80% against 70% in 2022). This welcome improvement could well be linked to the availability of robust guidance from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), the BWF Fire Door Alliance and other relevant bodies.

In the past year, the (HSE), which is creating the new Building Safety Regulator (BSR), has provided guidance on a number of issues covered by the new legislation in relation to their main functions. The BSR has three main functions; overseeing the safety and standards of all buildings, helping and encouraging the built environment industry and building control professionals to improve their competence and leading the implementation of the new regulatory framework for high-rise buildings.

The BWF Fire Door Alliance has also provided advice and information on how choosing third-party certification can ensure compliance and boost safety.

Promisingly, our survey data provides a clear indication that awareness is growing of the requirements under the Building Safety Act and the role that third-party certified fire doors can play in meeting them.



Some 66% of respondents to our 2023 survey say they are more likely to seek third-party certification of fire doors as a consequence of the new regulations. In total, 52% of all respondents say they are now likely to seek third-party specification for fire doors. Housebuilders and property developers are most likely to do so at 60%, followed by both local authority and housing association social housing, at 55%. Landlords (47%) and architects (42%) are less likely still - indicating more education is required across these sectors.

Landlords notably also have the lowest level of general understanding about their responsibilities under the new legislation: 71%, compared with house builders/ property developers on 87% and local authority social housing professionals on 86%. While the overall figures are encouraging, lack of understanding over new regulation could be a contributing factor towards lower intent to specify third-party certified fire doors.

The BWF Fire Door Alliance and its members can play an important role in providing more education and guidance over the built environment, and endeavour to reach more key audiences such as landlords in particular.

There was a notable contrast between attitudes to third-party certification in 2022 and in 2023. In 2022, more than half (52%) said the introduction of the Building Safety Bill (which had not yet received Royal assent) would prompt them to seek more proof of performance, while 28% said they would specify third-party certified fire doors. Now that the Act has been passed, this intent has not yet translated into reality.

This is despite some 35% of respondents saying they are seeking more proof of performance as a consequence of the new legislation and 25% saying they now ask for more information that gives them product traceability.

This indicates that the benefits of third-party certification in providing proof of performance and product traceability need to be reinforced so individuals understand how third-party certification can help them meet these requirements.

It is hoped that these lower figures will improve in the coming months and years as the effects of the secondary legislation start to come through.

The importance of traceability

The Building Safety Act stipulates that an accountable person, for example the landlord or management company, must maintain a 'golden thread' of records to demonstrate compliance with building regulations. The 'golden thread' must be created before building work starts, and kept updated throughout design and construction. When the building work is completed, the thread is handed over to the new accountable person. It must include a history for each product used in the construction of the building, such as fire doors, including any inspections or repairs. If replacements are not like-for-like, this could carry health and safety risks and be regarded as discrepancies by the new Building Safety Regulator.

Third party certification delivers traceability throughout the construction supply chain, including important information about the door's manufacturer, the certificate number and the compatible component parts. This will help maintain the 'golden thread' required by end clients and organisations across the supply chain.

92% of respondents rate traceability as important to their clients and organisations. This is slightly lower (88%) among landlords. Despite traceability being regarded as important by end users, this is not currently translating into specification of third-party certification in many cases.

As a consequence of the Building Safety Act:

66% reported that they are more likely to seek third party certification of fire doors

However, when asked how the Building Safety Act as impacted how they specify and purchase fire doors

15% said they are specifying third party-certified fire doors

Maintenance and inspection

Regular inspections and prompt maintenance of installed fire doors are essential for ensuring the door remains capable of high performance in the event of a fire. From January 2023, the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 have made it a legal requirement for those responsible for multi-occupied residential buildings over 11 metres high to undertake quarterly checks of all fire doors in common areas. Flat entrance doors must also be checked annually.

For buildings not covered by this legislation, the BWF recommends inspections should take place at least once every six months. In high traffic areas, such as hospitals or hotel corridors, it should be once a week or month.

Our survey found that overall inspection standards are rising: 68% are now inspecting fire doors or having them inspected every month or every quarter, up from 63% in 2022, but landlords score lowest at 58%. These figures include buildings not covered by the legislation.

When it comes to seeking advice on specification, maintenance and inspection, the top two sources of information are fire door manufacturers (47%) and specialist trade associations (43%). The research showed that these are also the top sources for those seeking a fire door inspector (45% from manufacturers, and 43% from trade associations). This highlights the clear role of the BWF Fire Door Alliance and its members in providing accurate and up-to-date information to guide sector professionals in their choices.

Finally, it is gratifying to see that respondents say they are choosing to work with qualified and competent individuals and companies. Some 66% say they know that the individuals they procure fire doors from and contract to carry out installations, maintenance and inspections are fully trained and competent. Nonetheless, as an industry, the BWF and its members should be pushing for this figure to rise closer to 100% and encourage those responsible for fire door safety to carry out thorough checks on the authentication of the qualification and competence of individuals carrying out fire door inspections and maintenance activities. Robust training and access to regulated qualifications for individuals and companies along the supply chain is essential for improving and maintaining fire safety.

68%

of those with fire door responsibility inspect fire doors every month or quarter

58%

of landlords inspect fire doors every month or quarter



SECTION 3

Improving understanding of requirements under the new legislation

The new fire safety regime relies not just on construction and materials that are fit for purpose, but also on greater awareness of building safety from residents and building managers. Regulation 10 of the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 requires Responsible Persons to: a) carry out regular fire door inspections (see section 2); and b) provide fire safety information to residents about their flat entrance doors.

Since the regulations came into force in January 2023, the Home Office has published new guidance to help Responsible Persons fulfil these new legal obligations. Our research explores how well respondents understand Regulation 10 and other new fire safety legislation now. It seeks to discover whether they require further information to improve their understanding and, if so, who should provide it – the government, industry bodies, employers, or others.

The data shows that gaps in understanding of the new legislation remain, potentially making it harder to put the new fire safety regime into practice. The expertise and reach of the BWF Fire Door Alliance and its members mean we are well placed to respond by supplying further information and education.

Home Office fire safety documents

Our 2022 data painted a picture of low overall awareness of how to respond to the changes which would be introduced by the Building Safety Act and Fire Safety Act, suggesting further guidance was much needed. Some 30% of respondents were unsure or did not understand their responsibility with regards to the new legislation, while 8% did not know how the Building Safety Act would affect how fire doors were specified, or believed it would not affect specification.

It is therefore encouraging to see that 78% of respondents in 2023 have read all or some of the new Home Office guidance to Regulation 10. A significant proportion (92%) say these documents have helped them understand what is required of them under the new legislation, for example informing residents about the importance of keeping fire doors closed and carrying out regular checks on fire doors on escape routes or flat entrance doors. This high uptake should further boost adherence to the new regulations, and an even deeper level of understanding in the future.

It is clear from the data that further information and training on the new legislation is needed. A third of respondents said more information from the government would improve understanding of their responsibilities under the new legislation. This lack of clarity may well have arisen due to delays in the government's timeline for raising secondary legislation arising from the Building Safety Act, such as regulations applicable to construction products including fire doors.

As well as looking to the government, many respondents turn to their employers for assistance in understanding the new fire safety regime. Some 39% want guidance from their employers, and 55% say they would like to receive training. Clearly, this represents an opportunity for the BWF Fire Door Alliance to work with employers on providing accurate information and training. We offer publications including a suite of fact cards and a best practice guide to

the specification, installation and maintenance of fire doors. We also provide online training courses in fire door safety and awareness and other resources. They are invaluable for ensuring that Responsible Persons are fully on board with better safety – and will pass on potentially life-saving information to residents.

▮ A third of respondents said more information from the government would improve understanding of their responsibility ▮▮

Attitudes towards fire safety guidance

78%



have read some or all of the Home Office guidance

39%



want more guidance from their employer

92%



say the documents have deepened their understanding

55%



want training

33%



want more guidance from the government

SECTION 4

Fire Door Best Practice

Robust proof of performance, accountability and traceability are key to the UK's new fire safety regime. The only way to be certain your fire door and doorset will perform as they are intended in a fire is to choose third-party certified models.

The BWF Fire Door Alliance is the leading UK authority on fire door safety, with third-party certification at its heart. Over half (57%) of respondents to our survey said that the BWF Fire Door Alliance and its predecessor, BWF-Certifire, are the top brand names associated with fire door third-party certification.

About the Fire Door Alliance

The BWF Fire Door Alliance is a membership scheme with a vision that every fire door and doorset sold in the UK meets required standards throughout its life. We want to see only third-party certified fire doors and doorsets, installed by certified companies, used in the UK.

Membership is open to timber fire door manufacturers and related companies who hold or are working towards certification under the Warringtonfire, BM TRADA Q-Mark and IFC schemes. Certification requires considerable time, money and dedication. By choosing to work with a BWF Fire Door Alliance member, you know you are partnering with a company that is deeply committed to protecting lives and property, and is operating to the very highest industry standards.

Robust industry information

The BWF Fire Door Alliance plays a vital role in boosting awareness of fire door safety in the UK. The BWF Fire Door Alliance seeks to highlight the benefits of third-party certification to everyone responsible for fire door specification, installation and maintenance. We supply the latest information on legislation and best practice to the entire supply chain, from manufacturers to installers.

Our website is an invaluable resource for architects, landlords, building managers, manufacturers and other professionals. Here, you can download fact cards, best practice and installation guides and much more. You can also search our directory of members to ensure that you are working with professionals who are as committed to fire safety as you are.

Plus, we are training the next generation of fire door professionals in a variety of ways. Trainees can gain an understanding of the principles of fire door installation and fire door safety through the regulated qualification route in partnership with the Awarding Organisations; the National Open College Network (NOCN) and City and Guilds. We also offer e-learning courses on fire door safety awareness.

It's our desire and drive that the industry focuses on improving the competence of individuals installing, maintaining and inspecting fire doors, so we can help bring about a new era of fire safety.

Top sources for advice on fire doors

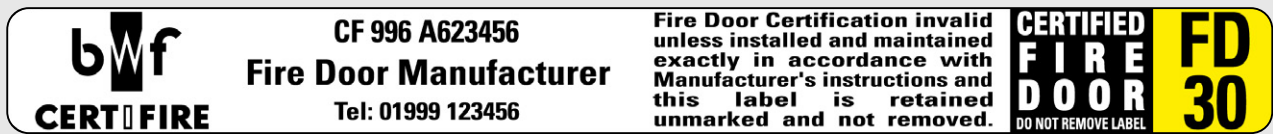
47% Fire door manufacturers

43% Specialist trade associations

Top fire door brand recognition

57% FDA/Certifire

The fire door label



Third-party certified fire doors all display a label or plug so you can identify them. This will tell you the fire door rating for its minimum tested burn performance (e.g. FD30 for minimum 30 minutes). The label will provide full traceability of the door back through the supply chain. But what's behind the label?



1

Fire testing

A full-sized fire door assembly is tested in accordance with BS 476: Part 22 or BS EN 1634-1 at a UKAS accredited test facility so you can **BE CERTAIN** of its performance and the scope of certification.



2

Manufacturing process audit

The fire door manufacturers, or licensed processors are audited by a UKAS accredited certification organisation. This means you can **BE CERTAIN** that manufacturing and management processes deliver consistency in fire door production.



3

Regular audits

The fire door is subjected to regular scrutiny to **BE CERTAIN** that the test results are repeatable and not a one-off result.

FIND A MEMBER LOCAL TO YOU

TODAY



The BWF Fire Door Alliance is the leading authority on fire door safety. The BWF Fire Door Alliance Scheme (formerly the BWF-CERTIFIRE Scheme) was established in 1997 by leading fire door manufacturers to bring the membership management, lobbying and promotion skills of the British Woodworking Federation to support the promotion of third-party certification of fire doors and fire doorsets.

As a membership scheme operated and managed by the British Woodworking Federation (BWF), the BWF Fire Door Alliance vision is that every fire door / fire doorset sold in the UK meets required standards through its service life.

For more information visit:

 <https://firedoors.bwf.org.uk/be-certain-be-certified/>

 Follow @FireDoorAll on Twitter or

 Search BWF Fire Door Alliance on LinkedIn.

Methodology: Two separate surveys (March 2022 and June 2023) of 1,000 people with responsibility for fire door specification, installation and maintenance across the UK were carried out. The two sets of data were compared and analysed to provide this report's key findings.

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