ASFP
Advisory Notice

'Indicative' or 'Ad-hoc' Testing

Essential Information

The ASFP supports third party product certification as the most appropriate way of demonstrating the performance of passive fire protection products in the market.

TESTING THIRD PARTY PRODUCT CERTIFICATION

The ASFP supports third party product certification as the most appropriate way of demonstrating the performance of passive fire protection products in the market. Certification is undertaken by independent bodies who verify the quality of the product. The process of certification includes:

- Selection of samples from the factory or market
- Determination of important properties by testing, inspection, design appraisal or assessment
- Surveillance by testing, factory production control, ongoing audit procedures and evaluation of quality management systems to ensure consistency of production
- Labelling that identifies the certification body
- Maintenance of a register of certificated products

Third party product certification is the only way of providing architects, specifiers, enforcement authorities and building owners a high level of confidence that products are 'fit for purpose'.

Given that certification is not mandatory, fire test reports are often used to demonstrate a product's fire performance. Unfortunately, many end-users may be unaware of the different types of fire tests that might be used and this can result in unsuitable reports being considered when obtaining approval e.g. via Local Authority Building Control. An example of this is the use of an 'indicative' or 'small scale' fire resistance testing as justification for the performance of a full size element.

GUIDANCE FOR END-USERS

- In the absence of third party product certification, evidence of performance should always be supported by Standard Tests*.
- Ad-hoc Tests* should only be used where no British (or European) standard exists.
- Indicative tests* should only be used for product development.
- In the event that Indicative Tests or Ad-hoc Tests are used for Building Control purposes, they must be supported by an assessment justifying their use by a UKAS accredited laboratory or reputable fire consultant.
- Where guidance is provided by a contractor or manufacturer in the use of ad-hoc testing they are liable for the advice given. However you must be satisfied that the test conditions/criteria are appropriate with respect to Approved Document B of the Building Regulations and that the test specimen design/mounting etc, is an appropriate representation of the end use application.

Unless the condition on site is equal to or less onerous than the situation to which the ad-hoc test was based then the test evidence has no validity.

If you are in any doubt seek advice from the test laboratory that undertook the test.

* See overleaf for definition of Standard, Indicative and Ad-hoc tests

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FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information can be found in the following document available from the ASFP website

- Demonstrating the Performance of Passive Fire Protection Products

Hard copies of the Fire Test Study Group Pocket Guide for Fire Test Reports and Assessments are available from FTSG c/o Exova Warringtonfire, Holmesfield Road, Warrington, WA1 2DS)

DEFINITION OF DIFFERENT REPORT TYPES

The UK Fire Test Study Group, which represents all the major fire test laboratories in the UK, has identified three fire test types and has agreed to report the results as follows:

Standard Test

The results of such a test are the subject of a full report in accordance with the Standard. The report will be comprehensive, with full details of the construction of the test specimen and the testing process.

Indicative Test

Reporting is normally by letter only, which should give the data relevant to the test result but shall not interpret those results against any classification requirements. A statement is included as follows:

"This (these) test result(s) relate to an investigation which utilised the test methodology given in (the relevant Standard); the full requirements of the Standard were not, however, complied with. The information is provided for the test sponsor's information only and should not be used to demonstrate performance against the Standard nor compliance with a regulatory requirement. The test was not conducted under the requirements of UKAS accreditation."

Ad-hoc Test

A test which has been performed to a non-standard procedure, in the absence of a Standardised procedure, but which utilises the principles of fire resistance testing given in the relevant test method. The reports of such tests shall bear the following statement:

"This report covers a test which was conducted to a procedure which is not the subject of any British or European standard specification, but the test utilised the general principles of fire resistance testing given in [insert relevant test method]. Since fire tests are the subject of a continuing Standardisation process, and because existing standards are the subject of review and possible amendment and new interpretations, it is recommended that the report be referred back to the test laboratory to ensure that the methodology adopted and the results obtained remain valid in the light of the situation prevailing at that time."

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