

P-05-858 Fire Sprinklers are for life, not a fast buck!, Correspondence – petitioner to Committee, 03.06.19

Please accept my apologies for this last minute response, work demands have been considerable of late.

Hopefully it will be easier for the committee to properly consider my petition if I summarise below key issues and comments that cause me concern at the way Building Control May consider 'competence' to install sprinkler systems.

1. Why is it important for only certificates from UKAS third party accredited installers to be acceptable? Fire Suppression systems are critical to life safety and if installed by inexperienced and/or unqualified personnel there are many errors that can be made that would render the systems ineffective in the event of a fire. Post Grenfell should we really be taking a risk in approving installations by non accredited installers. Would gas installations be passed without a Gas Safe certificate?

2. An example of an installation by an unqualified party can be seen on a LinkedIn post of mine at <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:6452037867177852928> This post attracted over 20,000 views and a significantly large number of concerned comments.

3. There have been a significant number of installations that do not comply with the relevant British Standard. This is particularly the case with 'mist' systems. There are currently no such systems available that comply with BS8458 yet such systems are being installed by non accredited installers. One system in particular, Puck, failed its automatic testing procedures developing pipe bursts and leaks at many new properties in Wales causing much stress, expense, damage, and inconvenience to homeowners. Properly certificated and experienced installers are not fooled or misled by the delver marketing involved with mist suppression systems, but will readily install such systems when there is a fully compliant system available.

4. Building Control can easily be misled by the production of apparently suitable certificates of training. Third party certification bodies such as FIRAS recognise that holding a pass certificate in sprinkler design (the most commonly recognised certificate is produced by XACT - see <https://www.xact.org.uk/courses/bs-9251-sprinkler-system-design>) is only part of the process in assessing competency. There are many practical issues with an installation that are not covered within this 3 day course. Consequently, an installer's previous experience and understanding of critical elements of an installation are thoroughly assessed in determining approval for certification.

5. It is worth noting that the standard for commercial sprinkler systems, BSEN 12845, makes 3rd party accreditation mandatory. The main purpose of the commercial standard was the protection of property for insurance purposes with life safety additions being later additions to the original standard. The residential and domestic standards, BS9251 for sprinklers, BS8458 for mist systems, were written with life safety being the paramount consideration so why should the certification requirements be any less robust than the commercial standard requirements.

I would like to thank the committee for further considering my petition and hope that any recommendations in support of third party accreditation and certification will take our World leading fire suppression legislation even further down the path of the protection of our citizens from the devastating effects of fires in our homes.

Kindest regards

John Newman