

How healthy are your fire doors?



GIVING YOU THE FACTS ABOUT FIRE DOOR CERTIFICATION

How safe are YOUR fire doors?

Fire doors play a vital role as part of a building's passive fire protection system. They help subdivide a building into compartments, slowing down the spread of fire and smoke and allowing occupants to either escape the building by keeping escape routes clear of smoke and fire, or wait for rescue within a protected area.

Manufacturers often make claims that their products are tested and achieve a certain performance level. But did the products pass that test? And if so, then how do they prove it?

In the UK, all fire door designs should be tested to BS 476 Part 22 or the European equivalent BS EN 1634 Part 1, to represent how they will function in a fire, and that the manufacturer can demonstrate that there is evidence supporting the performance of the door.

It is also important for a manufacturer to demonstrate that the products they make are consistently 'fit for purpose' and that passing the fire test wasn't a one-off event.

Ways of demonstrating fire door performance

There are three ways in which manufacturers describe their compliance.

1. Self-declaration

Where a manufacturer makes their own claim of conformity by stating that the door, doorset or door component 'complies with' or is 'designed to' or 'tested to' a certain standard.

These claims are no guarantee that products will meet the right standards or that they will continue to do so. There are an increasing number of fire door manufacturers and component manufacturers who make such claims.

2. Test certificate

A test certificate tells the purchaser that a company's products have been tested and they have a certificate to prove it.

But caution still needs to be taken with this information. It provides only a snapshot of the product test.

YOUR TEST CERTIFICATE QUESTIONS

- Was the sample representative of what they ALWAYS produce?
- What standards did they manufacture to?
- Was the test independent? Who carried it out? And if so, when?
- Will future products be the same?
- What if materials, processes or designs change?
- How old is the test certificate? Has there been time for the designs to "drift" from the original tested specification?
- Is it another company's test evidence, and they've simply altered the product?
- Does it relate to the installed product?

3. Third-party certification

Third-party certification tests and verifies a fire door's design, performance, manufacturing process and quality assurance from manufacture to installation.

The company is independently audited to ensure that all the management and manufacturing processes and systems are in place to ensure consistency with the product that was tested.

The product too, is subjected to regular scrutiny, with frequent testing taking place on standard products to ensure that the test wasn't just a once-only event.

In the BWF-CERTIFIRE Fire Door and Doorset Scheme, all manufacturers and companies that are licensed to cut an aperture and glaze doors are third-party accredited.

What to look for on a certificate

It may seem an obvious statement, but the product must relate to its certificate. You may be surprised to know how many people just accept a certificate without checking it refers to the actual door or component used. It's not enough to just obtain a certificate or a photocopy.

In the case of door leaves manufactured under the BWF-CERTIFIRE Fire Door and Doorset Scheme, the label applied to the top of each door leaf shows the certificate (CF) number of the original door manufacturer, and if the door was cut with an aperture and glazed by a licensed converter, a second label denotes their certificate (CAF) number.

You should also ensure that the door is of the correct type as detailed in the certificate, e.g. panel, flush, moulded panel, etc. If the door is glazed, then the certificate or technical data sheet should show that this is within the scope of the test evidence and any subsequent assessments that may have been undertaken.

If the door is to be used in a configuration other than a single leaf with single action hinge, the test evidence should state that it can be used in that way. Using two single leaf doors installed as a pair may NOT be covered by the test evidence.

You can download the relevant documents from the CERTIFIRE website.

Test evidence and technical data sheets

The contents of the CF document explain the scope of test evidence relating to the door leaf design that has been tested, describing all the components that were fitted in the test and what configurations (SA/SL, SA/DL) etc. It also explains what glazing is permitted.

The data sheet also confirms what seals, hinges, closers and other ironmongery are permitted under the certification. This information is summarized on the instructions which accompany every door leaf manufactured under the BWF-CERTIFIRE Fire Door and Doorset Scheme.

Glazing of fire doors should be only undertaken by the door manufacturer or by a company authorised and certificated to carry out this work. In this case, the door will carry a second label stating that the door has either been factory-glazed by the door leaf manufacturer or by their licensed converter. The licensed converter's scope of work is also detailed on their certificate and is designated with a CAF number.

All labelled doors have a unique door number which allows full traceability of the door. The label should NEVER be removed from the top of the door.

Bespoke doors

Bespoke doors, e.g. replicas of those required for special applications such as Historic Buildings are certificated and third-party accredited under the BWF-CERTIFIRE Fire Door and Doorset Scheme. This is easily achieved because it is the design and type of door that is tested and certificated, meaning that a range of doors can be manufactured and certificated. Also, the company's Quality Management system and Scheme's audit procedures ensure that consistency is achieved.

Summary

To ensure fire door safety make sure you ONLY specify or use third-party certificated and accredited doors, frames and components.

Check that ALL components are compatible with the door's test evidence.

Check the certificate is relevant to the door and components that are fitted to the door.

Never cut apertures on site.

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