



# Cladding safety must apply to the whole built environment

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Following the two-year anniversary of the appalling tragedy at Grenfell Tower, we can reflect on the great collective efforts made towards ensuring improved safety standards for cladding. But it is crucial that we never become complacent with the rules and regulations – there is simply too much at stake.

It is vital that the construction industry and the government continually push for ever more rigorous safety standards, and that these are extended across the build environment.

## "Stadiums and hotels are the next logical step for examination"

In my view, this must include hotels and stadiums. Fundamentally, this comes down to an issue of public safety. People deserve to feel and be safe not only in their homes, but also at their offices and when attending a public event such as a pop concert or football match.

So far, the cladding debate has focused primarily on private residences.

Banning combustible materials on new high-rise residential builds over 18 m in height was a step in the right direction. This measure was then extended across hospitals, care homes and student accommodation.

But our drive towards safer buildings should not stop there, and nor should it be limited solely to our residences. Stadiums and hotels are the next logical step for examination.

## 'Imposing higher standards on ourselves'

Consider how many people attend football matches or watch gigs in large arenas. The average attendance at Premier League games in 2018 was 38,000. Clearly, we need to ensure that in

the event of a fire at one of these venues, that the construction materials used were the safest possible.

While it is essential for the government to widen the legislation on cladding for buildings such as stadiums and hotels, and as soon as possible, there is currently little sign that it is imminent.

We in the private sector must also take our own steps towards improved safety across the built environment.

Fundamentally, that will also require self-regulation and imposing higher standards on ourselves. If past mistakes have been made, then we must rectify them as soon as we can and put in place procedures that mitigate the risk of those mistakes ever being made again.

For example, in recent history the construction industry has been poor in its record-keeping of materials used, and this is true on even major construction projects.

And there is still a lack of knowledge through the construction supply chain about unsafe materials.

## **Pursuing safety 'relentlessly'**

Two immediate steps we could all take to tackle this would be to ensure that our own records are accurate, comprehensive and up to date, and to train our staff to the highest standards.

When we build, we construct homes and places for entertainment and leisure – and it is an immense privilege for us to contribute to society in this way.

That privilege brings with it great responsibility.

The push for safer cladding and buildings must continue to be pursued relentlessly, and its scope must be widened to ensure that our entire built environment is as safe as it can possibly be.



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