PR13-020706

75% Of All Buildings In London Are Under Threat From Fire

Anthony Tiernan of Interact Fire Solutions claims that there may be as many as 75% of all buildings that use secondary cladding at risk of premature collapse in a fire due to breaches in the thin film intumescent fire protection system previously applied to the structural steel.

Anthony Tiernan is a member of the ASFP and sits on the TG1 (Task Group), a forum set up by the ASFP to consider guidelines for intumescent coatings. Anthony is a member of RIBA and Interact Fire Solutions is a RIBA CPD Networks Provider.

Anthony said “I have carried out over 100 seminars and established through architects and subcontractors that the ASFP guidelines are largely unknown” These concerns which are detailed in the ASFP PR93 document and an independent report by Fagus Fire Consultants highlight the danger of using battens fixed directly to the steel section to support secondary cladding.

There is also evidence that even when the danger of this breach in the integrity is pointed out, pressure is applied on the architect to allow the breach in integrity. Anthony said that in one instance the architect admitted that “he had already used thin film on the columns to receive secondary cladding and felt that he had no choice but to continue with the system even though they agreed that the detail was breaching the integrity of the system.” On another occasion the architect had instructed the main contractor not to install the suspect system until it had been investigated. This was ignored by the main contractor who instructed the subcontractor to proceed.

Anthony added that “Architects often look embarrassed when the weakness of the system is explained to them. It is clear that they have seen these systems specified.”

A technical description of the problems associated with overcladding thin film intumescent can be found on Interact’s website, www.interactfire.co.uk as a presentation entitled “Design Solutions For Secondary Cladding”