

**2.4. Connétable C.H. Taylor of St. John of the Minister for Home Affairs regarding the safety of the cladding used on all high-rise residences in Jersey: 1(394)**

Will the Minister confirm, and provide for Members written confirmation from the Chief Fire Officer, that the cladding used on all high-rise residences in Jersey has been tested; and that the Chief Fire Officer is satisfied that the cladding used is not flammable?

**Connétable D.W. Mezbourian of St. Lawrence (Assistant Minister for Home Affairs - rapporteur):**

The Connétable has agreed that I may answer this, as I have responsibility for the fire service.

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

In fact, the Connétable, although present, is still *en défaut*, I think, so if someone could ...

**Male Speaker:**

If we could raise the *défait* on ...

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

Sorry, Minister for Home Affairs, I beg your pardon. It is the Minister for Home Affairs.

**The Connétable of St. Lawrence:**

I am able to answer, am I?

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

Yes.

**The Connétable of St. Lawrence:**

The Chief Fire Officer has confirmed that no cladding on any of Jersey's residential high-rise buildings has been identified as A.C.M. (aluminium composite material), the type that was used on Grenfell Tower. The Fire and Rescue Service continues to undertake surveys of other buildings in Jersey to identify if A.C.M. has been used elsewhere. The Chief Fire Officer is in regular communication with the U.K. (United Kingdom) National Fire Chief Officers' Council, which has confirmed that the Department for Communities and Local Government requires only aluminium composite material samples found by local authorities to be sent for testing. Consequently, no cladding material inspected, or collected, by our Fire and Rescue Service has been sent for testing. The Chief Fire Officer is reassured, by confirmation from the Department of the Environment's Building Regulations team, that all cladding on Jersey's residential high-rise buildings, installed in the last 20 years is constructed and installed in accordance with the fire safety standards set out in the Jersey Building Bylaws. This includes independent fire testing and certification. The Fire and Rescue Service is continuing to work with the Strategic Housing Unit, Building Control and with housing providers to improve fire safety standards in high-rise residences in Jersey.

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

Connétable, could I ask you to bring your answer to a close, please, because you are well over the one minute 30 seconds?

**The Connétable of St. Lawrence:**

Beg your pardon, Sir. I am always being told I talk too much.

**2.4.1 The Connétable of St. John:**

I thank the Assistant Minister for her response. I am, however, a little concerned that they have checked with the Planning Authority that the materials used pass the necessary fire tests because, in reality, so too did the cladding on the tower referred to in London. This is why I would specifically ask that tests be carried out independently on all cladding to ensure that it is fire safe and not just rely on the testing that has been proved inadequate in the case of Grenfell Tower.

**The Connétable of St. Lawrence:**

Yes, what I can confirm is that J.F.R.S. (Jersey Fire and Rescue Service) have undertaken an inspection of the 11 high-rise buildings in Jersey and I can confirm that Andium Homes has not used the cladding or insulation systems installed at the Grenfell Tower, or any similar cladding made of A.C.M. It is currently subject to testing by the Building Research Establishment in the U.K.

**2.4.2 Deputy R. Labey of St. Helier:**

The cladding may conform locally to U.K. standards, but those standards are being challenged daily. We have a very fine Chief Officer of the Fire Service. Does he have the autonomy and the budget to keep up-to-date with changing standards?

**The Connétable of St. Lawrence:**

Absolutely. What I can say is that the Fire Service is meeting regularly with Andium Homes and housing providers, as I mentioned earlier, to review the situation in light of the information coming from the U.K., which I think is what the Deputy is referring to. As lessons are learnt from the U.K., so they will be applied over here. If that means that we have to bring regulations to the States to bring standards up to the current U.K. standards, then we will be doing that. But that would, I believe, be led by the Department of the Environment under Building Regulations.

**2.4.3 Deputy R. Labey:**

Does the Chief Fire Officer have the authority, if he is concerned about the safety of the cladding, to instruct its removal?

**The Connétable of St. Lawrence:**

I know of no reason why he would not have that authority. But what I am able to do is reassure the Assembly that the A.C.M. material has not been found on any of the high-rise buildings that we have in Jersey, the 11 high-rise buildings. However, ongoing investigations are being undertaken by the Fire Service to ensure that the A.C.M. has not been used on other buildings.

**2.4.4 Senator S.C. Ferguson:**

I understand that it was not just the materials used at Grenfell Tower, but it was also the method of application of the insulation. Has that also been checked over here? As I understand it, there was an airgap between the insulation and the wall of the building. Has that been checked?

**The Connétable of St. Lawrence:**

What I can repeat, for the Senator, is that in the words of the Chief Fire Officer: “All insulation and cladding used on Jersey’s high-rise flats does meet the fire safety standards set under the Jersey Building Bylaws and is independently fire tested and certified.” All insulation and cladding.

**2.4.5 Senator S.C. Ferguson:**

But the Connétable has already said that we look to the U.K. for standards. Surely we should be using our common sense, as well as just following the U.K. slavishly when their standards have been found to be wanting.

**The Connétable of St. Lawrence:**

If the Jersey Fire and Rescue Service had any concern regarding the standard for the use of cladding they refer to the Building Research Establishment in the U.K. They are in dialogue with the B.R.E. (Building Research Establishment) about all standards for fire safety.

**2.4.6 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

I am afraid that the answer given by the Assistant Minister reminds me of that given by Kensington and Chelsea officials, in the early days, when they kept referring to building regs. They satisfied building regs and there has been no question about whether those building regs are fit for purpose, or should be updated. Is the Minister prepared to undertake testing under the new stringent test, which has produced 100 per cent failure in the samples tested ... is the Assistant Minister prepared to engage with U.K. authorities to independently test all of the materials under the new flame test available and is she prepared to examine building regs, to see if they are fit for purpose and need updating in Jersey?

**The Connétable of St. Lawrence:**

Fire safety, fire prevention, is paramount with the Jersey Fire and Rescue Service and I believe for every Member of this Assembly. The Chief Fire Officer and his officers are in constant dialogue with colleagues in the U.K. They are following the lessons that are being learned from the Grenfell fire tragedy closely. Anything that needs to be done over here to improve our fire safety standards and regulations will be done. As I referenced earlier, the reference to building regulations falls under the remit of the Minister for the Environment. However, the Chief Fire Officer, I think we should all, and we do all, have full and utter confidence in our Chief Fire Officer. I am not sure whether I have answered everything that the Deputy asked. I am sure he is going to ask me more.

**2.4.7 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Indeed, as predictable as night follows day. Two issues: will there be a review, inter-departmental if necessary, over the fitness for purpose of the building regs as they exist now? Do we need to revise them? Secondly, is she prepared to submit all materials for the new testing which has presented 100 per cent failure rate in the U.K., so something is wrong?

**Deputy S.G. Luce of St. Martin:**

I am very sorry, I just want to clear up something. The questions being asked of the Assistant Minister should be directed to me and not to her. Building Regulations fall under my control.

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

That is obviously a sense in which the Assistant Minister can answer that question.

**The Connétable of St. Lawrence:**

I do need to repeat what I have just told the Deputy. That Building Regulations fall under the remit of the Minister for Planning. I have every confidence that if the Chief Fire Officer felt that all of these materials needed to be sent for testing, he would do that. What I can do, and what I will do, is put the Deputy's question directly to the Chief Fire Officer and I will come back with a response for all Members.

**2.4.8 The Connétable of St. John:**

My original question was: have all high-rise residences in Jersey been tested? Not whether they comply with building regulations - because Grenfell Tower complied with building regulations - but the material used was inadequately tested. Can I please have an undertaking from the Assistant Minister that the materials will be tested to ensure that they are fireproof?

**The Connétable of St. Lawrence:**

The Chief Fire Officer has been working to the guidelines of the Department for Communities and Local Government, which has required that local authorities, who find that cladding consisting of A.C.M., aluminium composite material, be sent for testing. As I said in my opening comments, no cladding found in Jersey consists of A.C.M. Therefore, they have not been sent for testing, because that is not a requirement. Again, this is an operational question that the Constable is asking me and I will refer it to the Chief Fire Officer for his response and I will send that to all Members.