

Who Was to Blame? Not me!



How often do you hear the words “Who was responsible? Someone must have been to blame” when you learn of a serious fire reported in the papers or on TV?

One of the most important ways to prevent the spread of fire and stop the blame game is to correctly specify, install, maintain and inspect fire doors. So if everyone involved in the lifespan of a fire door recognised the potential consequences of their choices and actions, and took responsibility for them, then all fire doors would do their job in protecting human life and property.

Just another door?

Fire doors are the unsung heroes of fire safety. Most of the time they work just like any other door. But when a fire breaks out, they need to work as an engineered safety device. All the components have to work together to hold back the lethal spread of smoke and flame for a specified time to allow time for escape and for the fire and rescue service to do their job.

There’s a surprising lack of awareness and understanding of fire doors and how they work, even amongst those who have dealt with and checked them for many years. And those responsible for specifying, buying, installing or inspecting them are not always aware that if

Medguard Professional Healthcare

Tel: +353 (0) 1 835 2411

Fax: +353 (0) 1 969 5009

Email: service@medguard.ie

Website: www.medguard.ie

the wrong components (for example, the wrong type of door closer) are used, the door's performance can be compromised.

This lack of understanding can lead to short cuts and penny-pinching. It's only when a fire breaks out that the potentially lethal consequences are realised, often with devastating results.

Who should ensure that fire doors are fitted and working correctly?

Because no one wants to take responsibility the lines become blurred through the various stages of the process, even through inspection.

The BWF-CERTIFIRE Fire Door and Doorset Scheme has developed the Circle of Responsibility, an easy way of describing the process that can lead to potentially lethal sub-standard fire doors. The term is intended to alert all those involved in the process to the fact that, without a definitive specification or recommendation right at the start, cost considerations, ignorance and quick fix solutions could override safety when it comes to decisions about fire doors. The Circle of Responsibility ensures everyone gets it right, without blaming the next person

Each stage in the Circle is crucial. Here's what you can do.

Architect or specifier

- Insist on third-party certificated fire doors

Specifiers have the power to prevent decisions which might be based on cost, rather than safety, being taken further down the line by insisting upon third-party certificated fire doors. With a wide range of third-party certificated designs at competitive prices there is no reason not to set the standard at this all-important point in the decision-making process.

Merchant

- Only stock third-party accredited and certificated fire doors and components, including frames
- Ensure your staff are aware of their responsibilities when advising customers on fire safety
- Consider becoming a BWF Approved Fire Door Centre – contact us for details

There are now around 100 BWF Approved Fire Door Centres at builders' merchants, with staff trained to understand fire doors, their components and the relevant building regulations. Every BWF Approved Fire Door Centre commits to stocking the right ranges of compatible fire door components.

The BWF-CERTIFIRE Scheme also commits to keeping AFDCs up to date on changes in legislation and the industry.

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Inspector or building control officer

- Check the frame is the right one for the door
- Check the closer is compatible. Does it close the door onto the latch in a controlled way?
- Check for the fire door label on the door
- Use the BWF Gap tester to ensure the door is fitted with the correct 3 mm gaps all-round the door

Building Control Officers bear the final responsibility for checking and assessing fire doors, as part of the signing off procedure for a building. The only way to be absolutely sure that a fire door will do its job is if the assembly, as described in the original test report, is replicated.

Contractor, door fitter or installer

- Make sure you have bought and fitted the correct, compatible components
- Check the label and the fitting instructions that come with the door
- If in doubt ASK. Contact the merchant or the manufacturer

Contractors, fitters or installers need to ensure that the door matches the requirements on the architect's drawings, and complies with the building regulations. If a fire door is not fitted correctly, it is just an ordinary door.

Responsible person / facilities manager

- Make sure you check fire doors regularly
- Check hinges, seals, closers and handles
- Visit the BWF-CERTIFIRE and FDIS websites to access useful resources and details of the Fire Door Inspection Scheme
- Never leave fire doors propped open

In line with The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, facilities and office managers must ensure that fire doors are properly maintained. The BWF-CERTIFIRE Scheme recommends that fire door repairs are carried out only by accredited competent persons who are able to maintain the certification of the fire door.

By adopting a circle of responsibility, you involve everyone and ensure there are no compromises.

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