

The Need for International Fire Safety Standards and Why the UN is Supporting This

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SUMMARY

The pioneering development of International Fire Safety Standards (IFSS) now has the support of the United Nations and the World Bank, together with over 40+ member associations around the world as a result of the awful Grenfell Tower fire tragedy in London in June 2017 highlighting the lack of consistent global fire safety standards.

There has never been a greater need, in the public interest, to bring together professional bodies, standard setters, governments and users of standards to ensure best practice is shared, lessons learned, and standards are set at a high level across the world to ensure the safety of residents, occupiers and the public in buildings.

This full paper and the associated seminar, will explore the contradictions, the lack of consistency, the lack of standards altogether in some countries, and how the IFSS Coalition is driving this work forwards.

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1. WHAT IS IFSS?

IFSS stands for International Fire Safety Standards. It is a set of new, high level international standard principles that aims to provide greater clarity and consistency globally in the application of fire safety to buildings at a project, state, national, regional or international level. It sets out high level principles that any person involved in the design, construction or managing of a building globally would be proud to be associated with.

2. WHAT PROBLEM IS IFSS TRYING TO SOLVE?

Despite rapid globalisation, with investment funds flowing across borders and money pouring into built assets, and increasing number of different professionals operating across the world, the construction and real estate profession globally currently lacks a consistent set of high level principles for the design, construction, and management of buildings for fire safety. Differences in materials testing and certification, national building regulations/codes, and guidance on how to manage buildings in use, particularly higher risk buildings, means there is confusion, uncertainty and risk to the public. Multiple differing standards means there is no standard. For the first time at a global collaborative level, IFSS will introduce a set of standard principles that will bring greater consistency of minimum levels of fire safety and professionalism across the world.

3. WHAT IS AN INTERNATIONAL STANDARD?

In the context of the work being undertaken by the IFSS Coalition, an international standard is something that is established and agreed at the international level and which is implemented and delivered locally. The standard itself will be owned by the IFSS Coalition and not by any single organisation. IFSS organisations subscribe to the shared international standard and commit to its use and implementation through their membership.

4. HOW DOES AN INTERNATIONAL STANDARD WORK?

IFSS will set out universal principles & rules that provide classification, definition, analysis and presentation of fire safety standards at a project, state, national, regional or international level. Professional institutions will incorporate these high level standards and rules within their guidance or local standards, and we expect governments to support and/or adopt these principles.

All organisations in the IFSS Coalition will participate in the implementation of the shared international standard through their respective memberships and staff.

5. WHY NOT STICK WITH THE ESTABLISHED METHODS OF REGULATION FOR FIRE SAFETY?

At present, the many contrasting standards across the world have contributed to uncertainty and confusion in the testing, and approval, of construction methods, products and operation of buildings. Research has shown that inconsistent approaches to the assessment and regulation of fire safety can lead to loss of life in extreme cases through to a loss of confidence by governments, financiers, investors and the public in buildings.

6. WHERE WILL IFSS BE USED AND ADOPTED?

IFSS will be used throughout the world both in developed nations and developing nations. Each of the organisations in the IFSS Coalition has committed to its adoption throughout its own professional membership. By using the IFSS wherever these built environment professionals operate in the world, the public can be confident that fire safety will be delivered as part of the professional service offered by these qualified individuals.

Our aim is that there will be a public display certificate of compliance with the International Fire Safety Standards in all higher risk buildings where the public have access.

7. WHAT IS THE IFSS COALITION?

The IFSS Coalition is a group of professional and not-for-profit organisations responsible for researching, developing, publicising, and implementing International Fire Safety Standards for the construction and real estate sectors. The Coalition was established in late 2017 after the awful Grenfell Tower fire tragedy in London in June 2017 and was officially launched at the United Nations in Geneva on 9th July 2018; <https://www.unece.org/index.php?id=49147>

The IFSS Coalition supports the creation, maintenance, and use of high quality international standards, developed using a transparent and inclusive standard setting process. Each of the Coalition organisations has signed a declaration of support and commitment to promote and implement IFSS, and to encourage world markets to accept and adopt it.

8. THE INTERNATIONAL FIRE SAFETY STANDARDS COALITION

The IFSS Coalition is a partnership of leading professional body and standards organisations from across the globe, committed to producing and supporting one shared set of standards for fire safety. The Coalition have created a Standard Setting Committee (SSC) dedicated to realising the vision of shared and international standards to promote fire safety in the public interest.

Full Members of the Coalition so far;

ABC – Association of Building Compliance (NZ) <http://www.abciqp.org.nz/about>

ACAI – Association of Consultant Approved Inspectors
<http://www.approvedinspectors.org.uk/>

AEEBC – The Association of European Experts in Building and Construction
<http://aeebc.org/>

API – Australian Property Institute <https://www.api.org.au/>

APS – Association for Project Safety <https://www.aps.org.uk/>

BAFE – British Approvals for Fire Equipment <https://www.bafe.org.uk/about-us/>

BCA – Building Control Alliance <http://buildingcontrolalliance.org/>

BSSIG – Building Surveyors Special Interest Group (South Africa) –

CABE – Chartered Association of Building Engineers <https://www.cbuilde.com/the-cabe/>

CASLE – Commonwealth Association of Surveying & Land Economy <http://www.casle.org/>

CEBC - Consortium of European Building Control bodies <http://www.cebc.eu/>

CFPA-Asia – Confederation of Fire Protection Associations – Asia <https://www.cfpa.com>

CIAT – Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists <https://www.ciat.org.uk/>

CIBSE – Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers <https://www.cibse.org/>

CIOB – Chartered Institute of Building <https://www.ciob.org/>

CIRIA – Construction Industry Research & Information Association <https://www.ciria.org/>

CTBUH – Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat <http://www.ctbuh.org/>

CTIF – International Association of Fire & Rescue Services <https://ctif.org/>

Engineers Australia - <https://www.engineersaustralia.org.au/>

FIA – Fire Industry Association <https://www.fia.uk.com/>

FIG – Federation International de Geometre, an international umbrella body of surveying professional bodies globally <http://www.fig.net/>

FPA – Fire Protection Association <https://www.thefpa.co.uk>

FPA Australia – Fire Protection Association Australia <http://www.fpaa.com.au/>

HKIS – Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors <https://www.hkis.org.hk/en/>

ICC – International Code Council <https://www.iccsafe.org/>

IFE – Institution of Fire Engineers <https://www.ife.org.uk/>

IPREA – Institute of Philippine Real Estate Appraisers <https://www.iprea.org>

IWFM - Institute of Workplace and Facilities Management <https://www.iwfm.org.uk/>

LABC – Local Authority Building Control <https://www.labc.co.uk/>

NFIA – National Fire Industry Association (Australia) <https://nfia.com.au/>

NFPA – National Fire Protection Association <https://www.nfpa.org/>

NHBC – National House Building Council <http://www.nhbc.co.uk/>

NIFHA – Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations <https://www.nifha.org/>

NZIBS – New Zealand Institute of Building Surveyors <https://www.buildingsurveyors.co.nz/>

RIBA – Royal Institute of British Architects <https://www.architecture.com/>

RICS - Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors <https://www.rics.org/uk/>

SCDF – Singapore Civil Defence Force <https://www.scdf.gov.sg/>

SFPE – Society of Fire Protection Engineers <https://www.sfpe.org/>

SGSA – Sports Ground Safety Authority <http://www.safetyatsportsgrounds.org.uk/>

SIBL – Singapore Institute of Building Ltd <http://www.sibl.com.sg/>

The World Bank <http://www.worldbank.org/>

Underwriters Laboratories Inc – <https://www.ulstandards.ul.com>

United Nations - <https://www.unece.org/info/ece-homepage.html>

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Each of these organisations are listed on the IFSS website - <https://ifss-coalition.org/>

Potential full Members of the Coalition wishing to join can complete the online form or email gstrong@rics.org

WHAT IS AN IFSS SUPPORTER ?

An IFSS Supporter is an organisation that supports a collaborative approach to the development of international standards and commits, in principle, to the adoption of IFSS.

IFSS Supporters can include, but are not limited to, the following types of organisation;

- Architects and designers
- Banks and lending institutions
- Construction-related software providers
- Construction cost data service providers
- Construction consultancy firms
- Construction industry service providers
- Construction materials testing firms
- Construction companies (eg multinational firms with international construction portfolios)
- Construction products firms
- Construction products trade associations
- Engineering consultancies
- Facilities management firms
- Fire engineers
- Fire consultancy firms
- Fire risk assessors
- Property investment firms and developers
- Property management firms
- Universities and academics.

Prospective IFSS Supporter organisations are asked to express their interest through any member of the IFSS Coalition, by completing the form online at <https://ifss-coalition.org/>

or by emailing gstrong@rics.org for further information

COMMENTS: This is an important subject, cross border, affecting millions of people. It would be remiss of FIG representing surveying associations not to be at the forefront of this work in the public interest.

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