

What buildings, what building works and what building safety risks do the Building Safety Act apply to?



What buildings?

The Building Safety Act applies to most buildings, however it contains a particular focus on high-rise residential buildings, because evidence shows that the spread of fire or the occurrence of structural failure, can have the biggest impact on buildings in residential use and above a certain height threshold.

Therefore a new strengthened regulatory regime for building safety in the Act applies to so-called “higher-risk buildings”. Such buildings are defined by their height and their use, namely they are at least 18 metres in height or at least 7 storeys high, and they contain at least 2 residential units. Care homes and hospitals are included within that definition. A residential unit can be a dwelling, a flat, a bedroom in a hall of residence, or any other unit of living accommodation.

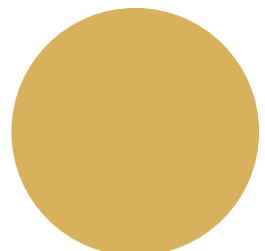
As at February 2021, the Government estimated that the total number of residents living in residential buildings in England over 18 metres or at least 7 storeys tall, was 1.31 million. The proportion of the population of England living in high-rise flats was approximately 2%. Often these people are amongst the poorer sections of society, as was the case at Grenfell.

What building works?

The term building works generally includes constructing new buildings, making buildings bigger, altering buildings and changing what they are used for. It also covers installing a “controlled service” or a “controlled fitting”. A boiler is an example of a controlled service and a replacement window is an example of a controlled fitting. Renovation of thermal elements is also building work. That includes roofs and external walls.

What building safety risks?

Government commissioned research by the Health and Safety Executive, concluded that the major accident hazards in a higher-risk residential building, are rapid onset escalating fire, structural failure, or explosion events. Therefore those are the risks that the Act looks to address.





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