

EWS1, what you need to know

After the Grenfell Tower fire in June 2017 there was a focus on removing aluminium composite material (ACM) from buildings over 18 metres. Over time, the focus broadened to take in other types of combustible cladding. In December 2018 the Government issued Advice Note 14 containing guidance for building owners on the steps to take to tackle non-ACM materials on the external walls of high-rise buildings. Owners were advised to check “general fire precautions” and ensure that external wall systems were “safe”. This can require an intrusive inspection by a qualified individual to check the materials used and how they were installed.

In 2019 mortgage providers began to require assurances about the safety of external wall systems as a condition of approving mortgage applications. There was concern that flats in high-rise blocks wouldn't represent good security and that owners could be liable for remediation costs. Surveyors took the view that flats in blocks without a certificate showing compliance with Advice Note 14 had a value of £0 or significantly less than the asking price. An increasing number of mortgage applications were rejected; sales started to fall through.

In response, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) led a cross-industry working group to consider best practice in the reporting and valuation of tall buildings within the secured lending arena with a view to agreeing a new standardised process.

The EWS1 process was agreed by the industry in December 2019 – it is described as an “industry-wide valuation process which will help people buy and sell homes and re-mortgage in buildings above 18 metres (six storeys).”

1. What is the EWS1 form?

The EWS1 form is a way for residential building owners, of buildings above 18m in height, to prove to lenders and valuers that the external wall system (cladding) has been assessed by an expert. The form requires a ‘qualified professional’ to conduct an assessment on the external wall system (made up of the outside wall of a residential building, including cladding, insulation, and cavity barrier system) before signing one of the two options in the EWS1 form. An EWS1 form is valid for 5 years from signature.

2. Who is responsible for safety of an external wall system?

The building owner or managing agent is responsible for establishing what materials make up the external walls building. They need to confirm what any external wall system is made up of and whether an assessment is required. The building owners are the only ones who can progress the assessment process.

3. Which buildings currently require EWS1 forms?

The EWS1 form currently applies to individual residential leasehold buildings over 18 metres tall that have external wall cladding systems. While the EWS1 form is not applicable for properties below 18 metres, lenders and investors are increasingly requesting the same level of comfort across their entire portfolio following several fires in buildings under 18m in height involving fire in external wall systems.

4. Who should fill out the EWS1 forms?

The forms require a competent person to complete. For option A of the form, the signatory should be a member of a relevant professional body within the construction industry. For option B of the form, the signatory should be member of a relevant professional body that deals with fire safety in the built environment. This could be a Chartered Engineer with the Institution of Fire Engineers or equivalent.

5. What does the EWS1 form ask?

The form includes two options.

Option A - is for buildings where the materials used in the external wall would be unlikely to support combustion.

Option B - is for buildings where combustible materials are present in external wall and Option A therefore does not apply. It means that a more detailed review is required.

The signatory should use either the Option A approach or the Option B approach and delete/cross out the unused option. Within each option there are sub-options, and the user should tick the box of the relevant sub-option.

6. What else is involved in the process?

Documentation will need to be reviewed, possibly alongside photographic or other evidence taken at the time the building was constructed, to satisfy the requirements of the EWS1 form. If this evidence and documentation is missing or inconclusive then intrusive tests may be required. This could include opening-up works to the external walls and cladding to check the materials used in the construction and the quality of workmanship in the installation.

7. Who can sign off the EWS1 form?

For Option A the signatory would need the expertise to identify the relevant materials within the external wall and attachments, as well as whether fire resisting cavity barriers and fire stopping measures have been installed correctly. However, this wouldn't necessarily require expertise in fire engineering. The signatory should be a member of a relevant professional body within the construction industry.

For Option B the signatory of the EWS1 form would need expertise in the assessment of the fire risk presented by external wall materials and should be a member of a relevant professional body that



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deals with fire safety in the built environment. This could be a Chartered Engineer with the Institution of Fire Engineers or equivalent.

8. Who pays for the EWS1 and any works required?

The building owner, which can be an individual leaseholder, may have to bear the cost if remedial works are required.

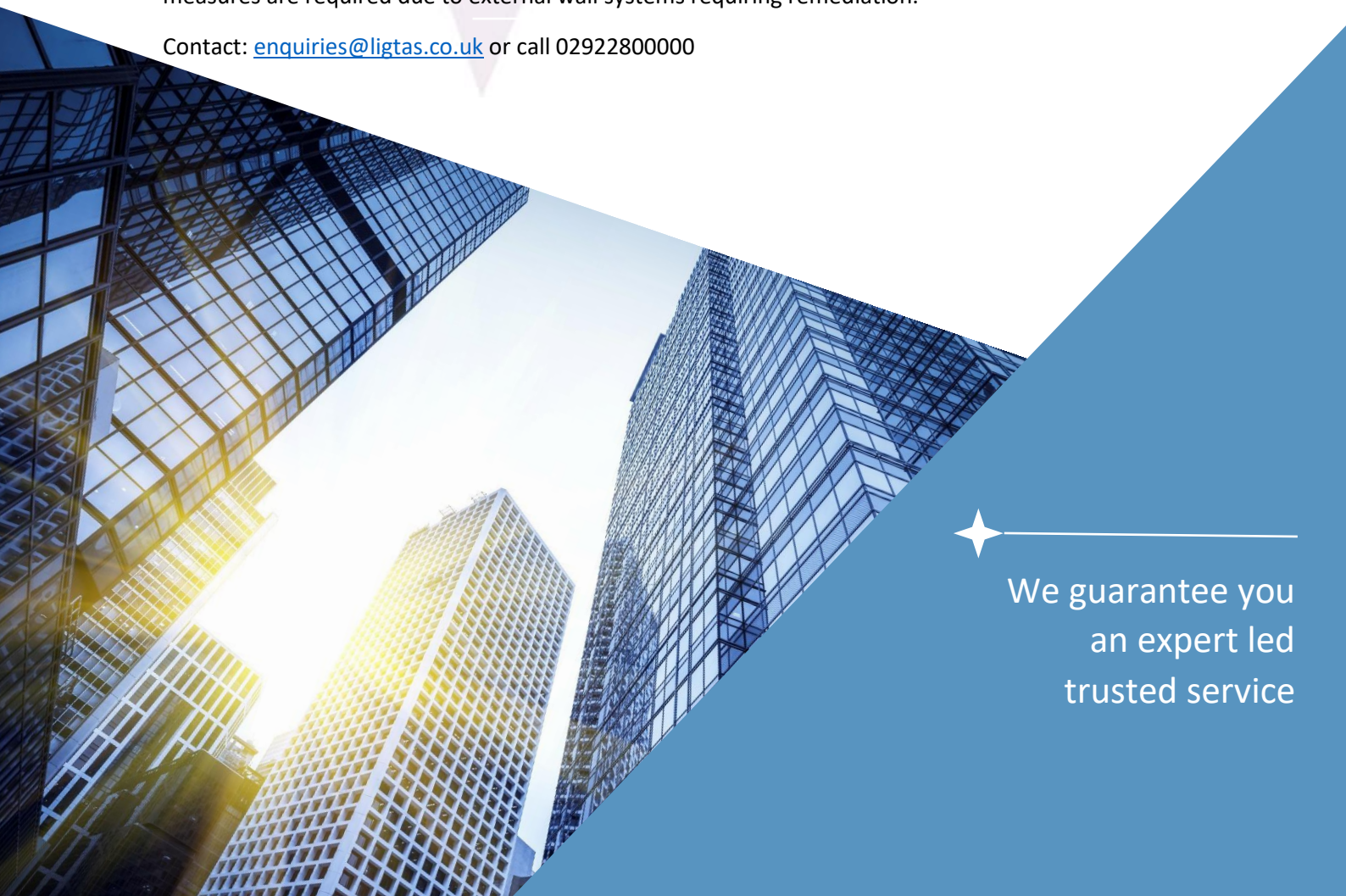
9. Who can do cladding remediation works?

Multiple disciplines and different specialists need to be involved in implementing any necessary changes, including fire engineers, cladding engineers, and construction consultants.

10. What can Ligtas do to help?

Ligtas can assist you by sign posting you to the right people to get the EWS1 forms completed. Once your EWS1 form is completed, Ligtas can support with any review of the buildings fire risk assessment that is needed or provide bespoke consultancy advice, especially where additional fire safety measures are required due to external wall systems requiring remediation.

Contact: enquiries@ligtas.co.uk or call 02922800000



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