

uPVC DOORS IN FLATS

Hazard Alert

18/06/08

ADDENDUM TO FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT

Site:

Date:

uPVC front doors in flats:

Background Information from Companion Health and Safety

Following a fire in a block of flats the local Fire Brigade drew attention to the problems with the common habit of the front doors of flats being replaced with non-compliant uPVC doors. In the fire, a uPVC front door virtually melted, so it could not be opened, and it allowed fumes to escape into the stairwell and injure a second floor resident. Luckily there were no fatalities but a child in the flat suffered serious burns.

uPVC doors are generally acceptable for the front doors of houses, and other dwellings where the exit is to a safe external area. However where the front door of a flat opens onto a means of escape such as a common corridor or stairwell, 30-minutes fire resistance is required.

Modern flats should have been fitted with 30-minute fire-resisting doors when constructed, but there are many older flats with doors which are not fire-resisting because of glazing, poor fit, inadequate materials etc. There are also flats which originally had fire-resisting doors, but where the owners have fitted replacements that do not meet the 30-minute fire requirement.

A number of fire authorities have been consulted. They say it would be difficult to enforce the replacement of all doors that are not 30 minute fire-resistant. However the fire authority for the burned-out flat insisted that all the uPVC front doors in the development are replaced with fire-resisting doors.

In view of this fire, we are encouraging clients to have such front doors replaced and ensure that detection alarm systems are in place in common areas where required.

Recommendation

It is recommended that non-compliant uPVC doors (and ideally all other non-compliant doors,) be replaced with 30 minute fire-resisting doors (FD30 standard) and that if these non-compliant uPVC doors are to remain in place for any length of time, detection alarm systems, if not already in place, should be installed in common parts.