



The Building Safety Act: A Simplified Overview





Introduction

The Building Safety Act, which received Royal Assent in April 2022, represents a landmark change in the UK's approach to building safety, fundamentally transforming the landscape for construction businesses, building owners, and operators. The Act emerged as a response to the tragic Grenfell Tower fire in June 2017, which underscored the urgent need for more robust building safety regulations. The following guide outlines the most important takeaways from the act for the benefit of employers and their workplaces.

Key Aspects of the Act:

-  **1. Regulatory Framework:** The Act sets a clear framework aimed at delivering high-quality, safe homes. It places explicit responsibilities on those involved in design and construction, with stringent penalties for non-compliance.
-  **2. Higher Risk Buildings:** Buildings over 18 metres or with at least seven floors and two residential units, including hospitals and care homes, are classified as higher risk. These buildings must develop and maintain a "golden thread" of information, ensuring comprehensive documentation from design to occupation.
-  **3. Building Safety Regulator:** A new regulator has been established to oversee building safety, professional standards, and the registration of building control officers. All higher-risk buildings must be registered, and owners must apply for a Building Assessment Certificate to demonstrate effective management and resident safety.
-  **4. Accountability and Competence:** Building owners must demonstrate effective safety measures and clear lines of responsibility. Key roles include the Principal Accountable Person during occupation and duty holders responsible for fire and building safety throughout the building's lifecycle.
-  **5. Golden Thread of Information:** This vital component requires maintaining detailed, digital records throughout a building's lifecycle, promoting transparency and accountability. The information must be accurate, easily understandable, and up-to-date, supporting safety and quality management.



6. New Standards and Competence Requirements: The Act introduces new regulations for the competence of those involved in building work, with statutory requirements for designers, constructors, and maintainers. The British Standards Institution has released a Code of Practice outlining core criteria.



7. Gateway System: To ensure building safety at every stage, a new Gateway system has been implemented, encompassing design, construction, and completion phases.



8. Fire Safety Standards: The Act specifies new fire safety standards, including an asset exchange specification called FireIE, differing from the existing COBie specification.



9. Penalties for Non-compliance: The Building Safety Regulator has the authority to impose strict penalties for non-compliance, including criminal charges. Homeowners can claim compensation for substandard work for up to 15 years, applied retrospectively.



10. Additional Measures: Developers must join the New Homes Ombudsman, and a National Regulator for Construction Products will be established. All building control inspectors must register with the BSR, with non-registered inspections becoming a criminal offence post April 2024.

Conclusion

In summary, the Building Safety Act is a pivotal step towards ensuring safety, transparency, and accountability in the construction industry. It emphasizes the importance of comprehensive information management and sets a high bar for competence and safety standards across the board.

Navigating the complexities of the Building Safety Act can be challenging. For bespoke guidance and expert support to ensure your compliance and enhance your building safety practices, get in touch with THSP today.

