

The Urgent Need for International Fire Safety Standards (IFSS) and Why the UN is Supporting this

Gary Strong, United Kingdom

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.

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.

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.

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.

The UN anticipate adopting the IFSS as UN standards, meaning that all countries in the UN will have to comply.

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.

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, which is in excess of 500,000 individuals. 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 ultimately 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.

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 and supported by the UN.

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.

For more details of the Coalition members, visit the IFSS website <https://ifss-coalition.org/coalition-organisations/> or see Appendix 1

NEXT STEPS

The IFSS Coalition have now issued the first high level principles of fire safety standards document for public consultation. Please participate in the consultation, by visiting the IFSS website <https://ifss-coalition.org/news/>

The questions are in Appendix 2.

APPENDIX 1

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/>

ASFP – Association for Specialist Fire Protection <http://asfp.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.cbuide.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.cio.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/>

EPIC – Engineering Panels In Construction <https://www.epic.uk.com>

European Fire Safety Alliance - <http://www.eurofsa.org>

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

FIG – Federation International de Geometre <http://www.fig.net/>

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

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

FSEU – Fire Safe Europe <https://firesafeurope.eu/>

FSF - Fire Sector Federation – www.firesectorfederation.co.uk

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/>

IFMA – International Facility Management Association <https://ifma.org>

IMA – Insulation Manufacturers Association www.insulationmanufacturers.co.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/>
MBA – Modern Building Alliance <https://www.modernbuildingalliance.eu/>
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/>
PAM – Malaysian Institute of Architects <http://www.pam.org.my/>
PIMA – Polyisocyanurate Insulation Manufacturers Association
https://www.polyiso.org/page/About_Polyiso
RIBA – Royal Institute of British Architects <https://www.architecture.com/>
RICS - Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors <https://www.rics.org/uk/>
RMIT University, Melbourne <https://www.rmit.edu.au/>
RTPI – Royal Town Planning Institute <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/>
SBCA – [Structural Building Components Association](https://www.sbcindustry.com/about-sbca) <https://www.sbcindustry.com/about-sbca>
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/>
SIA – Singapore Institute of Architects <https://sia.org.sg/>
SIBL – Singapore Institute of Building Ltd <http://www.sibl.com.sg/>
RMIT University <https://www.rmit.edu.au/>
The World Bank <http://www.worldbank.org/>
Underwriters Laboratories Inc – <https://www.ul.com/>
United Nations - <https://www.unece.org/info/ece-homepage.html>

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.

APPENDIX 2

Consultation – please respond by completing this form;

Name:

Organisation:

Type of organisation :

(Regulatory body, fire and rescue services, fire safety engineering/consultancy, third party body, research institute, Architect, Manufacturer...)

Email:

Consultation: from Thursday 23rd January 2020 until Monday 23rd March 2020

BACKGROUND

This consultation seeks views on the proposed International Fire Safety Standard Coalition Common Principles.

At present, the many contrasting approaches and requirements across the world have resulted in significant variations in the design, approval, construction methods, products and operation of buildings. In some cases, certain regions or nations may not have their own building regulatory documents and may depend upon national and international references for the design and regulation of buildings (i.e. IBC, NFPA). The development of a common understanding of building design, construction and management and how the impact of fire affect these will help to build trust and confidence amongst the many and varied stakeholders.

APPROACH

The IFSS Coalition believes that sharing knowledge of the principles of fire safety which have been adopted around the globe represents an important opportunity to educate stakeholders and improve protection for people and buildings from the risk of fire and could help drive improvements in safety in both developed and developing economies. This first edition of IFSS-CP primarily focuses upon safety principles rather than attempting to standardize specific testing methods as a first step towards establishing a common framework and attempt to minimise the social and economic impact of fire on communities.

Q1. Do you agree with the approach of establishing overarching principles rather than looking at prescriptive requirements? If so why and if not please explain your thinking.

(Add your comments here)

Q2. Do you believe that the International Fire Safety Standard Common Principles and Framework will be beneficial for your purposes? If yes, how and in what circumstances would you use it? If no, why not?

(Add your comments here)

OBJECTIVES

The aims and objectives set in place by the IFSS **Coalition** were to 1) research existing relevant fire safety Principles and Fire Codes for Buildings to identify current good practice and to evaluate deficiencies in markets and thereby establish different market needs, and 2) develop a conceptual framework which will guide the drafting and understanding of **IFSS-Common Principles** into the future. (see the Consultation Document for the complete aims and objectives).

Q3. Does the draft IFSS-CP meet the aims and objectives from the Coalition as described on Section 1,2 page XX of the attached Consultation Document? If not, why?

(Add your comments here)

COMMON PRINCIPLES

IFSS CP states that the following 5 Principles shown below, should be considered at each stage of the Property Life.

- Prevention
- Detection & Communication
- Occupant Safety
- Containment
- Extinguishment

Q4. Do you believe that there are any other principles that need to be added? If yes, what are they and why should they be added?

(Add your comments here)

SUB PRINCIPLES

Section 3 provides an indicative list of “sub-principles” that should be considered at each stage of the property life cycle.

Q5. Are there any sub principles that you feel should be added to this list? Please provide the Principle (i.e. Prevention, Detection, Occupant Safety, Containment, Extinguishment) and Stage (i.e. 1,2,3,4,5) together with your reasoning behind any additions or removals.

(Add your comments here)

Q6. Do you believe that the IFSS CP reflect or would be able to enhance, support or advance the current market practices and regulatory framework within your market? If not, why not?

(Add your comments here)

GENERAL FEEDBACK

Q7. What additional information or requirements would you like to see included in future editions of IFSS CP.

(Add your comments here)

NEXT STEPS

For next actions, it is the plan of the Coalition and Standards Setting Committee to develop a broader taxonomy on common fire safety terms and undertake the task of compiling the appropriate existing regulatory codes, standards, and guidelines that govern various regions. The enormity of this task has been considered; however, it appears to be the next logical development in satisfying these objectives.

Q8. Which of the following would be helpful for the IFSS SSC to work on next? Please provide your reasoning for the option(s) chosen below. If there are other matters that you think the IFSS SSC should work on next, please provide the option(s) and your reasoning.

- a) **A glossary of common fire safety terms**
- b) **A directory of and roadmap to existing regulatory codes,**
- c) **Standards,**
- d) **Guidelines**

(Add your comments here)

Q9.

Do you have any further comments?

(Add your comments here)

International Fire Safety Standards - the Urgent Need (10626)
Gary Strong (United Kingdom)

FIG Working Week 2020
Smart surveyors for land and water management
Amsterdam, the Netherlands, 10–14 May 2020