



Guide to balcony refurbishment

**Practical advice for leaseholders and building managers
to help you to understand current legislation and best practices
for replacing combustible materials on high rise buildings.**



The fire at Grenfell Tower sparked many concerns regarding the external walls of buildings. Since then, the government has introduced new fire safety measures for external walls in an attempt to ensure safety for residents of high-rise buildings. In the first round of regulations, buildings over the height of 18 meters used for residential purposes required the removal of all combustible cladding in external walls. On June 24, 2019, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) issued a further advisory note on risks arising from balconies on residential buildings.

This advice note applies to every residential building, irrespective of its height. In this advice note, the MHCLG asked for the removal of combustible materials from the construction of every balcony to reduce the risk, in case of a fire. As a leaseholder or building manager, here's what you should know about refurbishing your balconies to meet these new safety standards:



For further information:

T: +44 (0)3300 94 94 11

E: sales@mydek.com

www.mydek.com

Assessing the Risks

Before deciding to refurbish your balconies it is advisable to engage the services of a qualified fire assessor who can determine whether your building and balconies will meet the criteria for an EWS form that will pass your building as safe. They will assess the condition of the balconies and identify the level of combustibility risk presented by the components used in the balcony construction.

Here are some things you must assess based on the latest advice note by the MHCLG:

- Identify all the materials used in the construction of your existing balconies and assess the combustibility risk of each.
- Check whether there are enough fire protection measures in place to avoid the spread of fire through the external walls or from one balcony to another
- If there is any use of combustible material in the construction of your balconies check with a professional on how to rectify it.
- Check and review what policies are in place for residents with regards to what can and cannot be stored on balconies and any activities such as BBQ's are safely regulated or disallowed.



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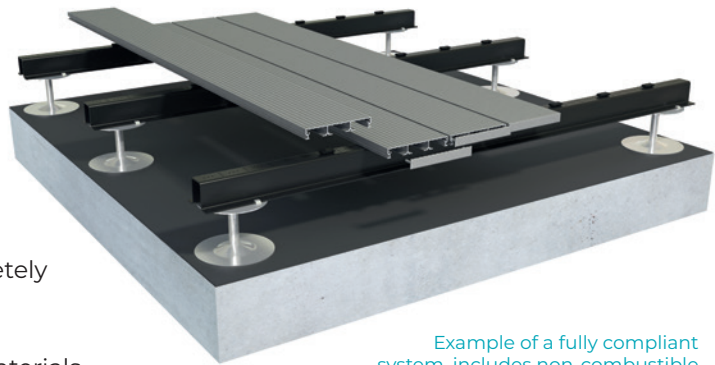
Replacing Old Balcony Decking with New Non-Combustible Decking

Once you've assessed your current balconies, you may decide to refurbish them to ensure they are compliant with the latest fire safety regulations. According to the new rules, the external wall (including the balcony) of every residential building needs to be constructed using materials that are A2-s1, d0 rated or Class A1 under the European classification system, EN13501.

So, when selecting your decking provider, don't forget to check if every decking material used is non-combustible and compliant with the European classification system. Ask to see the relevant certifications so that you are completely sure of compliance.

But just eliminating combustible materials on balconies isn't enough to ensure safety. Here are some additional things to keep in mind while refurbishing your balconies:

- The quality and ease of install of your decking structure
- The design of your substructure
- Installation and logistics strategy
- Health and safety during the process
- Access solution, material movement and debris removal



Example of a fully compliant system, includes non-combustible substructure components.



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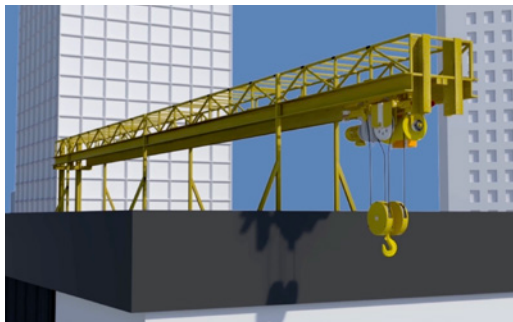
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Access Systems - Planning of Work

The MyDek Rapid Access system has been developed to access balconies from the outside so we can safely scale a high-rise building with a vertical stack of balconies. The way the access system works is via a roof beam that is a cantilever structure that allows us to hang the cage using a very robust wire rope. The Cradle itself uses simple hoist mechanism and allows us to lift personnel and materials up and down the building. Our innovative approach ensures stable and steady installation.

Our system also includes a safe way of getting in and out of balconies using a ladder system and enables the balconies to be refurbished without disturbing the residents.

The whole system is also modular and can be easily transported through standard sized personnel lifts within a building ensuring transport and handling is much quicker and easier than traditional scaffolding.



1 The cantilever roof beam comes in component format and can be transported to the roof via standard personnel lifts.



2 The cradle is used to transport running ladders that fix to the existing balcony rails



3 The ladder/running rails securely slot into each other, self building up the side of the building.



4 The cradle provides transport for both construction workers and materials, meaning there is no requirement to enter apartments.

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Choosing a Decking Installer for Refurbishment Projects

Getting the right installer could mean the difference between success and disaster when refurbishing your balcony decks. Here are some the top tips to ensure you get it right:

Experienced Operatives with Skills and Qualifications to Work at Height.

Make sure the installers you select are experienced and trained at working at height and managing the risks associated with such work. Working at height requires specific skills and experience to do so safely. The principles of installing decking are very similar, regardless of the material. When looking at a refurbishment project; however, the main challenge is the need to remove old, non-compliant material and replace it with new compliant material in a high-risk environment, i.e. a high-rise building. These risks, which include falling from height and dropping items, can have severe consequences.

TIP:

Ask your installer for Risk Assessments and Method Statements (known as RAMS) and ensure you are happy with what they are proposing before instructing them to commence work.

Sufficient Resource in Terms of Staff and Suitable Equipment

Select an installer that has the necessary resources available to manage the responsibility of such a challenging task. This includes staff trained in high-rise lifting of materials and operatives, along with an experienced, full-time project manager who will oversee the day to day activities. A health and safety advisor, surveyor and competent on-site supervisors are also essential to the operation. In addition, the installer should have the correct tools and equipment to meet all H&S and CDM requirements.

TIP:

Ask your installer for a register of all their operatives current equipment tickets (licences). This will give you a good feel for both their level of competence as well as their attention to health and safety.



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Expertise – Don't Risk Installers with Limited Experience and Competency.

Due to the significant need for work in the refurb market, especially as it relates to cladding and decking, there is a natural influx of new players seeking new work opportunities. Many companies will claim to be experts but do not always have the expertise or experience to manage a refurbishment project properly. It is essential to check the contractor's track record in refurbishment, especially on high rise buildings, to ensure they have the necessary skills and experience.

Making balconies safer is at the heart of what we're committed to and the end result is what matters most to us. Our team are here to advise and support each step of the way to ensure your balcony refurbishment is a positive experience.

Contact our team today for free and friendly advice.

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TIP:

It is nearly always worth paying that little bit extra for the experience and competency! Remember the old saying, "the Bitterness of Poor Quality Remains Long After the Sweetness of Low Price is Forgotten".



About MyDek®?

The **MyDek** team harnesses a huge range of experience, creativity, passion and drive to make balconies and terraces safe places to be. Drawn from different areas of the construction industry our team brings together extensive knowledge of specification, technical compliance and outstanding innovation to create a non-combustible decking system that delivers on our mantra of Safe. Smart. Sustainable. **So relax, you're in safe hands.**

Safe. Smart. Sustainable.

Our ethos runs through everything we do. We're passionate to ensure that our products reflect these values and make a significant contribution to residential balconies and terraces as safe and enjoyable places.

The philosophy that supports all our products



Safe.



Smart.



Sustainable.

MYDEK®
Non-combustible decking systems

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