

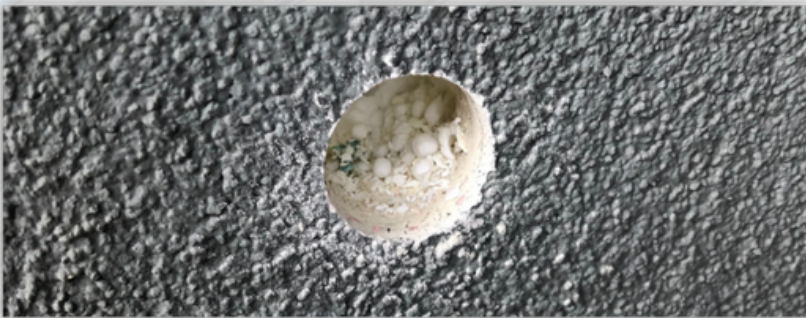


Combustible Cladding Frequently Asked Questions

What is combustible cladding?

Combustible cladding is a broad term for materials covering a building that have a high propensity to combust. This includes timber, aluminium composite panels (ACP), expanded polystyrene (EPS) and sandwich panels.

ACP and EPS are commonly used cladding materials that cover all or part of a building's exterior and are not structural. Both products have become popular as a quick and effective method of covering buildings or improving its aesthetic appeal. However, any external cladding material that burns, including timber, is considered flammable cladding.



Expanded polystyrene (EPS)



Aluminium composite panel (ACP)



What is the problem with cladding?

The issue many buildings are facing is that some cladding products used in the past are dangerous – they can be easily ignited and then burn, produce noxious smoke, and allow the rapid spread of fire. This compromises the safety of the building, adjoining properties, and all occupants.

In 2014 the Lacrosse apartment tower in Docklands caught fire from a single cigarette discarded on an apartment balcony. The fire spread rapidly through 15 levels of the building and affected approximately 500 occupants who needed emergency evacuation and accommodation. The combustible ACP panels were the primary cause of the rapid spread of fire up the external walls of the building.

What action has been taken?

Public concern and government action started the movement in 2017 towards the rectification of non-compliant combustible cladding. Cladding Safety Victoria was established to provide funding and guidance for the rectification of combustible cladding on privately owned residential buildings that had been assessed as high risk or subject to a Building Notice or Order.

In 2023 the Cladding Remediation Partnership Program, underpinned by Minister's Guideline 15 and the Cladding Risk Mitigation Framework, shifted the focus to assisting owners of apartment and residential accommodation buildings where combustible cladding is present but poses a lower risk. This strategy allows for some combustible cladding to remain in certain configurations.

How can AESG help mitigate the risk?

AESG's combustible material identification report provides a cost-effective method for identifying combustible cladding.

This report summarises our non-invasive site inspection findings, identifying estimated percentages of different wall material coverage, identification of ignition sources and recommended actions in line with the requirements of Minister's Guideline 15. Cladding risks can be assessed as an acceptable risk, or a low, elevated or unacceptable risk.

Risk factors and risk mitigation recommendations to reduce the risk of fire, spread and damage are provided, giving cost-effective and efficient methods of risk reduction relating to combustible cladding.

The combustible material identification report is a critical negotiation tool when dealing with insurance brokers and underwriters. Without specific information regarding the building's construction, insurance premiums can include hefty loadings to mitigate potential but unknown risks.

AESG's combustible material identification report can be expanded beyond the visual, non-invasive inspection to include:

Sampling

AESG completes the visual inspection and also takes samples of materials identified on site. These samples are reviewed by our Solutions team to provide further insight into the materials used.

Laboratory Testing

The samples taken on-site are tested by an accredited and independent laboratory to determine the combustibility and fixing method of the cladding materials. The results also identify the polymer and inert components.

What information do Insurers seek?

In a recent amendment to the Insurance Contracts Act 1984 (Cth), the duty of disclosure was replaced with a duty to take reasonable care not to make a misrepresentation to an insurer when entering or renewing a contract. This means insurers must ensure they have all the information required to write, cover and price the building's risk.

Specifically, insurers are increasingly asking for details of the materials used in the building's construction and the percentage coverage of each material type. In many instances, insurers are declining quote requests without this information.

Why is EPS deemed non-compliant?

Expanded polystyrene is a cladding material that is typically rendered when used on a building. It is highly combustible and increases the likelihood of fire spreading more rapidly when ignited.

EPS may shrink, melt or ignite when exposed to elevated temperatures and when burning, releases a noxious smoke. When EPS burns, a kilogram of polystyrene releases more energy than a litre of ignited petrol.

EPS is considered an appropriate building material for Class 1a buildings (private detached single dwellings) but has been rated a non-compliant cladding for all other building classes.

Why is ACP deemed non-compliant?

Aluminium composite panels consist of two thin aluminium sheets bonded to a polymer core. The polymer core is combustible.

ACP products with a polymer core of 30% or more have a high level of combustibility; panels with a 100% polymer core (usually polyethylene) are the highest flammability risk.

Contact AESG's sales team on sales@aesg.com.au or **1300 336 339 for a quote to have your building assessed.**



Australian Essential Services Group

Experts in Independent Fire Safety Auditing

Why AESG?

Since 1996, Australian Essential Services Group (AESG) has specialised in identifying and reporting on essential safety measures in line with current Australian Standards.

Our highly experienced team of fully qualified auditing staff are constantly engaged with regulatory bodies and industry forums to ensure that we deliver the highest level of quality and compliance for our clients.



Essential Safety Measure Audit

Building owners must comply with Australian Standards to audit the essential safety measures in their buildings. AESG's inspections and reporting comply with Australian Standards 1851 (2012) and the regulations required in each state and territory.



Building Health & Safety

In-depth investigations of building conditions, personal injury risk and utilities risk. Identified hazards are highlighted with a clear description, photographs, and recommendations to resolve or mitigate risk, ensuring the owners corporation fulfills its duty of care.



Evacuation Diagrams

Evacuation Diagrams can reduce the risks associated with duty of care obligations and comply to Occupational Health & Safety requirements. AESG Evacuation Diagrams are prepared to Australian Standard 3745 (2010) and are an important part of a building's emergency plan.



Maintenance Plans

Detailed reporting that determines the amount to be set aside each year for capital expenses, including the replacement, renewal or repair of minor and major items such as windows, fencing, paths and painting.



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Building Surveying

AESG streamlines the process of obtaining building permits, maintenance determinations and maintenance schedules ensuring that construction projects comply with all relevant codes and regulations.



Building Notices & Orders

Our compliance team can guide you through the process of understanding the issues identified in the Council document and work towards practical solutions. Our process addresses the compliance concerns and resolves them to meet regulatory requirements.



Asbestos Audit

Comprehensive reporting that provides an asbestos register and management plan, using a safe inspection process where no asbestos materials are disturbed, protecting the well-being of building occupants.



Insurance Valuation

Reporting undertaken by a registered valuer to provide a Certificate of Value for the replacement cost and reinstatement of buildings. Regular valuing of the building protects against the potential loss from under-insurance.



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