



Guide for the procurement of Fire Engineering Services

This guide is intended to help assist anyone who is intending to procure Fire Engineering services for work in the construction industry. For the purposes of this note, the word 'client' is used to refer to anyone who employs a Fire Engineer.

COMPETENCE

Under the CDM Regulations¹, there is a responsibility on the client to take reasonable measures to ensure that all organisations working on a construction project are competent in their profession.

In addition, a competent Fire Engineer can make significant savings on a construction project. Conversely, an engineer without that level of competence may give incorrect advice. If these mistakes are picked up late in the construction programme, it can cause significant cost and time extensions.

However, the role of 'Fire Engineer' is not legally protected in the same way as, for example, the role of 'Architect'. As a result, a wide variety of companies and individuals claim to be competent Fire Engineers, despite limited proof.

This leaves clients at risk if they accidentally employ a Fire Engineer who is not as competent as they initially claimed.

The Fire Engineering Council of the FIA have developed a competence assessment process as part of their membership criteria. That remains the only widely accepted criteria for 'competence' of Fire Engineering companies in the UK.

The FIA competence criteria depends on companies employing Chartered Fire Engineers, i.e. Chartered Engineers specialising in fire safety.

Chartered Fire Engineers are engineers who have been through a verification process to prove that they have the adequate education, training and experience to work as fire engineers.

This procedure is overseen by the Engineering Council, the same body that oversees Chartered Engineers within Structural Engineering and other well established professions.

The FIA would therefore encourage anyone who employs Fire Engineering companies to use one of the companies who are members of the Fire Engineering Council of the FIA. By doing that, clients will have demonstrated that they have taken 'reasonable measures' to ensure the competence of their Fire Engineers.

If clients use companies who are not on that list, the client themselves will have the responsibility for verifying the competence of any Fire Engineering companies they employ.

SCOPE OF WORKS

When employing a fire engineer it is important to ensure that there is a clear scope of works, particularly if the client is intending to use a competitive tender.

The Fire Engineering Council of the FIA have published a Standard Scope of Services document which is freely available and is intended to be used by anyone to assist in developing that scope of services.

Each construction project is different, so the scope of services is intended to be modified case-by-case, but it provides the main content for the appointment.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Clients should be careful to be aware of any potential conflicts of interest that can arise when appointing a fire engineer.

For example, if using an Approved Inspector, under Regulation 9 of the Approved Inspector Regulations², it is a legal requirement to ensure that the Approved Inspector, and the company they work for, has no professional or financial interest in any of the people or organisations that are involved in the design that they will be supervising.

1. Construction Design and Management Regulations.

2. Building (Approved Inspector) Regulations.

DISCLAIMER

The information set out in this document is believed to be correct in the light of information currently available but it is not guaranteed and neither the Fire Industry Association nor its officers can accept any responsibility in respect of the contents or any events arising from use of the information contained within this document.



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