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Chinese manufacturers learn from UK fire safety rules

A group of Chinese scientists and manufacturers of fire-retardant insulation boards are visiting the UK to learn more about the regulations governing phenolic panels from the Rubber and Plastics Research Association (RAPRA) and the Passive Fire Protection Federation (PFPF).

The visit was prompted by several serious fires in China, including one in a Shanghai skyscraper in November 2010 in which 79 lives were lost. In particular, the Chinese group was keen to understand how it is that phenolic panels are regulated and used in the UK construction market, in order to help them to develop their own opportunities to use these panels in Chinese building situations. The panels manufactured by the Chinese have already passed the BS 8414 test, accepted in the UK, but not yet recognized in China.

At the request of RAPRA Executive Director Richard Walton, PFPF Chairman David Sugden addressed the Chinese delegation on 25th July on the UK testing, certification and approval system for phenolic panels and similar products.

David explained the UK Building Regulations system and how independent, third party certification and CE marking are used to ensure products conform to the required standard. His talk also emphasised the need for third party certification of installers too, stressing that fitting certified products incorrectly will affect their performance.

The visitors took a lively interest, questioning David (through interpreter Ivy Lue, RAPRA's Business Manager in Shanghai) on the duties of building owners and operators, who are responsible for the fire safety of their properties under UK law. The

delegation also went on to visit Kingspan, a UK manufacturer of such products, and the Building Research Establishment later in the same week, to discuss further technical aspects.

For more information and guidance on fire safety, including a register of UK certification bodies for fire-safe products, installers, and fire Risk Assessor courses, visit www.pfpf.org.

END

280 words

Image attached: David Sugden of the Passive Fire Protection Federation, centre, with delegates from the Chinese phenolic panel industry and Richard Walton of the Rubber and Plastics Research Association.

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Editors' notes: The PFPF (www.pfpf.org) is the body for the built-in fire protection industry, and is dedicated to growing awareness on fire protection, and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Membership includes the Chief Fire Officers Association, the DCLG, Local Authority Building Control and the Fire Test Study Group (UK) Ltd.

The PFPF Strategy Group includes members who were involved professionally in investigating and advising on previous disasters such as the Summerlands Leisure Centre, Kings Cross, write for the trade and fire service media and recently appeared on television commenting on the Channel Tunnel fire and the tragic fire at Lakanal House. **For informed, unbiased and professional comment please contact Jane Rigby at MRA Marketing on jane@521621.com who will put you in touch with the relevant person.**

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