



COMPETENCE IN PASSIVE FIRE PROTECTION SALES & DISTRIBUTION ACTIVITIES

Pathways for counter staff & specialist sales staff

Industry Competence Steering Group Sector Led Group 12

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Contents

1	Scope	4
1.1	Purpose	4
1.2	Occupational area	4
1.3	Limitations and exclusions	4
1.4	Building types	5
1.5	Geographical scope	5
2	The standard for competence	6
2.1	Competencies	6
2.2	Preparing to evidence competence	7
2.3	Collecting evidence of competence	7
2.4	Initial validation of competence	8
2.5	Revalidation of competence	8
2.6	Ability to check competence of individuals validated against the framework....	8
2.7	Relationship to organisational capability	8
2.8	Ongoing monitoring and maintenance	9
3	Implementing the standard	10
	Appendix 1 – Terms & definitions.....	11

1 Scope

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this work is to create a single industry standard for developing, measuring, and validating the competence of those undertaking sales & distribution of passive fire protection as defined in 1.2. This will ensure that defined arrangements are in place by which competence can be objectively measured and confirmed.

This document and its underpinning details are designed for use for a variety of purposes, including:

- Development of industry wide tools for measuring and validating competence
- Development of organisational approaches to evidencing workforce competence
- Alignment and/or recognition of existing training, assessment, qualifications
- Development of new training, assessment, qualifications, and occupational standards
- Strengthening arrangements for organisational capability

This standard should be read in combination with the Competence in Passive Fire Protection Sales & Distribution Activities – Benchmarking document, which describes the work of the passive fire protection sales & distribution competence group (the sales & distribution group), the requirements for competence in this area, and the associated functional map and framework of competencies.

1.2 Occupational area

Competent sales & distribution of passive fire products is critical to ensure that building work can be carried out safely and that the resulting buildings are safe for their users and occupants. This includes sales & distribution of products for:

- Fire protection to the structural frame
- Fire resistant walls, floors & ceilings
- Penetration seals
- Linear gap seals
- Large cavity barriers
- Cavity barriers for use in facades
- Fire resisting ducts and dampers
- Operable fire curtains
- Fire resisting doors and associated hardware
- Fire resistant glazing

Employees in a range of organisations may carry out activities related to making passive fire protection products available in the market, including manufacturers, retailers and distributors. The routes to competence set out in this document are specific to:

- Counter staff in merchants, retailers and distributors
- Specialist sales staff in distributors and manufacturers

1.3 Limitations and exclusions

Sales & distribution may also be carried out by manufacturers' technical sales agents with additional design expertise. The overlap between sales & distribution and design & specification

is not dealt with in the scope of this document. Where employers or individuals identify that design and specification activities form part of a particular role scope, the associated routes to competence should also be identified. More information on design and specification competence for passive fire protection is set out in the Competence in Passive Fire Protection Design & Specification Activities benchmarking and pathways documents.

Competence required to develop marketing and technical information for passive fire products, and to review and sign that information off, is specifically excluded as individuals working in the role types set out in section 1.2 are not expected to conduct these activities.

1.4 Building types

The routes set out here are independent of building type, and are applicable to both HRB and non-HRB environments. This also includes supply of product for new build requirements or refurbishment of existing buildings.

1.5 Geographical scope

This proposals in this report have designed to apply to the whole of the UK.

2 The standard for competence

2.1 Competencies

Detailed competencies for sales & distribution are set out in the 'sell & distribute' domain of the passive fire protection functional map and framework of competencies available from <https://asfpindex.org.uk/competenceframework>. The activities relevant to this standard are listed below.

Individuals (in conjunction with their employer where appropriate) should select relevant activities from the functional map according to role scope. Evidence should then be gathered to show that the full scope of SKEB statements for relevant activities have been met in accordance with the routes to competence set out in sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.2.¹

2.1.1 Counter staff in merchants, retailers and distributors

All counter staff should evidence competence against:

- SD001 – Answer routine and well-defined product queries

Routine and well-defined product queries are considered to be those where the answers are based on published information available on product webpages or product data sheets.

Counter staff in specialist distributors may also be required to offer alternative product (e.g. if the brand requested is out of stock). Where this is the case, individuals should also demonstrate competence against relevant activities from the following list:

- SD015 – Offer alternative products for fire protection to the structural frame, to meet a defined need
- SD017 – Offer alternative products for fire resistant walls, floors & ceilings, to meet a defined need
- SD018 – Offer alternative product for penetration seals, to meet a defined need
- SD019 – Offer alternative products for linear gap seals, to meet a defined need
- SD020 – Offer alternative products for cavity barriers for use in facades, to meet a defined need
- SD021 – Offer alternative products for large cavity barriers, to meet a defined need
- SD022 – Offer alternative products for fire resisting ducts & dampers, to meet a defined need
- SD023 – Offer alternative products for operable fire curtains, to meet a defined need
- SD024 – Offer alternative products for fire resisting doors and associated hardware, to meet a defined need
- SD025 – Offer alternative products for fire resisting glazing, to meet a defined need

2.1.2 Specialist sales staff in distributors and manufacturers

Specialist sales staff carry out activities to deal with more complex product queries. Complex queries are considered to be those where the information required to answer them is not available through product websites or datasheets and other information, e.g. details of classification and third-party certification, needs to be used.

¹ Where additional routes to competence are identified over time, the standard will be updated to reflect the full range of options available

Competence should be evidenced against the following activities, relevant to the scope of the individual's work:

- SD002 – Answer complex product queries relating to fire protection to the structural frame
- SD003 – Answer complex product queries relating to fire resistant walls, floors & ceilings
- SD004 – Answer complex product queries relating to penetration seals
- SD016 – Answer complex queries relating to linear gap seals
- SD013 – Answer complex product queries relating to cavity barriers for use in facades
- SD014 – Answer complex product queries relating to large cavity barriers
- SD005 – Answer complex product queries relating to fire resisting ducts and dampers
- SD006 – Answer complex product queries relating to operable fire curtains
- SD007 – Answer complex product queries relating to fire resisting doors & associated hardware
- SD008 – Answer complex product queries relating to fire resisting glazing

2.2 Preparing to evidence competence

Individuals should use a combination of formal and informal learning to prepare to demonstrate competence.

Training alone (without embedded summative assessment) does not provide evidence of competence, but it is a useful enabler to prepare individuals to create the evidence of skills and knowledge required. Training may be carried out in house or through third-party training providers. When purchasing training, individuals and employers should check that this meets the requirements of the framework and will have value to them.

In addition to aiding development of knowledge and skills, informal learning in the workplace will also help to develop experience and behaviour.

2.3 Collecting evidence of competence

2.3.1 *Route to competence: evidencing initial baseline competence*

Individuals must provide:

- Knowledge assessment certificate, specifying completion of assessment in relevant activities that meets industry requirements
- Evidence of experience, e.g. through records of work completed aligned to the framework that meets industry requirements
- Evidence of behaviour, e.g. through records of performance management or appraisal aligned to the framework

2.3.2 *Route to competence: addition of further competencies*

Individuals may need to evidence competence in further activities, if they expand their scope of work, change employer etc. Individuals should complete further assessment to add to their range of evidence over time, as and when these are required. Individuals would still be required to provide the evidence set out in 2.3.1, but this should cover the full range of activities in which they now need to validate their competence.

2.4 Initial validation of competence

Individuals and their employers should validate that evidence of competence is in place across the full scope of relevant standards, as set out in the framework and in accordance with the route to competence set out in 2.3.

It is recommended that a third-party system is utilised to provide an objective check. For example, this may be through a specific third-party certification scheme embedding the requirements for competence, a certified quality management system incorporating individual competence checks, a trade association membership scheme or a third party registration mechanism.

Individuals who have yet to meet the required standard of competence for a particular activity should have their work overseen and checked by a competent individual until competence has been demonstrated.

2.5 Revalidation of competence

Competence should be revalidated every 3 years, as a minimum, according to the requirements set out in the framework of competencies. This includes:

- Ongoing demonstration of experience through continuing collation of workplace evidence
- Ongoing demonstration of behaviour through continuing evidence from performance management systems etc.
- Evidence of completion of a refresher assessment for skills and knowledge
- Evidence of completion of any relevant industry updates – these may be set out within the framework as standard requirements or may be added based on emerging requirements within the revalidation period

Alongside ongoing collation of evidence to demonstrate baseline competence, individuals should also complete any relevant manufacturers' training for the products / systems they deal with.

2.6 Ability to check competence of individuals validated against the framework

Sales & distribution of passive fire protection is part of a broader picture of sales & distribution across the built environment. It is important that the validated competence of individuals is made available to members of broader sales teams to ensure the limits of their competence can be taken into account.

As these individuals are likely to be managed and monitored through broader organisational structures, there is no requirement for a publicly accessible register of people in these roles. Care should also be given to the data protection implications of sharing such personal data.

2.7 Relationship to organisational capability

Alongside demonstrating the capability of individuals within their workforce, companies also need to demonstrate organisational capability. This can be evidenced through implementation of an internal system for managing the competence of staff, for example an ISO 9001 system that integrates competence management, or a third-party certification scheme that embeds individual competence.

Evidence generated through organisational capability schemes may prove useful for evidencing individual competence, for example through collating records of experience and behaviour against the framework.

2.8 Ongoing monitoring and maintenance

These pathways will be managed and maintained by ASFP in consultation with SLG 12 and with practical support from the passive fire sales & distribution competence group.

3 Implementing the standard

Further development work will be required to put in place the proposed routes to competence for the sector. The following table sets out the next steps required to fully implement the competence standard.

It should be noted that this list is not necessarily exhaustive, and further actions might be identified as work progresses.

Where specific product development is required, estimated time required for that development to take place has been factored into the timescale outlined.

Activity required	Purpose	Owner	Target completion timescale
Determine knowledge assessment requirements	To create a clear picture of the requirements	S&D group	Q2 2025
Determine knowledge assessment delivery model	To ensure that one deliverable assessment method can be put in place	ASFP	Q3 2025
Develop initial knowledge assessment (SD001, SD015)	To deliver required route to competence	ASFP & industry specialists	Q3 2025
Develop knowledge assessment for answering complex queries	To deliver required route to competence	ASFP & industry specialists	TBC
Develop aligned training	To support individuals in preparing for assessment	ASFP	TBC
Quality assure existing, relevant training	To ensure high quality training is available, and that its alignment to the framework is clear	ASFP	Ongoing
Create supporting guidance for capturing evidence of experience & behaviour	To support individuals and employers in gathering evidence of competence	ASFP	TBC
Determine and implement registration requirements	To ensure that the registration mechanism is set up for design & specification to support industry	ASFP	TBC
Launch and communicate routes to competence	To generate awareness and drive uptake	ASFP & SLG 12	TBC

Appendix 1 - Terms & definitions

Behaviour

Observable traits or ways of working that should be displayed. Observable things that an individual does or does not do

Competence / individual competence

Application of skill, knowledge, experience, and behaviour consistently by an individual to achieve a specific outcome

Standard for competence

Procedures & requirements for developing, measuring, validating, and proving competence against agreed skills, knowledge, experience, and behaviours required for an individual undertaking a role, function, activity, or task in order to perform their work to predetermined standards and expectations and maintain or improve their performance over time. This is sometimes referred to as a competence framework or competence standard

Continuing professional development (CPD)

Activities undertaken by an individual to maintain and develop competence, including formal and informal learning, self-assessment, obtaining feedback and identifying areas for improvement

Experience

Participation in relevant activities or observation of facts and events leading to acquisition, improvement or demonstration of skills and knowledge

Formal learning

Organised and structured learning against formal learning objectives

Framework of competencies

Agreed statements of skills, knowledge, experience, and behaviour against specific activities identified in the functional map

Functional map

A map of activities included in the sub-sector, split into pre-determined levels of complexity

Individual

A single human being

Informal learning

Self-directed learning, or learning from experience

Higher-risk building (HRB)

Building subject to enhanced regulatory requirements or where risks might be considered elevated (for example as a result of the physical characteristics of the building, the way in which the building is used, or as a result of human factors)

Job role

The specific combination of activities performed in a specific role, as agreed between an employee and an employer. This may change over time, or from employer to employer, or between employees of the same employer

Knowledge

Assimilation of facts, theories, and practices in relation to a given role, function, activity, or task

Occupation

The area of work undertaken by a category of employees, each of which may have a related but different job role. This is standard across the entire industry

Organisational capability

The combination of people, practices and other resources brought together by a business to allow it to function effectively and deliver value to customers and stakeholders

Qualification

A regulated programme of assessment, sometimes with aligned training, which results

in the issue of a nationally recognised award being made upon completion

Revalidation

The formal process of reassessing an individual's competence against a sector-specific framework on a periodic basis to check that competence has been maintained

Sector-specific competence framework

A competence framework relevant to a specific role, function, activity, task, trade, or discipline

Skill

The ability to perform an activity or task consistently with a specific intended outcome

Validation

The formal process of assessing an individual's competence against a sector-specific framework