



ARCHITECTURAL AND SPECIALIST DOOR MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION  
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The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP  
The House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

25 March 2020

Copy: The Rt Hon Robert Jenrick, Communities Secretary of State

Dear Mr Gove,

**Covid-19 coronavirus national emergency**

**Concerns over risks to the future coherence even existence of the UK's specialist fire door industry**

ASDMA is the UK's trade association for manufacturers of specialist custom-made quality fire doors for use in all types of buildings, typically including public buildings, especially school and hospital refurbishment projects and new build, also commercial, retail and leisure buildings and a variety of private residential buildings, including apartment blocks. Specialist fire-resistant and smoke-control fire doors are fundamentally important for every fire safety strategy for buildings of all types.

On 24<sup>th</sup> March you expressed on national television, following comment from Robert Jenrick the previous evening, a Government plea for manufacturing and major construction projects to be continued as much as possible, of course where working can be continued on open sites observing the 2m social distancing rule between individuals whilst exercising sensitivity and common sense.

But we note questioning from various major media outlets and different mixed messages coming from other leading political figures in Scotland and London. We also note that the Construction Industry Council has advocated closing down construction whilst the emergency continues.

Such mixed messaging leads to a great deal of uncertainty and confusion. We see organisations and people taking their own decisions which do threaten in effect a complete shutdown of construction and project finishing activity. Our sector is concerned and unsure; and we do seek guidance on construction and manufacturing continuity. The specialist fire door sector for quality fire doors could be substantially lost to the UK, as companies fold and their skilled workforce disperses.

**If construction shutdown happens - and continues for any extended period of months - then we do genuinely and sincerely fear for the existence of our specialist sector as it is currently very well established once the recovery arrives at some indeterminate time in the future.**



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ASDMA feels that we are obliged to appraise you and the Government of the serious risk that we think faces our specialist sector if construction activity on major projects should be shut down for an extended period. We fear that a stoppage of only some weeks would be enough. ASDMA would not be representing its members properly if it did not express concerns on their behalf.

We have reports of deliveries of finished doors being turned back; and it is evident that orders and the pipeline flow of contracts coming in are reducing quite quickly. Cash flow is emerging as an urgent problem already, since payment is not normally received until later after delivery (and it is well known that construction supply chains operate at tight margins). Continuity of manufacturing is critically dependent on maintenance of product flow out of factory doors. There is only very limited factory space available to stock and store finished doors in properly controlled conditions.

The concern is not just loss of manufacturing operations. The sector is very specialised, as it has to be to develop fire door designs and produce fit-for-purpose products for what is a highly specified requirement. The issues do not just concern specialist manufacturing. There is a great deal of expertise, proprietary specialist knowledge and technology know-how accumulated over many years, locked into the manufacturing companies themselves. In particular, fire door designs and manufactured products must have a bedrock investment in especially fire resistance and smoke control testing, combined with other testing (such as durability and opening/closing forces) carried out to establish a test foundation over many years to get to the current position.

That investment will be lost if the companies are forced to close because of the current situation.

There is also an extensive component manufacturing support network to consider: especially core blanks for the door leaf, door hardware from different sources, fire-resistant and smoke-control seals and speciality fire-resistant glass and glazing systems. All are threatened if demand collapses.

Thank you for your consideration. We hope you can take these concerns into your discussions on advice and government action. We think that it is important if a level of major construction projects can be maintained, and if project planning and preparation can also be continued so that a flow of work can be maintained at a sustainable level. ASDMA fervently asks for serious consideration of fundamental support to ensure the continuity of the sector after this horrible emergency has passed, when again construction will undoubtedly require high quality UK-produced fire doors.

With sincere regards,

Ian Makins (ASDMA Chair)