

CLIENT PROTECTION CASE STUDY

# FIRE DOORS: NOT JUST A DOOR LEAF

A client-focused briefing on why fire doors must be treated as complete tested systems, not isolated products. The leaf matters, but so do the frame, gaps, seals, hinges, closer, ironmongery, certification, installation evidence and ongoing maintenance.

## CORE MESSAGE

A fire door can look visually complete and still fail its intended purpose if the door set is not correctly installed, adjusted, evidenced and maintained. ITSA reporting makes those hidden risks visible before they become life safety, compliance or handover problems.

## Why clients should care

Life safety	Client exposure	Handover risk
Fire doors protect escape routes by resisting fire and smoke spread. A missing closer, excessive gap or incorrect seal can materially weaken that protection.	Fire safety law places duties on those in control of premises. Poor evidence, unresolved defects and weak follow-up can increase exposure.	Fire door defects are often found late, when access, programme and commercial pressure are at their highest. Early inspection reduces surprises.

## Real-world warnings

<b>Government fire door testing</b>	Following the Grenfell Tower fire, government reported that a glazed composite fire door from Grenfell Tower failed a 30 minute resistance test after approximately 15 minutes. Fire doors from five suppliers were later identified as failing to meet the required performance standard. Client lesson: product claims, test evidence and installation records matter.
<b>Flat fire and missing closer</b>	Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service reported a serious fire where a fire door had no self-closing device. Smoke entered the staircase, escape was hindered and firefighters rescued a resident. Client lesson: a fire door only protects when the whole assembly works in use.
<b>Enforcement and penalties</b>	GOV.UK states that failure to follow fire safety regulations can result in fines or prison. Major penalties can include unlimited fines and up to two years in prison. Client lesson: poor fire safety management is not just a technical issue.

*Important position: these examples are not presented as proof that a Clerk of Works was absent or responsible. They show why fire door risk should be checked, recorded, escalated and closed out with evidence.*

THE DOOR SET PRINCIPLE

# WHAT ITSA CHECKS BEFORE A FIRE DOOR IS ACCEPTED

A fire door is a system. The inspection should not stop at whether a door leaf has been fitted. ITSA looks at the full assembly, the surrounding construction and the evidence trail that supports compliance.

Physical installation checks	Evidence and compliance checks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Door leaf condition, rating, damage, warping and protection during works.</li> <li>• Frame, lining and architrave interfaces, including concealed gaps behind trims.</li> <li>• Door margins, threshold gaps, smoke leakage risk and consistent closing line.</li> <li>• Self-closing device strength, latch engagement and closing from multiple angles.</li> <li>• Hinges, intumescent pads, lock case, latch, handles, signage and ironmongery compatibility.</li> <li>• Glazing, vision panels, beads, seals and any penetrations through the door leaf.</li> <li>• Riser doors, service cupboard doors and communal escape route doors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Product data, certification, fire rating and smoke control intent.</li> <li>• Approved foam, intumescent mastic, sealant or backing material at frame interfaces.</li> <li>• QA photographs before architraves, trims or protection hide critical details.</li> <li>• Fire stopping between frame and wall construction, not just the visible door face.</li> <li>• Installation against manufacturer guidance and project specification.</li> <li>• Close-out records, defect tracker status and reinspection evidence.</li> <li>• Final operation and maintenance information for the client or responsible person.</li> </ul>

## Common failures ITSA would challenge

Looks finished, not evidenced	Wrong product risk	Operation failure
Architraves are fitted, decorations are complete, but no record exists to show how the frame gap was sealed before closure.	General purpose foam, unknown sealant or uncertified materials are used where a certified fire door assembly requires specific products.	The door does not fully close and latch, or the closer is poorly adjusted, meaning the fire door may not protect the escape route in a real event.

## Real ITSA sample themes

<b>Hawks Road   Residential handover</b>	Fire doors, risers, compartmentation, apartment readiness and the difference between visual completion and technical readiness.
<b>Gosford Hill   Live education project</b>	Fire door installation in temporary modular accommodation, certified foam, firestopping details and golden thread style QA evidence.
<b>Newman Street   Commercial refurbishment</b>	Demolition and structural change where temporary works, openings, escape routes and future fire strategy interfaces require recorded review.

HOW ITSA PROTECTS THE CLIENT INTEREST

# CLEAR REPORTING TURNS TECHNICAL FIRE DOOR RISK INTO ACTION

Fire door issues are often small in appearance but significant in consequence. ITSA reports are designed to help the client understand the issue, see the evidence and require the right corrective action before completion pressure makes problems harder to resolve.

<b>INSPECT</b> See it on site	<b>INTERPRET</b> Explain why it matters	<b>RECORD</b> Photograph and locate	<b>ESCALATE</b> Make the action clear	<b>TRACK</b> Monitor status	<b>VERIFY</b> Check close-out
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## What the client receives

<p><b>Plain English risk commentary</b></p> <p>Reports explain what has been observed, why it matters to safety, compliance or handover, and what should happen next.</p>	<p><b>Photographic evidence</b></p> <p>Images support the narrative and provide a traceable record of condition, location, progress and close-out.</p>
<p><b>Actionable defect tracking</b></p> <p>Items can be tracked within the report or through a shared live document showing status, ownership and close-out progress.</p>	<p><b>Flexible reporting format</b></p> <p>ITSA can use bespoke reports or adopt DfE, public sector, local authority or client standard templates where required.</p>

***“The cost of a Clerk of Works per annum is cheaper than a day in court.”***

Attributed to Tony Bingham, Arbitrator, Adjudicator, Mediator and Barrister

## Client takeaway

A fire door is not just a door leaf. It is a life safety system that depends on correct specification, competent installation, compatible components, recorded evidence, adjustment and maintenance. ITSA gives clients independent visibility of those details, in a format that is clear enough to understand and practical enough to act on.

### SOURCE NOTE AND DISCLAIMER

Sources consulted include GOV.UK Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 fire door guidance, GOV.UK workplace fire safety penalties guidance, GOV.UK statement on fire door testing following Grenfell, London Fire Brigade fire door guidance, Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service prosecution reporting, and JCT commentary on the role of the Clerk of Works. This document is general information only and is not legal advice. It does not allege that any case was caused by the absence or failure of a Clerk of Works.