BUILDING COMPLIANCE – NOT JUST A TICK BOX EXERCISE!

Aluminium curved roofing at Warwick Lodge Dental Centre, Essex.
Image courtesy of Kalzip Limited

The Metal Cladding and Manufacturers Association (MCRMA) has produced practical guidance to assist building inspectors, specifiers, main contractors and others involved in the specification, procurement and installation of metal roofing and cladding systems and assemblies. The inspection checklist has been compiled to help ensure that the metal-based building envelope complies with the appropriate Building Regulations and industry standards.

The guidance document sets out a four-stage compliance checklist covering specification, design, on-site and completion. Each stage provides a summary of the checks which should be conducted and the required proof of compliance.

In addition, each stage includes cross references to the more detailed information which can be found in the MCRMA series of guidance documents.

It is essential that those involved in the inspection process understand that any deviation from the design specification could impact on the compatibility of materials and systems, structural capability, thermal performance, life expectancy, in-use performance and future sustainability. It must be noted that any one choice of a material type or component does not exist in isolation and can have potentially far-reaching implications on other aspects of the performance of the completed building envelope.

A collection of individual component parts which are brought together to form an assembly, but not a system, can have serious consequences for the main contractor, cladding contractor, the building inspector and the owner and those involved with subsequent operation and maintenance.

This can be avoided by ensuring that a complete fully designed and manufactured system is actually sourced from a reputable manufacturer or supplier who understands the needs of the project and who can design a fully engineered system for the application.

Alternatively, work with a lead manufacturer who has the technical capability and the technical relationships with other leading supply partners to enable them to design a solution which is fully designed and guaranteed to work in the application. This will also make the compliance process easier for all concerned!

When it comes to Building Regulations, it should be remembered that the responsibility for ensuring compliance with the Regulations does not stop at the point of approval but continues through the on-site construction phase.

It is during this phase that changes to specification, material or building practice and workmanship can result in non-compliance. It is important to note that compliance with the Regulations is building and/or project specific and therefore the use or reference to generic information or advice contained in manufacturers' or industry publications, web sites or literature cannot be accepted as ensuring compliance.

The Blyth Boathouse Restaurant which features insulated panels, flashings and purlins all manufactured and supplied by Steadmans Limited.

In many cases there will also be a need to submit additional evidence of compliance such as test certificates or performance calculations. The inspection checklist outlines proofs of compliance such as the Simplified Building Energy Model (SBEM), Declaration of Performance (DoP) or a CE mark.

The introduction of CE marking has undoubtedly raised the level of product specification; as most, if not all, products such as metal cladding, fasteners, insulation and support systems together with structural framework must now comply with CE marking requirements.

Further emphasis of correct product specification will be introduced through the Government's construction strategy, which is set to drive level 2 Building Information Modelling (BIM) in public sector projects by 2016.

The introduction of BIM into the design stage will enable all members of the supply chain to work collaboratively through the access and sharing of information about components, systems and their in-service use. The availability and sharing of information across the design team should have a marked effect on cost reduction and avoiding costly mistakes.

Specifiers may feel that they do not need the advice of an independent inspector before or during the construction process. However, members of the MCRMA independent inspectors group can offer practical advice and be a vital part of the team who can help get the specification right in the first place.

In our experience, specifiers whether they are architects, engineers or design and build contractors often need specialist advice and assistance to help them make key decisions on grounds other than cost.

It is the clearly stated position of the MCRMA and its members that the best assurance of compliance with the appropriate standards and performance expectation is to source systems and products from reputable manufacturers who can demonstrate the pedigree of the materials used and support design requirements with job specific data.

It is hoped that the guidance and advice within the document will act as an aide-memoire for all those in the construction chain and will help to achieve a compliant, reliable and sustainable building solution. The inspection checklist can be downloaded from the MCRMA web site at http://mcrma.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/GD23-LABC-guidance1.pdf

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