

Press release

Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government welcomes the publication of ‘I.S. 465:2018 – Assessment, testing and categorisation of damaged buildings incorporating concrete blocks containing certain deleterious materials’

From [Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage \(/en/organisation/department-of-housing-local-government-and-heritage/\)](/en/organisation/department-of-housing-local-government-and-heritage/)

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The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government has today (20 November 2018) welcomed the recent publication by the NSAI of a Protocol to Assess Homes Suspected of Being Affected by Mica or Pyrite.

The Expert Panel on Concrete Blocks was established by the department in 2016, to investigate problems that have emerged in the concrete blockwork of certain dwellings in Counties Donegal and Mayo.

On 13 June 2017, the [Report of the Expert Panel on Concrete Blocks \(/en/publication/0218f-report-of-the-expert-panel-on-concrete-blocks/\)](/en/publication/0218f-report-of-the-expert-panel-on-concrete-blocks/) was published and included eight recommendations, which the department is actively progressing with the relevant stakeholders, prioritising the implementation of Recommendations 1 and 2.

With regard to Recommendation 1, the National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) established a Technical Committee to scope and fast track the development of a standardised protocol. The standardised protocol will inform the course of action in relation to remedial works for all affected householders.

The draft standard was published on 6 June 2018 for public consultation and ran for a period of six weeks to 18 July 2018. The Technical Committee recently finalised the review of the submissions received and the standardised protocol was published by the NSAI on 13 November 2018.

'I.S. 465:2018 - Assessment, testing and categorisation of damaged buildings incorporating concrete blocks containing certain deleterious materials', is now available at [www.n Sai.ie.](https://www.n Sai.ie/) (<https://www.n Sai.ie/>)

Minister of State Damien English,welcomes the recent publication of the new standard by the NSAI:

"I welcome the recent publication of the new standard by the NSAI. This is another important measure introduced by Government to assist the parties directly involved in reaching a satisfactory resolution to the problems that have emerged in the two counties.

"I.S. 465:2018, outlines a protocol which can be used to assess and categorise the damage in properties where the concrete blocks are suspected to contain the minerals mica or pyrite. The protocol will be used by engineers and geologists to assess, test and categorise the damage in properties negatively affected by defective concrete blocks.

"Previously, there was no common way for engineers or homeowners to assess the damage caused by defective concrete blocks to help decide what, if any, remedial work could be carried out."

This standard:

- establishes a protocol for assessing and determining whether a building has been damaged by concrete blocks containing certain excessive amounts of deleterious materials (free or unbound muscovite mica, or aggregate with potentially deleterious quantities of pyrite)
- describes methods for establishing the extent of the problem
- describes the scope of any testing required
- categorises buildings, in accordance with this Standard, providing competent persons with guidance on the appropriate measures to be taken

With regard to Recommendation 2, the department has been in contact with Engineers Ireland in relation to the establishment of a register of competent engineers for homeowners/affected parties. Engineers Ireland has provided assurance that they are in the process of finalising measures to establish such a register now that the standardised protocol is in place.

Last year, Minister English visited Donegal and Mayo and met with key stakeholders, including affected homeowners, elected members and officials of the local authorities and other interested parties. Minister English made similar visits to both counties this year and continues to monitor the situation and to update affected parties on progress.

Under Budget 2019, the government approved in principle the development of a grant scheme of financial assistance to support affected homeowners in the two counties to carry out the necessary remediation works to dwellings that have been damaged due to defective concrete blocks.

The putting in place of such a scheme is now a key priority for the department and work

is well underway on the development of such a scheme, including discussions with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in relation to funding. It is intended to revert to Government with proposals for the scheme with a view to publishing details of the scheme as soon as possible thereafter.

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