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Recycling plants may see new regulations for fire and building

23 August 2012 | By [Alexandra Wynne](#), [Declan Lynch](#)

Building Regulations and fire safety standards must be amended to force recycling plants to introduce fire suppression systems, a leading industry expert has told NCE in the aftermath of a major fire in London last week.

Independent fire consultant and expert witness Fathi Tarada told NCE that the fire at Hunts Waste waste management and recycling facility in Dagenham, along with several other recent recycling plant fires, highlighted the need for more stringent fire safety measures.

Current Building Regulations and fire safety laws in the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 place the emphasis on protection of human life and general building standards.

Many waste facilities are single storey buildings that are below 18m tall - it is only for structures above this level that fire suppression becomes compulsory. Facility owners deem that, because the content value is low and there is often sufficient provision of fire exits, there is little reason to add extra robust safety measures.

Wider costs

"Recycling companies are not obliged to use fire suppression, and from their own cost/ benefit perspective, it is not worth installing such systems," Tarada said.

But Tarada said wider threats such as the potential for pollution meant it was vital that the regulations were looked at again.

"The cost to society of inhalation of toxic fumes, evacuation of nearby premises, the cost of fire service attendance, the risk to fire fighters and the down-time associated with facilities being out of service for a long time following a fire are not factored into such cost/benefit considerations," said Tarada.

The Department for Communities and Local Government and recycling members body the Environmental Services Association would not comment on the benefits of revising the regulations.

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