FIRAS Certification for the installation of passive fire protection products -

An overview of the scheme and how it works.

1.0 What is FIRAS Certification?

FIRAS Certification is the UK's leading, independent, voluntary 3rd party certification scheme covering the installation / application and maintenance of all major types of passive fire protection. It is operated by Warringtonfire Testing & Certification Ltd and was established in 1994.

The FIRAS Certification scheme is independently accredited by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS). Accredited 3rd party certification bodies are listed here: https://www.ukas.com/find-an-organisation/

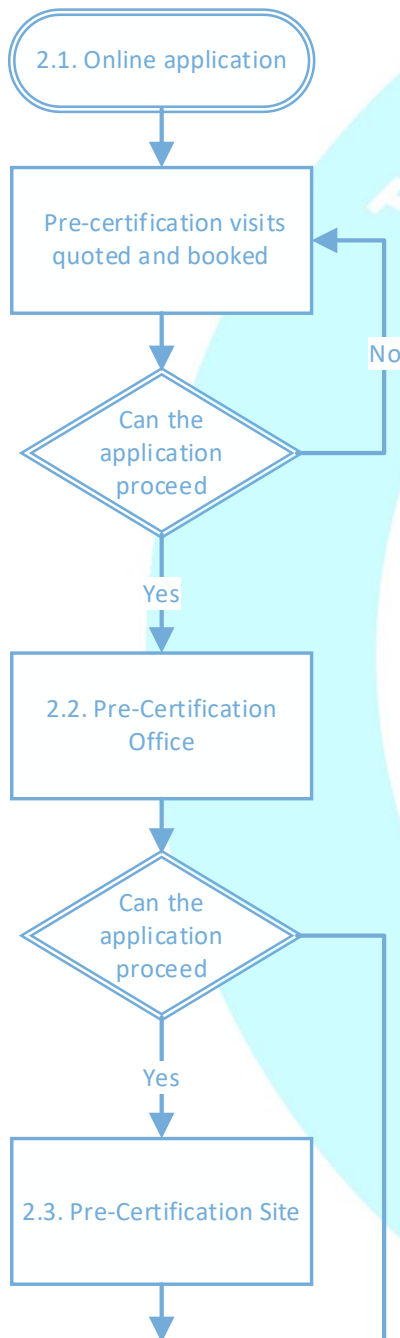**FIRAS Certification scheme covers the following modules for which we provide certification:-**
Intumescent Paint / Sprays for structural steel / Boards for structural steel / Penetration Sealing / Cavity Barriers / Partition systems – Dry Lined / Partition systems – Steel Faced / Partition systems – Composite / Timber Doors / Steel Doors / Composite Doors / Aluminum Doors / Roller Shutters / Ducting / Glazing Systems / Fire Door Maintenance.

The purpose of FIRAS Certification is to provide:

- A management system and staff competency framework to help contracting firms in this sector control and demonstrate the quality of their work.
- A formal means by which certified companies declare for every project that the components / elements they have worked on have been installed / applied / maintained correctly.
- A regime of FIRAS auditing certified companies' procedures and sampled site work. An initial audit is conducted prior to formal certification, which is then followed by regular audits conducted every up to 4 times a year on site with 1 annual office audit.

Note: FIRAS does not audit every site or product; it sample audits a certified company's activities.

The formal Rules and Regulations of the scheme are defined separately and are provided to all applicants and certified companies. These are reviewed regularly and at the time of writing are in their 19th edition. In this document we aim to provide a short summary of how the scheme operates. We hope that this is useful to contractors considering applying for FIRAS Certification as well as specifiers wanting to understand how FIRAS Certification helps provide assurance of performance.

Flowchart

- **2.1. Online application**
- **Pre-certification visits quoted and booked**
- **Can the application proceed** — No → (back to Pre-certification visits quoted and booked) / Yes ↓
- **2.2. Pre-Certification Office**
- **Can the application proceed** — Yes ↓
- **2.3. Pre-Certification Site**

2.0 What is the process to achieve FIRAS certification?

2.1 Application

We welcome applications from passive fire protection contractors. You can make these at any time online at www.warringtonfire.com/certification-services/fire-certification/firas.

FIRAS certification includes 16 modules (see above list of product areas) covering all the major passive fire protection product types. When you apply you will be able to select one or two of these, which will define the scope of your certification. Others can be added later if you expand into other areas, which is often the case.

Once we have received this we will provide a quotation, along with some suggested available dates for conducting the work.
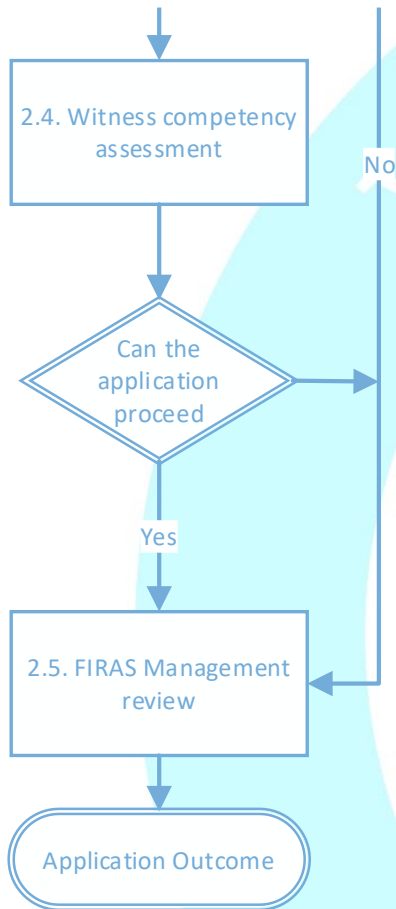
2.2 Initial audit: office

The first initial audit that we conduct is at your offices. This is to review whether your management systems, routines and procedures are all in place. This includes auditing the following activities / areas:

- Handling and quoting against enquiries
- Assigning and using project references
- Awarding of projects
- Procurement of products
- Storage and handling of products
- Site project files
- Full details of installations and supporting evidence for the application (see Annex A)
- Quality control information, records of inspections and handovers
- Training and competency records for staff
- Employee / sub-contractor employee details.

2.3 Initial audit: selected site(s)

Providing the office audit is satisfactory, we will proceed to undertake a site audit at a selected project, where we will be looking at staff competency assessments, project site files and some completed work on site. The audits will be in relation to the product modules selected in the application, e.g. fire doors.

2.4 Initial audit: staff competency assessment at selected site(s)

You will select the staff to be audited for competence, choosing at least:

- 1 supervisor / working supervisor; and
- 1 technician

per module / product type.

The audit activities we conduct in relation to staff competency at this stage are shown in the below table.

Role	Audit (witness assessment) involves the following
Supervisor	Multiple choice questions. A quality control review of a completed installation.
Working Supervisor	Multiple choice questions. A quality control review of a completed installation. A practical installation of a passive fire protection system.
Technician	A practical installation of a passive fire protection system. Verbal questioning to establish an acceptable level of understanding of what is involved in correctly installing the product / system.

2.5 Awarding of Certification

All audit results are reviewed by FIRAS management to decide if formal certification can be awarded. As stated above, auditing only proceeds from one stage to another providing audits are satisfactory.

If all is satisfactory, we will issue a FIRAS certified company certificate which will detail the scope of the certification and give a date of expiry. It is important to note that FIRAS certification relates to the certified company and not to the company's work on an individual project.

As a certified company, you will be listed on our online directory of certified companies at:
https://www.warringtoncertification.com/certified-companies/firas

Flowchart (left column):

2.4. Witness competency assessment

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Can the application proceed — No → 2.5. FIRAS Management review

Yes ↓

2.5. FIRAS Management review

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Application Outcome

3.0 What is the process after FIRAS certification has been awarded?

3.1 Contracts in Hand (CIH)

As a company in the FIRAS certification scheme, you will be required to register every contract you are awarded which involves passive fire protection products, using the online Contracts in Hand form at www.firas-database.co.uk. Initially, the form will require main project information such as site address and passive fire protection products to be installed. This information can be added to as the project progresses. It will also be used by FIRAS auditors to select sample site surveillance audits.

3.2 Site audits: on-going

We will make regular, ongoing site audits to all FIRAS certified companies. These audits will include assessing:-

- Project site files and a sample of completed works
- Renewing existing and assessing the competency of new members of staff in various roles
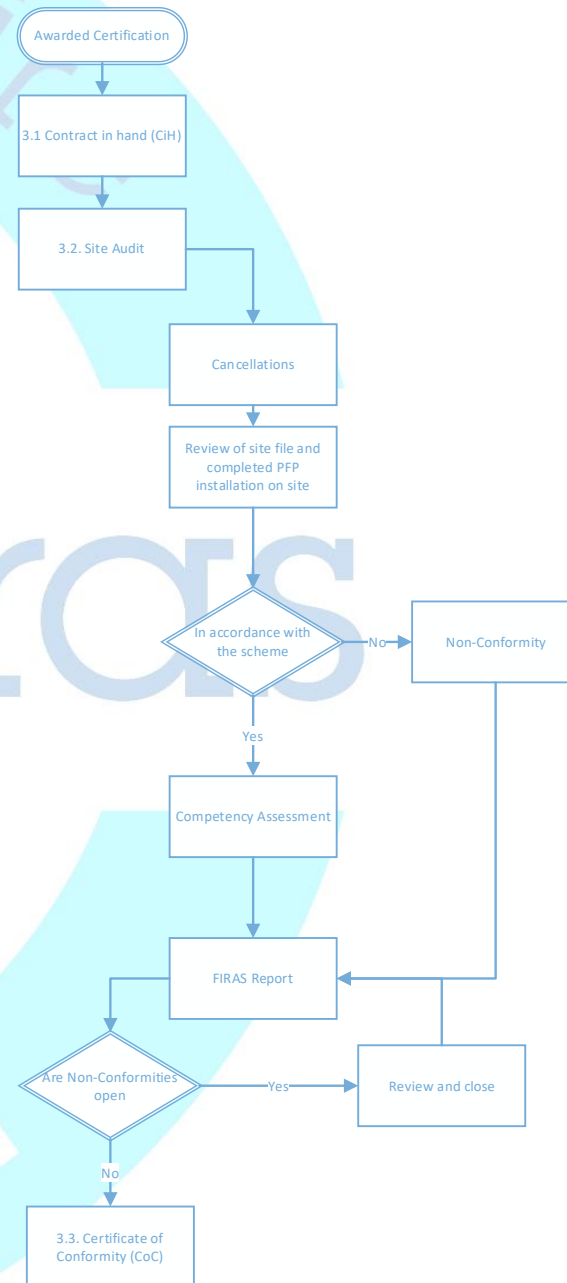
Additions to product scope can be requested, where additional modules (product types) are added (see the list in section 1) following the same principles as 2.3 – 2.5 above.

Note: If you cancel a scheduled site audit at late notice we will make a charge in line with our cancellation charge policy.

All audit reports are submitted to you using the digital FIRAS 'Maintenance Suite'. These will, if applicable, outline all identified non-conformances.

3.3 Certificates of Conformity

As a FIRAS certificated company you will issue certificates to your customers once certification has been formally awarded. These are to confirm that you have completed all the listed work fully in accordance with the FIRAS certification scheme's requirements and that the required fire performance of the installed / maintained products has been attained by fully following all the necessary installation instructions and that the claimed performance is substantiated by acceptable forms of evidence. (see Annex A)

Awarded Certification → 3.1 Contract in hand (CiH) → 3.2. Site Audit → Cancellations → Review of site file and completed PFP installation on site → In accordance with the scheme — No → Non-Conformity; Yes → Competency Assessment → FIRAS Report → Are Non-Conformities open — Yes → Review and close → FIRAS Report; No → 3.3. Certificate of Conformity (CoC)

4.0 General issues

4.1 Confirming the certification status of contractors

All FIRAS certified companies are publicly listed at
https://www.warringtonfire.com/certified-companies/firas
You can search by company or product group.

Issued / Valid: A live certificate that has been issued and meets the requirements of the certification scheme.
Suspended: A certificate that has been temporarily stopped under the scheme e.g. non-payment of fees, under review etc.
Withdrawn: A certificate that has been removed from the scheme. Withdrawal could be due to several reasons:
- Voluntarily by the certified company
- Failure to pay fees
- Breach of certification requirements
- No longer trading

4.2 Confidentiality

We will not disclose to third parties any information about a company or their activities gained as a result of carrying out certification of the company which may be considered confidential. However, restrictions will not apply to information which is considered to be in the public domain and available on request to any interested party.

4.3 Impartiality

The role of FIRAS as an independent third party certification scheme is to audit our companies against the scheme requirements. We deal solely with our client during surveillance audits to satisfy ourselves that they not only continue to meet the FIRAS scheme requirements but also continue to demonstrate competence for the work for which they hold certification. In order to maintain our impartiality we cannot engage or liaise with our clients' clients or any manufacturers.

The Warringtonfire Impartiality Policy can be found using the link below:-

https://www.warringtonfire.com/-/media/files/warringtonfire/policies-and-procedures/ewcqups001impartialitypolicyissue2011102021.pdf

4.4 Complaints against a FIRAS certified company

Where a company has engaged the services of a FIRAS certified company and is not satisfied with work undertaken our recommendation is to initially raise the concerns directly with the FIRAS certified company – and allow them to address the issues raised. This may involve providing them with access to site to investigate the matter for themselves and develop a proposed plan of action. Clearly this is a better route than involving a third party such as us.

If the above does not lead to a satisfactory outcome you may email details of your complaint to us at FIRAS@warringtonfire.com.

We will need the following information as a minimum to help us review the complaint:-

Your contractual relationship to the member company.
Name of the certified company concerned including their certification number.
The project in question e.g. (name of project, full address, work being undertaken etc).
The nature of the complaint.
Confirmation of whether the work is complete. And if so, the reference number of the FIRAS Certificate(s) of Conformity issued for the work in question.

5.0 Definitions and Explanations

Certificate of Conformity (CoC)

A Certificate of Conformity is a declaration by the certified company that the work it has undertaken on a project is fully in accordance with the FIRAS scheme requirements and that the installation complies with the Documented Specification of the products installed. Any deviation from a Documented Specification for specific installations where the work has been undertaken outside of the FIRAS scheme requirements is to be detailed on the CoC by the certified company. If you are the recipient of a Certificate of Conformity it is expected that the project has been completed and you are satisfied that the products and systems installed meet the requirements. The CoC should only be accepted once you are fully satisfied with all installations undertaken by the certificated company. Please note that FIRAS will not (and cannot) issue a CoC on behalf of any certified company at the request of their clients.

Competency Assessment

Evaluation by us of the skills, knowledge and experience of individuals employed by the company based on a questionnaire, interview and inspection of the quality of workmanship (produced by the individual under assessment) demonstrated on site. An assessment is valid for 3 years, after which a reassessment is required.

Contract In Hand (CiH)

The means by which the certificated installer notifies FIRAS of projects won and when they will be on site. It is to be noted that a CiH cannot be backdated. Where a certified company fails to record a project as a Contract in Hand, the project would then not be certifiable by the contractor under the FIRAS scheme. We would advise that when contracting a FIRAS certified company to undertake work, you request that they confirm that a Contract in Hand has been recorded on the FIRAS Maintenance Suite (see below) prior to the commencement of work. Where more than one Certificate of Conformity may be required e.g. covering different buildings, levels or phases etc., these will need to be raised as separate Contracts in Hand prior to the commencement of work.

Company FIRAS Certificate

The certified company's FIRAS Certificate is valid for 5 years and will be renewed on completion of a full office audit and a minimum of one site surveillance visit in the year of recertification. If a company has been inactive (no live projects), it may be reviewed and accepted that a mock-up scenario (where possible) may be undertaken to demonstrate the certified company's ability to continue to work in accordance with the scheme requirements.

FIRAS report

FIRAS reports are audit reports detailing systems and documents reviewed during the audit. The report is issued to the certified company via the FIRAS Maintenance Suite portal. The report is the property of the certified company and we cannot provide copies of these reports to a third party.

Maintenance Suite

A web-based portal with access granted to all certified companies who have their own company profile where all reports are filed and assessed employee profiles are maintained; this platform enables them to manage all aspects of their certification e.g. raising Contracts in Hand, generating Certificates of Conformity etc.

Non-conformance

Where non-conformances are raised during a pre-certification audit, we may decide not to award certification. The company would be required to make the necessary changes prior to making a new application. Non-conformances identified in other audits must be adequately addressed within an agreed timescale. In cases where non-conformances are identified during a site visit a 'hold' will be placed on the specific Contract(s) in Hand to prevent Certificate(s) of Conformity by the contractor being issued until such time as the non-conformances have been adequately addressed. Where a site non-conformance has been issued on one project, we may require an additional site audit at another project to establish whether the non-conformance is an isolated incident. It is the responsibility of all certified companies to consider if the non-conformity raised may be applicable to past projects and if remedial action may be required. Three non-conformances within a 12 month period may result in the certification being withdrawn.

Non-certified work (Disclaimer)

If the certified company is instructed to deviate from the FIRAS scheme requirements by their client (including end-users), they are to raise a disclaimer in writing for the items of work affected. An example situation would be when a certified company is unable to install the passive fire protection system to a Documented Specification (See below: Acceptable Forms of Evidence). In this case the affected work is to be communicated to the client in writing as a non-certified and potentially non-compliant installation. Details of this are also to be held on the Site File for the project.

Site File

A Site File should contain all the relevant information listed below for the project in addition to any other information required to support the work being undertaken on site:-

- Method Statement (signed by all employees on the site)
- Fire performance rating required (This can be in the form of a fire-rated drawing, survey or written requirement from client)
- Installation Guides/data sheets/evidence of certification for each system installed
- Product Safety Data Sheets
- Quality Control Records.

Training

All installation and subcontract installation staff must receive appropriate training. It is every certified company's responsibility to ensure that all personnel are suitably qualified and competent for the work they are undertaking. A FIRAS witness assessment is used to confirm that at the time of assessment the applicant has demonstrated their ability to successfully complete a task(s) within the assessed module(s).

Please note: FIRAS is a certification scheme and not a training facility. FIRAS does not provide training to a company's installation staff.

Obtaining acceptable forms of evidence to confirm the fire performance of any given product is quite complicated. There are several options and we have listed all the acceptable ones below.

In practice installation companies will need to request installation instructions for each product and situation (e.g. differing wall types) as well as the acceptable supporting technical evidence, usually from the manufacturer.

Annex A - Acceptable forms of evidence

1. Fire Test Evidence –The fire test report must be from a laboratory that is accredited by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) or accredited by an Accreditation Body that is a signatory of the ILAC (International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation) mutual recognition agreement (MRA) to ISO/IEC 17025 for the appropriate test standard. The product must be installed as per the recorded installation method stated within the test report.

2. Classification report written in accordance with EN 13501 series of standards - The laboratory issuing the classification report must be UKAS accredited or accredited by an Accreditation Body that is a signatory of the ILAC (International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation) mutual recognition agreement (MRA) to ISO/IEC 17025 for the appropriate test standard.
NB: the classification report may not have been issued under accreditation as some Accreditation Bodies do not currently accredit against the EN 13501 series of standards. The product must be installed as per the recorded installation method stated within the classification report or the test evidence on which the classification report is based.

3. Technical Assessment of Fire Performance (test laboratories and independent assessment/consultancy bodies)[1] – an evaluation of a product or system specification provided fully in accordance with PFPF document 'Guide to Undertaking Technical Assessment of Fire Performance of Construction Product based on Fire Test Evidence'. These assessments[2] will be provided by test laboratories and independent assessment/consultancy bodies with the necessary expertise. For example, laboratories accredited by UKAS for the relevant test standard can be assumed to have the necessary expertise (Ref: ADB vol 2, clause B5: 2019 edition). The product must be installed as per the installation methodology stated within the technical assessment.

4. Technical Assessment of Fire Performance (manufacturers)[1] applicable for penetration, linear joint seals, and cavity barriers products only – an evaluation of a product or system specification provided fully in accordance with PFPF document 'Guide to Undertaking Technical Assessment of Fire Performance of Construction Product based on Fire Test Evidence'. These assessments[2] will be provided by the manufacturer of the proposed products who will have technical knowledge of their products' performance capabilities. Assessments must be carried out by manufacturers with the necessary expertise in the relevant supporting test methods. The product must be installed as per the installation methodology stated within the technical assessment.

5. Fire performance certification scope of application - This must be issued under a UKAS accredited third-party certification scheme, such as Certifire and BM TRADA Q-Mark.
NB: For some certification schemes it may be necessary to obtain the relevant supporting technical assessment documentation and installation instructions as listed on the applicable scope.

6. The associated technical documents and relevant installation instructions that are issued with a CE/UKCA marked product covered by a scope of application given within a European Technical Assessment (ETA) that is linked to a valid Declaration of Performance (DoP).

7. The associated technical documents and relevant installation instructions that are issued with a CE/UKCA marked product, which has been placed on the market in conformity with a harmonised/designated product standard. The product must be linked to a valid Declaration of Performance (DoP).

8. Following the agreed specific design details for a project at which the installation work is to take place. The Principal Designer, Principal Contractor under instruction from the Principal Designer or anyone appointed as the Designer e.g. fire engineer (as defined under the Building Regulations (England) Amendment Regulations 2023 and CDM regs 2015) who will be taking design liability for the installation detail(s) must provide sufficient information including justification of the detail(s) and suitable installation instructions. Formal documentation to confirm the acceptance of liability referencing the detail(s) to be used must be provided by the appropriate party referenced above. This shall be provided to the FIRAS certified company who must hold it on file and make it available for reference at any future audit.
NB: This approach is site address specific only and the supporting documentation will not be transferable to other projects.

Foot notes:
[1] It is expected that all organisations and manufacturers providing assessments in accordance with PFPF document 'Guide to Undertaking Technical Assessment of Fire Performance of Construction Product based on Fire Test Evidence' must:
• have Professional Indemnity insurance (PFPF clause 4)
• be a subscribing organisation to the PFPF guide (PFPF clause 4)
• comply with the PFPF guide in full including confirmation of impartiality (PFPF Clause 8)
• follow the PFPF checklist in Annex E (PFPF annex E)

[2] It is expected that all assessments written in accordance with PFPF document 'Guide to Undertaking Technical Assessment of Fire Performance of Construction Product based on Fire Test Evidence' must:
• be signed off by an assessor and reviewer(s) with the necessary expertise (PFPF clause 8)
• include the signed declaration from the applicant (PFPF annex B)

Is there suitable manufacturer's technical data sheets and installation instructions to cover the intended design detail using the installed product(s)

— Yes →

No
↓

Is there suitable test evidence or an EN 13501 series classification report available to support the installation detail?
(see point 1 and 2 above)

— Yes →

Suitable for use within the installation scheme. The product shall be installed according to the accepted evidence following the installation instructions or applicable code of practice.
N.B. Keep records on the project file and handover information on completion as required.

No
↓

Is there a technical assessment of performance to support the installation detail?
(see points 3 and 4 above)

— Yes →

No
↓

Is the installation detail covered by the fire performance certification scope of application?
(see point 5 above)

— Yes →

No
↓

Is the installation detail covered by the CE/UKCA marking for the product?
(see points 6 and 7 above)

— Yes →

No
↓

Has the installation detail been deemed acceptable by the Principal Designer/Contractor or other appointed as the Designer e.g. Fire Engineer?
(see point 8 above)

— Yes →

No
↓

Is it possible to alter the situation on site to bring the installation detail back within scope of the supporting documentation?
(listed in points 1-8)

— Yes →

No
↓

Is it possible to test the installation detail?

— No →

The installation detail cannot be covered.
Detail to be logged and communicated to client as non-compliant under the certification scheme.

Yes (loops back up)