

Ashley Chivers, Sales Director of IKO Roofing Specification, says the new NFRC Safe2Torch guidelines are vital for improving the safe use of gas torches in roofing projects.

Why Safe2Torch is an essential tool for the roofing industry

The National Federation of Roofing Contractors (NFRC) has issued new guidelines for safe practice when using gas torches in roofing. The Safe2Torch campaign has been developed in partnership with contractor and manufacturer members of the NFRC. The campaign addresses the risk of fire when drying out roof surfaces or using gas torches to install torch-on membranes. Safe2Torch consists of a Guidelines booklet and a checklist to be completed before work starts. These replace the original publication, 'Responsible Specification Checklist', previously issued by the NFRC. The main aim of Safe2Torch is to promote the safe use of hot works from specification to completion, providing a joined-up approach to every situation where there is any risk of fire.

Martin Fisher, Technical Manager at IKO PLC has been closely involved in the consultations to design the new guidelines, working with the NFRC and other manufacturers in a two year process to deliver a simple series of steps to follow when approaching a roofing project. Martin is a Fellow of the Institute of Roofing, a member of the NFRC technical committee and has served on numerous British Standard and industry-related technical committees. He comments: "These guidelines directly affect at least 50% of all the flat roofs installed in the UK. It's a serious issue for the industry, so having a clear guide to hot works at each stage from specification to completion is a great contribution to safety at work."

The aim of the NFRC is to have manufacturers and contractors pledge their support for the Safe2Torch campaign, to show they have read and understood the guidance and are committed to promoting and implementing the campaign throughout their organisation. All IKO specification sales and design teams have signed up to the Safe2Torch guidance document. In practice this means IKO is committed to providing specifications to its clients with Safe2Torch applications identified in every bespoke design.

Although the guidelines are just that - a guide, not a statutory requirement - Safe2Torch is a welcome addition to safety in the roofing industry. There may be those in the industry who will not see the need for information or instructions on a process they have been using for years, but there is always room for clarification. A reminder of the risks involved is never wasted, and it's useful for both newcomers and old hands to have a quick, Safe2Torch

checklist to follow. Contractors agree. Ian Deacon, Director of Rio Asphalt, comments: “This is a brilliant initiative, long overdue. Anything which provides clarification for the operatives on site, and helps define the risks and how to avoid them, is very useful. It’s a great contribution to hot works safety.”

As the UK’s largest roofing trade association, the NFRC is seen as the voice of the industry. With a history spanning 125 years the NFRC is constantly adapting to change and innovation to ensure its members are well informed on all relevant matters. Kevin Taylor, Head of Technical Services at the NFRC, comments on the importance of the Safe2Torch guidelines: “Roof fires, no matter how minor, pose a serious threat to life, property, the image of the industry and possibly even the long-term future of torch-on as an accepted method of covering a roof. The NFRC seeks to significantly reduce the risk of roof fires when using gas torches by educating contractors and manufacturers with guidance on safe working practices.”

The campaign will promote the positive side of the industry, where safe specifications and safe working practices are second nature. It will give clients assurance that if they engage with a Safe2Torch Contractor and/or Manufacturer, their roof works will have been planned and installed within the requirements of the Safe2Torch guidance.

For more information on the NFRC or to download the Safe2Torch guidelines visit: <https://www.nfrc.co.uk/safe2torch>. To contact IKO PLC’s Technical team, call 01257 256864 or email technical.uk@iko.com.

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Images: “The NFRC seeks to significantly reduce the risk of roof fires when using gas torches”