

Joint BPF Pipes Group/BESA statement – plastic pre-insulated pipes.

The term 'pre insulated pipes' is a generic term that is generally used to describe several different pipe systems, but with polymer based pipes, the term usually refers to three different product categories;

- Pre-insulated district heating pipe designed to be buried below ground for district heating and heat networks
- Pre-insulated plumbing pipework designed for domestic services applications within buildings
- Pre-insulated pipework designed for cooling application typically above ground within a building and externally.

District heating pipe systems are generally used outside of a built environment which are usually buried within a trench or within a specially constructed conduit.

Although these district heating pipes are generally buried underground, it may be possible that they could be laid above ground, but these applications should be confirmed with the specific manufacturer to ensure their system is suitable for that use.

However, whether used above or below ground, where these pipes may transition from the outside of a construction project to the inside of a built environment, care must be taken that the relevant standards regarding fire safety and fire control are strictly observed.

If district heating pipe systems are to be applied within the inside of a building project, advice must be sought from the project's design team to approve suitability for that specific application and ensure compliance with Building Regulations and appropriate standards.

Separate to pre-insulated district heating pipe systems, there are a wide variety of pre-insulated plumbing pipes on the market. These are available in a range of different thicknesses and insulation materials.

In all cases, any insulated pipework within a building has to be approved by the design team to ensure compliance with Building Regulations and the relevant associated standards – including those pertaining to reaction to fire and thermal performance. The specification details should be sought from manufacturers to help with this process.

Specialist advice for fire stopping and evidenced performance testing for fire stopping products should also be sought from a qualified professional contractor (third party certified where relevant) who should also be able to advise on the necessary detail to

maintain the specified fire performance of the combined building fabric and pipe installation.

Whatever the system being used, contractors must ensure that products are installed correctly to the manufacturers' installation requirements and must also follow the guidance of the project's engineers as to the suitability for the specific application.