



## News from Eurisol

### About Us

[Home](#)

[News from Eurisol](#)

[Member Sites](#)

### About Mineral Wool?

[What is Mineral Wool?](#)

[The Production Process](#)

[Why Insulate?](#)

[How Much To Use?](#)

### Solutions

[Common Solutions](#)

[Pipe Insulation](#)

[Grants for Insulation](#)

### Environmental Issues

[Global Warming](#)

[Waste and Sustainability](#)

[Safe Handling](#)

### Information

[European News](#)

[Health Issues](#)

[Links](#)

[Publications](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Legal](#)

[Site Map](#)

### Members Area

[Home Page](#)



## PRESS RELEASE - REJECTION OF MULTIFOIL INSULATION CLAIMS IS GOOD NEWS, SAYS EURISOL

Release date: February 2007

The growing rejection of the seemingly exaggerated performance claims for some multifoil insulation products is good for the construction industry, good for the consumer and good for the UK's commitment to reducing the energy consumption of buildings according to Eurisol, the UK mineral wool insulation trade association.

For some considerable time, Eurisol has disputed the testing methods used by some high profile multi-foil suppliers to calculate the claimed thermal insulation performance of their products. While the rest of the insulation industry and indeed progressive multi-foil suppliers use the harmonised European methods of testing and declaring their products' thermal performance, some multifoil manufacturers have used 'in situ' comparative tests as the basis of calculations claiming thermal conductivity values better by 200 to 300 per cent than the values obtained using these recognised methods.

With the revision of Approved Document Part L of the Building Regulations coming into force, the thermal performance of buildings is under the spotlight as never before, with insulation set to play a vital role in meeting the increased standards required by the Government.

According to Eurisol it has therefore become even more important that specifiers can select insulation products with confidence, based upon consistent measurement methods and fair claims for performance.

Now a number of bodies have joined Eurisol in rejecting the claims of the multifoil lobbyists.

In recent months the government has moved to give guidance on the use of multifoil insulation in roofs, which counters the claims made by 'in situ' comparative tests. It has written to all local authority building control departments and to bodies such as the NHBC, concerned with the policing of building standards, and told them that they could no longer accept the thermal values claimed for Actis Tris Iso Super 10 and similar products. In future all insulation must meet the standards laid out in BR 443, requiring hot box tests to be carried out on multi-foil products. Interestingly, the Multi Foil industry itself is

divided with companies such as Web Dynamics making fair and properly substantiated claims and actively opposing the 'in situ' comparative tests.

A Technical Guidance Note has also been issued by LABC, which instructs Building Control to:

- reject multifoil insulation claims for thermal resistances of 5m<sup>2</sup>K/W for all building works requiring compliance with ADL 2006
- only accept multifoil thermal resistances tested and declared in accordance with recognised EN test standards
- allow an R-value of 1.7m<sup>2</sup>W/K for multifoils with 'comparative' test data, pending the development of an agreed European test standard for multifoil insulation.

In the light of these developments the NHBC has issued advice to members, saying: "NHBC has decided to err on the side of caution in order to prevent the possibility of homes being built with thermal performance which falls short of expectation. Consequently, we will not accept any multifoil insulations until the situation becomes clearer."

Eurisol has welcomed the announcement by these bodies. "The role of insulation is too important to the construction industry, to the consumer and to the UK's commitment to reducing the energy consumption of our buildings to allow anyone to take advantage unfairly" says Crispin Dunn-Meynell, General Secretary of Eurisol. "The cost of building with inadequate insulation materials is immense both in financial and in environmental terms."

As well as unfounded claims over the thermal performance of multifoil insulation products when new, Eurisol believes the products have a question mark against their ongoing performance.

"A study by the North American Insulation Manufacturers Association in 1999 found there were a number of variables which affect the reliability of multifoil insulation in use. It found that the claimed performance of these products could be reduced by as much as 85 per cent if the heat flow direction changes, the emissivity of the facing is degraded, the airspace is less than 88mm or the airspace is not fully sealed.

"Furthermore many studies have reinforced the eventual and continual drop in the R-value of multifoil insulation as dust accumulates on the reflective surface of the product. As R-value decreases, the costs of maintaining stable temperatures either by heating or cooling to compensate for R-value loss will increase," said Crispin Dunn-Meynell.

"Further studies have shown that mould and corrosion of the insulation is also possible, and that multifoil insulation does not fare well when exposed to low energy fire, when it can allow a flashover situation to occur.

"Compare that with mineral wool insulation, which provides the unique four-in-one benefits of proven thermal insulation performance, excellent sound absorption, fire protection and sustainability.

"With the increasing awareness of housebuyers of carbon efficiency, and the introduction of compulsory Energy Performance Certificates in Home Information Packs from this June, owners whose homes have had multi-foils used for their insulation should have serious concerns that they may face a reduction in their property value if they fail to perform. If this proves the case, it will be interesting to see who the lawyers then target for compensation; the multi foils manufacturers who made the claims, Building Control who allowed foils to be used, or the builders who installed them."

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▶ [PRESS RELEASE - PRE BUDGET REPORT STATEMENT](#)

▶ [NEW PART L - THERMAL](#)

▶ [IRRITANT DECLASSIFICATION](#)

▶ [WARMING TO TOUGH NEW RULES ON BUILDINGS](#)

▶ [PRESS STATEMENT ON FORMALDEHYDE](#)

## FACT SHEETS

[Mineral Wool](#)

[Naima Study 1999](#)

[Labels in the Industry](#)

Mineral wool has the following characteristics:

- ⊕ Permanent and will not rot
- ⊕ Non-combustible
- ⊕ Melting temperatures in excess of 1800 – 2000°F
- ⊕ Effective sound control
- ⊕ Does not absorb moisture
- ⊕ Mineral Wool will not rot or support mould growth