

Thomas Bell-Wright International Consultants turns up the heat

CEO and Chief Technical Officer **Thomas Bell-Wright** says his company has been providing value-added services to the construction industry in the UAE and beyond for 20 years.



Thomas Bell-Wright, CEO and Chief Technical Officer of TBWIC.

Home to the GCC's first fire-testing laboratory, Thomas Bell-Wright International Consultants (TBWIC) has helped further raise building fire safety standards across the region through its expanding portfolio of services.

Twenty years young and operating out of Dubai's Ras Al Khor Industrial Area since 1999, TBWIC has established a name for itself in the regional construction industry as a leader in providing Façade Consulting and accredited testing for building products. In 2009, it made headlines when it launched the region's first furnace for testing fire-rated doors and partitions used in the construction of commercial, public and office buildings.

In December 2014, the company was accredited to provide the United States' National Fire Protection Association test NFPA 285, for Fire Propagation in building cladding – an extremely useful test for a country like the UAE, with such a large

stock of high rise buildings.

Thomas Bell-Wright, CEO and Chief Technical Officer of TBWIC, pointed out that their testing services have made a huge difference in helping companies and local authorities comply with GCC building department regulations.

"The NFPA 285 test is a great asset for the region as it ensures that a building's exterior wall system complies with the UAE Fire and Life Safety Code, the Abu Dhabi International Building Code and other US-based codes around the region. TBWIC is proud that their accreditation for the NFPA 285 test is with IAS, which is a part of the International Code Council, publishers of the 'model' code, the International Building Code," he said.

Product Certification

In 2014, TBWIC also became accredited by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service

(UKAS), to provide Product Certification services in accordance with ISO 17065. "This is a very big deal," said Bell-Wright.

What this means is that when a component such as a fire door appears on site, the purchaser can be confident that it is the same, in every particular, as the specimen that was tested. This is because the Certification Body has inspected the factory and their records on a periodic basis to ensure it is so.

Aside from fire testing and product certification, TBWIC's expertise also include Façade Consulting -- design review work for curtain walls and curtain wall testing, which – unlike fire testing – are not mandated by regional governments, but are nonetheless crucial in ensuring that the building is safe and secure for the occupants inside.

"These services serve as insurance for the building owners because the façade systems typically represent around 15% of the cost of the building. Curtain walls are repetitive systems so any bad workmanship or design is likely to be throughout the building. Repair is usually not possible and replacement requires an empty building since the outside walls are to be replaced.

"So if a problem does manifest during the life of the building, it can be too expensive to repair and mean the end of the building. In that respect, it is very worthwhile to spend a small amount of money during construction to make sure that what's being installed is done correctly from the beginning," Bell-Wright explained.

As the business continues to gather pace, he said TBWIC will be relocating this year into a new 95,000-square-foot facility in Jebel Ali – three times the land area of its current site. ■