

FIRE COMPLIANCE, FIRE SAFETY & CERTIFICATION FOR YOUR SCHEME

COMPLIANCE & CERTIFICATION AND YOUR STRATA SCHEME

The consequences of fire devastating property and causing serious injury or death to residents are obvious. In order to limit these consequences NSW legislation, the Building Code of Australia and Australian Standards provide minimum provisions for fire safety and compliance which must be satisfied when construction of a new dwelling or conversion of an existing building is undertaken.

These safety provisions are particularly strenuous for buildings where public safety is paramount, such as Hospitals, Hotels, Office Buildings, Shopping Centre's and Multi Dwelling properties, IE strata schemes – Apartments, Villas, Townhouses, Factories Etc.

There are a range of provisions that can be implemented to ensure compliance with the relevant fire safety standards. Part 9 of the Environment Planning & Assessment Regulations 2000 (NSW) covers fire safety and the requirements contained in the Building Code of Australia. Clause 166 outlines many of these safety measures as detailed overleaf.

The type of fire safety measures required for a particular building will largely be determined by the size, style and construction of the building. These measures are usually taken into consideration during the planning & design stage of the development and must be approved by local council prior to the commencement of construction.

Once the development is completed, the builder/ developer must then obtain a certificate of compliance which stipulates the building has been constructed with the approved fire safety measures in place – this is known as a Fire Safety Certificate, a copy of which must be posted at the building, as well as provided to the local council.

To ensure the fire safety measures installed at a building are properly maintained & functioning properly, the Environmental Planning & Assessment Act & Regulations places an obligation on a 'building owner' to obtain an annual certificate of compliance certifying that all fire safety equipment installed at a building has been inspected, tested and is operating within the guidelines specified by council, Australian Standards, and in accordance with the original Fire Safety Certificate.

This is known as the Annual Fire Safety Statement, a copy of which must be provided to council, the Fire Commissioner and displayed at the building. When it comes to strata schemes, the Owners Corporation (Body Corporate) is considered to be the 'building owner'. Whilst obtaining an Annual Fire Safety Statement is not new, recent changes to strata legislation* and more stringent requirements being imposed by council and relevant authorities means that more thorough inspections and testing of the fire safety measures installed at your building are necessary.

Inspection of Fire Doors

AS1851.7**, specifies that every fire door at your strata scheme must be thoroughly inspected on an annual basis. A fire door is a door designed and installed to prevent the spread of fire from one section of a building to another. Those doors that separate lot property and common property, for instance the front entry doors to an apartment are generally fire rated doors.

Serious problems can arise when modifications are made to a fire door, such as the installation of non approved deadlocks, security chains, spy holes or the removal of door closers. The extent of these types of alterations can compromise the fire rating of the door so severely that only way to restore its' fire rating is to replace the door.

Whilst the strata By-Laws permit owners to fit locking or other safety devices to their Lot to improve security or safety, not all owners have taken the necessary care to assure that such installations comply with fire safety regulations.

In order to overcome the burden of responsibility for restoring the fire rating of a door that has been damaged, many Owners Corporations have passed By-Laws placing this responsibility on individual lot owners. For this reason, if you are considering making any type of alteration or addition to a fire door at your premises, it is essential that you investigate the fire safety standards prior to undertaking the said works.



Fire safety measures listed in clause 166 of the Environment Planning & Assessment Regulations 2000 (NSW)

FIRE SAFETY MEASURE	INSPECTION
ACCESS PANELS, DOORS AND HOPPERS TO FIRE-RESISTING SHAFTS	YEARLY
AUTOMATIC FAIL-SAFE DEVICES	6 MONTHLY
AUTOMATIC FIRE DETECTION AND ALARM SYSTEMS	MONTHLY
AUTOMATIC FIRE SUPPRESSION SYSTEMS	WEEKLY
EMERGENCY LIFTS	YEARLY
EMERGENCY LIGHTING	6 MONTHLY
EMERGENCY WARNING AND INTERCOMMUNICATION SYSTEMS	MONTHLY
EXIT SIGNS	6 MONTHLY
FIRE CONTROL CENTRES AND ROOMS	YEARLY
FIRE DAMPERS	YEARLY
FIRE DOORS	YEARLY
FIRE HYDRANT SYSTEMS	6 MONTHLY
FIRE SEALS PROTECTING OPENINGS IN FIRE-RESISTING COMPONENTS OF BUILDING	YEARLY
FIRE SHUTTERS	YEARLY
FIRE WINDOWS	YEARLY
HOSE REEL SYSTEMS	6 MONTHLY
LIGHTWEIGHT CONSTRUCTION	YEARLY
MECHANICAL AIR HANDLING SYSTEMS	6 MONTHLY
PERIMETER VEHICLE ACCESS FOR EMERGENCY VEHICLES	6 MONTHLY
PORTABLE FIRE EXTINGUISHERS	6 MONTHLY
SAFETY CURTAINS IN PROSCENIUM OPENINGS	YEARLY
SMOKE AND HEAT VENTS	6 MONTHLY
SMOKE DAMPERS	YEARLY
SMOKE AND HEAT DETECTORS	YEARLY
SMOKE DOORS	MONTHLY
SOLID CORE DOORS	YEARLY
STANDBY POWER SYSTEMS	6 MONTHLY
WALL-WETTING SPRINKLER AND DRENCHER SYSTEMS	YEARLY
WARNING AND OPERATIONAL SIGNS	6 MONTHLY

Contact Us



8567 6400



admin@netstrata.com.au



PO Box 298, Hurstville BC NSW 1481



netstrata.com.au



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