



Building newsflash number 461

Flooding impacts on fire safety systems

Purpose

To advise of emergency exemptions for approvals of repairs and replacements of components of fire safety systems following recent the recent flood disaster.

Background

Building codes require some buildings to have fire safety systems such as fire detection and alarm systems, sprinklers and hydrants.

For example, high rise buildings usually have a fire alarm system with a fire indicator panel located on the ground floor. When a part of a building's smoke hazard management system is activated (for example a smoke detection and alarm system), the panel indicates the area of the building in which the alarm has been triggered. Also, some hydrant and sprinkler systems have pump-sets located on the premises or in the building to assist with the operation of the fire systems.

Due to recent flooding across Queensland some fire safety systems may have been damaged and fire panels, pump-sets or other aspects of fire safety systems may need to be replaced to protect occupants. It is essential that owners check their building's systems and take steps to ensure that safety is not compromised.

Issues

Generally, replacing major components of fire safety systems is assessable building work under the Building Act 1975. In addition, fire indicator panels and components of other fire systems are special fire services under the Sustainable Planning Regulation 2009 (SPR) with the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS) as a referral agency for advice.

Under normal circumstances building approvals are required for major work on fire safety systems. However, section 584 of the Sustainable Planning Act 2009 (SPA) provides exemptions for building work undertaken in emergency situations. Section 584 authorises building work to be undertaken without the usual approvals in circumstances related to an emergency endangering life or health, or the structural safety of a building.

In the circumstances of the recent flood disaster, damaged fire safety systems pose a risk to life. In particular, a non-functioning fire indicator panel could have severe consequences for the safety of the occupants of a building. Therefore, repairing or replacing components of fire safety systems with a comparable operational component may be undertaken without a building approval by advising the Local Government in writing as soon as practicable after starting the work.



In addition, it is recommended that owners advise their local Queensland Fire and Rescue Service community safety office of the work and provide a certificate from the installer stating the work conforms to the relevant Australian/New Zealand Standard as soon as practicable after completing the work. This will help to ensure Queensland Fire and Rescue Service officers conducting regular maintenance inspections are aware of the new systems.

Contact for further information

Department of Infrastructure and Planning

Building Codes Queensland Division

tel +61 7 3239 6369

buildingcodes@dip.qld.gov.au

DISCLAIMER: The information contained in this Newsflash is provided by the State of Queensland in good faith. The material is general in nature and before relying on the material in any important matter, users should carefully evaluate its accuracy, currency, completeness and relevance for their purpose. It is not intended as a substitute for consulting the relevant legislation or for obtaining appropriate professional advice relevant to your particular circumstances. The State of Queensland cannot accept responsibility or liability for any loss, damage, cost or expense you might incur as a result of the use of or reliance on information contained in this Newsflash. It is not intended to be, and should not be relied upon as the ultimate and/or complete source of information.