



Building Newsflash

Proposed amendments to the Fire Safety Standard for Budget Accommodation Buildings

Purpose

The purpose of this Newsflash is to seek comments on the proposed amendments to the Fire Safety Standard, Part 14, of the Queensland Development Code for budget accommodation buildings.

Background

By 1 July 2005, owners of all budget accommodation buildings built, approved, or for which an application was made prior to 1 January 1992, are required to comply with all provisions of the Fire Safety Standard. This will require, for a significant number of owners, the installation of fire safety features which are additional to smoke alarms and emergency lighting.

Proposed Amendments

As a result of an internal review and comments received from stakeholders, some minor improvements to the Fire Safety Standard have been identified. These improvements were circulated for comment through Building Newsflash 132 issued on 27 May 2003.

All comment received were favourable to the proposed amendments, however further improvements have been suggested to more accurately define the meaning and application of the word '*disability*' and other related words, when used in the context of provision A4 of the Standard.

A copy of the proposed amendments is available on the Department's website www.dlgp.qld.gov.au under "Building & Plumbing" together with explanatory notes.

Comments on the proposed amendments are required by 30 June 2003.

Contact Officer

The comments may be in writing or faxed to Mr Allan Wendt, Senior Projects Officer, on Fax 07 32371 705; or email to Allan.Wendt@dlgp.qld.gov.au

Proposed Amendments to the Fire Safety Standard for Budget Accommodation Buildings

- Replace existing definition of *disability* with:

Disability means an impairment/s or a combination of impairments which reduces the capacity of a person to evacuate a building in an emergency, and includes any impairment that restricts mobility or the ability to understand or independently respond to an emergency evacuation.¹

- Replace existing definition of *level of supervision ratio* with:

Minimum support ratio means the lowest ratio of the number of persons able to provide support to the number of persons with a disability within the building, between the hours of 8:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m.

- Replace existing definition of *level of supervision* with:

Support, for the purposes of *minimum support ratio*, means immediate on-site evacuation assistance, able to be provided by a person without a disability to a person/s with a disability.²

- Insert new definition:

Supported budget accommodation building means a budget accommodation building in which one or more persons are on-site continuously between the hours of 8:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m. to provide a “personal care service”, as defined in Schedule 2 of the *Residential Services (Accreditation) Act 2002*, other than a “personal care service” solely to “help in managing the resident’s financial affairs”.

- Replace existing A4 (a) with:

In all *supported budget accommodation buildings* which accommodated non-itinerant people with a disability, the distance a person with a *disability*,

- Replace existing A4 (b) with:

In *budget accommodation buildings*, other than *supported budget accommodation buildings*, with a floor area greater than 300 m² and except where *fire-isolated stairways* are provided,

- Insert the following 2 footnotes at the end of the Definitions section.

1. For the purpose of assessing whether a person has a disability under the Standard, a checklist is provided in the xxxxxx Fire Safety Standard Guidelines.
2. For the purpose of assessing whether an occupant able to provide support, a checklist is provided in the xxxxxx Fire Safety Standard Guidelines.

Explanatory Notes to the suggested amendments

- The amended definition of **Disability** is limited to the Fire Safety Standard (FSS) and is used only for the purpose of determining whether a person has a reduced capacity to evacuate a building in the case of an emergency.
- The change from **Level of supervision ratio** to **Minimum support ratio** provides a number of improved outcomes:
 1. The ratio is now based on the minimum number of persons able to assist people with a disability to evacuate in an emergency (the existing definition is ambiguous, without using the term minimum);
 2. The minimum ratio is now calculated during the hours in which the highest risk to life and limb due to fire exists, i.e. the hours in which persons are more likely to be asleep.
 3. These are also the hours during which occupants, who are able to provide evacuation assistance to persons with a disability, are most likely to be on the premises. This provides some relief for owners by providing for greater ratios, and therefore greater travel distances, without negatively affecting evacuation times.
 4. The FSS will refer to guidelines, which will contain the checklists for operators to determine whether a person has a disability or is able to provide support to a person with a disability.
- The change from **Level of supervision** to **Support** more accurately reflects the intention that the “support” is for the purpose of assisting persons to evacuate who have a reduced capacity to evacuate themselves.
- The insertion of the definition of **Supported budget accommodation building** is intended to ensure that Acceptable Solution A4(a) only captures those premises that provide continuous on-site care during the general sleep period. The existing A4(a) is deemed to be too broad in its capture of buildings. I.e. some boarding houses with long-term residents were inadvertently caught.

The definition of personal care service in the *Residential Services (Accreditation) Act 2002* states:

“personal care service” means a service of regularly providing a resident with—

(a) help in—

- (i) bathing, toileting or another activity related to personal hygiene; or
- (ii) dressing or undressing; or
- (iii) consuming a meal; or
- (iv) meeting a mobility problem of the resident; or
- (v) taking medication;

(b) help in managing the resident’s financial affairs.

For the purpose of the definition of **Supported budget accommodation building**, paragraph (b) is excluded.

- The amendment to Acceptable Solution A4(b) was necessary to remove a conflict with A4(a). I.e. despite Schedule 3 of the *Fire Safety Standard* allowing a maximum travel distance of 60m for a Type B building with self-closing doors and a 1:1 supervision ratio, if the building was over 300m², A4(b) reduced the maximum travel distance to 30m. This was not the intention. By making A4(a) and A4(b) mutually exclusive, the original intent is achieved.