

Fire Safety Management Plan Guidelines

Fire Safety Inspections or Audits



Queensland Government

Department of Local Government and Planning
Department of Emergency Services

Background

This guideline provides information about fire safety inspections (previously known as audits). Owners of budget accommodation buildings may expect a fire safety inspection to be carried out on their buildings from time to time under the new fire safety legislation.

This guideline is intended to assist building owners, local government officers, fire officers, consultants and designers in understanding the process of a fire safety inspection and the possible outcomes of a fire safety inspection. It should be read in conjunction with the legislation, the Fire Safety Standard and the other guidelines listed at the back of this guideline.

Introduction

On 1 July 2002, new laws (legislation) introduced by the Queensland Government took effect to ensure the safe evacuation of occupants from budget accommodation buildings. The new legislation requires all budget accommodation buildings built, approved, or for which an application was made prior to 1 January 1992, when the Building Code of Australia was introduced into Queensland, to comply with the prescribed Fire Safety Standard.

The legislation requires the installation of an early warning system and emergency lighting by 30 June 2003 and compliance with the other provisions of the standard within a two-year period. Owners of all existing budget accommodation buildings, including those approved since 1 January 1992, are also required to prepare and implement a Fire Safety Management Plan (FSMP) by 30 June 2003.

It is the owner/occupier's obligation to ensure that the building complies with all the fire safety requirements.

Building occupiers are people who have a delegated responsibility for fire safety within a building. The occupier may be an owner/operator of the building, the lessee or the building manager.

Building occupiers are required to ensure that all fire safety installations in their building are maintained in accordance with the Fire Safety Standard and the appropriate Australian Standard. In addition, building occupiers are required to keep records of maintenance of their fire safety installations in the FSMP for their building. For further information about FSMPs refer to the guideline titled 'Fire Safety Management Plans'.

Why are fire safety inspections carried out?

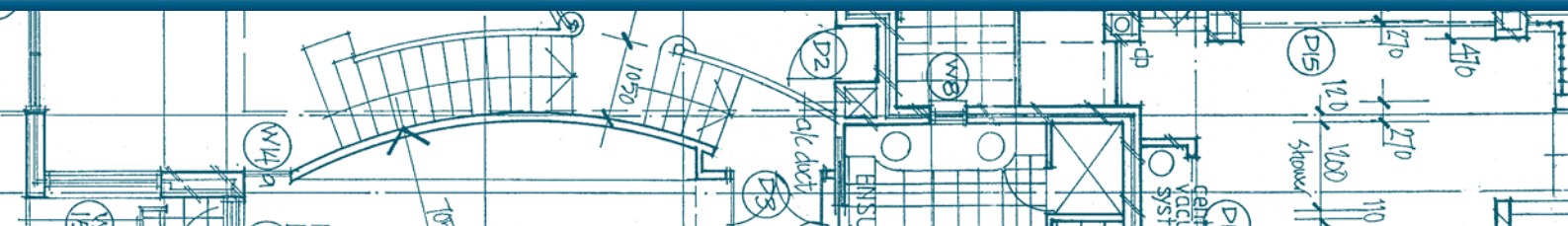
A fire safety inspection helps to ensure that owners and occupiers of buildings are meeting their responsibilities under the legislation, that buildings are fitted with the correct fire safety installations required by the Fire Safety Standard, and that those fire safety installations are maintained in an operational condition. However, during the time provided for compliance under the new laws, all building owners must comply with the existing fire safety requirements of the *Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990* and the *Building Fire Safety Regulation 1991*.

What is a fire safety inspection?

Fire safety inspections are a check of all fire safety procedures, installations and records within a building to determine compliance with appropriate legislation and regulations.

The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS) undertake two levels of fire safety inspections of all types of buildings to ensure that they comply with the relevant fire safety legislation. A Level 1 inspection, known as a fire safety inspection, is a visual check of fire safety in a building using a standard fire safety inspection checklist of legislative requirements.

A Level 2 inspection, known as a fire safety survey, is an assessment of the building against all legislative requirements, a check of evacuation instructions given to staff and residents, a check of the records of maintenance of fire safety installations and an operational test of those fire



safety installations. On some occasions where a building has complex fire safety installations, a fire protection contractor may be engaged to assist with the testing of those installations.

During a fire safety survey carried out on a budget accommodation building, the building will be assessed by QFRS officers for compliance with the new requirements of the Fire Safety Standard as well as the pre-existing requirements of the *Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990* and the *Building Fire Safety Regulation 1991*.

How is a building selected for a fire safety inspection?

Each year a number of budget accommodation buildings will be inspected as part of the QFRS inspection program for all buildings. The QFRS inspection program is influenced by regional profiles and the operational demands on QFRS services. Buildings may be chosen for inspection based on a number of selection criteria:

- a history of problems or complaints about the building;
- the number of residents;
- the nature of any disability suffered by the residents of the building;
- the size and type of construction of the building; or
- for a licensing or registration requirement.

The consideration of one or more of these criteria may result in more frequent inspections of some buildings

Other interested parties, for example, Workplace Health and Safety or the local government for the area may provide reasons why a fire safety inspection should be performed on a budget accommodation building.

Sometimes, owners of buildings may request a fire safety survey of their premises to be undertaken to satisfy themselves or a prospective purchaser of the building that all fire safety requirements are being met. Where an owner requests an inspection of their property, a fee would generally be charged for the inspection and report. Any deficiency detailed in the inspection report must be resolved to the satisfaction of the inspecting officer within the timeframe specified in the report. A re-inspection would be carried out after the time given to rectify any problem has expired.

Who undertakes fire safety inspections?

Qualified officers of the QFRS will perform the fire safety inspections. The officers may be from the local fire station or alternatively, may be a QFRS Fire Safety Officer.

Officers from a local fire station generally carry out a Level 1 fire safety inspection of a building using a standard fire safety inspection checklist of legislative requirements.

Should this inspection reveal that fire safety systems are not being properly maintained or that the building does not meet legislative requirements, and the owner/occupier fails to act to rectify the problem in the time provided, a report will be provided to a senior fire safety officer to carry out a more thorough Level 2 building fire safety survey of the property.

How are fire safety inspections conducted?

The QFRS conducts an ongoing inspection program of all types of buildings other than domestic residences.

Prior to a fire safety inspection being conducted, a QFRS officer would normally make contact with the owner/occupier of the building to arrange a suitable time for the inspection. It should be noted that the QFRS is not required to give prior notice of a fire safety inspection, however as a matter of practice, inspections without notice are generally only carried out when there is cause to believe a serious fire danger exists in a building.

On the agreed day of the inspection, the QFRS officer(s) will meet the owner/occupier on site and discuss the inspection with the owner/occupier who may accompany the officers during the inspection, if desired. All QFRS officers will be able to provide appropriate identification to verify themselves as a representative of the QFRS. The fire safety inspection will include an inspection of the building's FSMP.

All existing budget accommodation buildings must have a FSMP prepared by 1st July 2003, which must include information about how the building meets the requirements Fire Safety Standard. All information about fire safety for the building should be kept with the FSMP. For further information about FSMPs, refer to the guideline on "Fire Safety Management Plans".

Level 1: Fire Safety Inspection

The fire safety inspection will involve an inspection of the building's fire safety installations and an inspection of the maintenance records for each of the fire safety installations in the building. The inspection checklist will be completed during the inspection of the property and the owner/occupier will receive a copy of the completed checklist signed by the inspecting officer. If no problems are found to exist, the inspection is complete.



Where it is found that the building does not comply with the legislative requirements or that fire safety systems have not been correctly maintained, the faults will be noted on the inspection report together with the action required by the owner/occupier and the time by which the owner/occupier must have the faults corrected. The QFRS officer will explain to the owner/occupier that a re-inspection of the property will be carried out after the time given to correct the faults has expired.

If at the time of the re-inspection of the building faults noted in the original report are still outstanding, the owner/occupier will be advised that the matter will be passed to a more senior fire officer and that a full fire safety survey will be carried out on the building. The owner/occupier is responsible for ensuring that their building meets the requirements of the Fire Safety Standard and the appropriate legislation and regulations. The owner/occupier must also ensure that the FSMP for their building is up to date recording details of all fire safety installations in the building.

Level 2: Fire Safety Survey

A fire safety survey will involve a check of the structural aspects of the building such as travel distances to exits and emergency escapes etc. The survey also checks the level of compliance with the legislative requirements and that all required fire safety systems are installed, functioning, and being correctly maintained. In addition, a fire safety survey will check for evacuation plans and procedures.

For budget accommodation buildings, all fire safety information must be kept in the FSMP prepared for the building, which must be available for inspection when requested.

After a fire safety survey, a report will be issued to the building owner/occupier confirming the findings of the survey, noting which fire safety systems are adequate and highlighting any deficiencies. Where a deficiency is noted, the owner/occupier will be given a specified time in which to rectify the problem. The time period given for the owner to correct the problem may vary depending upon the nature of the problem and the time likely to be required to rectify it.

Any deficiencies detailed in the fire safety survey report must be resolved to the satisfaction of the inspecting officer within the timeframe specified in the report. A re-inspection will be carried out following the deadline given to rectify any deficiencies to ensure that all faults have been corrected.

The report may also contain one or more recommendations about fire safety in the building. These recommendations are not legislative requirements but are matters that the inspecting officer believes will assist the owner/occupier to further improve fire safety in their building.

What if I don't comply with the legislation or if I don't fix any faults?

Since December 2001, the QFRS has had the ability to issue on-the-spot fines and compliance notices where serious breaches of fire safety legislation have been detected (i.e. blocked exits) or where there is ongoing non-compliance with the legislative requirements.

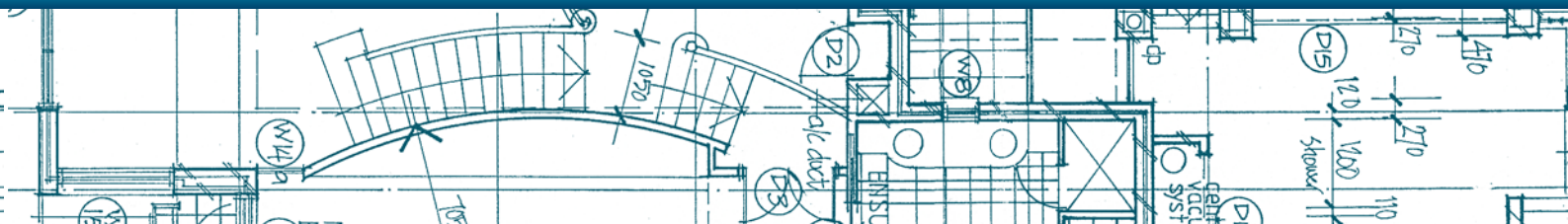
Under the new legislation, owners of budget accommodation buildings must ensure that the installation of an early warning system, emergency lighting and preparation of a FSMP are completed by 30 June 2003. Owners are given a further two-year period to comply with the other provisions of the Fire Safety Standard. Enforcement action will not be taken against owners/occupiers of budget accommodation buildings, under the provisions of the new legislation and the Fire Safety Standard until after the expiry of the time provided for owners to upgrade their buildings.

However, if the QFRS believes that the current level of fire safety poses a serious risk to life, enforcement action will be taken under the existing requirements of the *Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990* and the *Building Fire Safety Regulation 1991*. This legislation requires, among other things, that owner/occupiers of buildings ensure that there is adequate means of escape from the building, buildings are not overcrowded and required fire safety installations have been correctly maintained.

All Queensland legislation can be viewed at the following website:
www.legislation.qld.gov.au.

Examples of penalties that may apply under the new legislation include:

- non-compliance with the Fire Safety Standard within the time period provided - \$12,375; and
- failure to prepare a FSMP by 30 June 2003 - \$7,500.



How do I find out more?

For further information about fire safety inspections, contact your regional QFRS Community Safety Office from the list below.

State Community Safety	(07) 3247 8149
Cairns	(07) 4031 9816
Townsville	(07) 4724 4327
Mackay	(07) 4953 0581
Rockhampton	(07) 4938 4890
Maryborough	(07) 4121 7841
Brisbane North	(07) 3247 8045
Brisbane South	(07) 3362 9932
Southport	(07) 5583 7578
Ipswich	(07) 3280 6806
Toowoomba	(07) 4638 2844
Caloundra	(07) 5491 9704

Use of guidelines

These guidelines are intended for use by:

- Building owners;
- Local governments;
- Building certifiers for acceptable solutions;
- Building certifiers with competence in fire safety for performance decisions; and
- Fire engineers, architects and building designers.

Associated guidelines

Other guidelines relating to fire safety in budget accommodation buildings provide specific guidance on various parts of the legislation, as well as illustrative examples using actual buildings as case studies.

The list of guidelines includes:

- Overview of the Fire Safety Legislation;
- How to Comply with the Fire Safety Standard;
- Application of the Fire Safety Standard;
- Budget Accommodation Buildings;
- Smoke Alarms & Emergency Lighting;
- Development Application Process;
- Inspection and Maintenance Options;
- Enforcement, Appeals, Extensions of Time; and
- Fire Safety Management Plans.

Case studies on actual buildings include:

- Fully compliant building;
- Large single storey building;
- Small supported accommodation building;
- Two storey timber hotel;
- Three storey boarding house; and
- Two storey backpacker hostel.

Guidelines and case studies are available on the following websites:

www.dlqp.qld.gov.au/building_codes
www.fire.qld.gov.au/buildingsafety

For further information

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