

ADVISORY NOTICE

BUILDING

05/14

Advisory Notices are issued to assist in the interpretation of the Development Act 1993

May 2014

TECHNICAL:

New requirements for the interconnection of smoke alarms

This Advisory Notice provides information about new requirements for the interconnection of smoke alarms installed in new dwellings and in new additions to existing dwellings. Information is also provided about the use monitored smoke detection/security systems for compliance with the Building Code of Australia and regulation 76B of the *Development Regulations 2008*.

BACKGROUND

The Building Code of Australia (BCA), which is part of the National Construction Code (NCC) series, requires smoke alarms, a smoke alarm system or a smoke detection system to be installed throughout new Class 1 dwellings, within sole-occupancy units of Class 2 or 3 buildings and in a Class 4 part of a building (domestic houses, apartments, flats etc).

Smoke alarms installed to comply with the BCA provisions are required to be located in strategic positions such as hallways serving bedrooms, in order to facilitate an early response by occupants to a fire within a dwelling. In some circumstances, the size or layout of the dwelling necessitates the installation of more than one smoke alarm within that dwelling. For example, a two-storey dwelling requires at least one smoke alarm to be installed on each storey (even if there are no bedrooms located on one of those storeys).

DISCUSSION

New dwellings

Until now, the BCA did not require the interconnection of multiple smoke alarms within individual dwellings. However, in late 2013 following extensive research that commenced in 2008, the Australian Building Codes Board resolved that multiple smoke alarms must be interconnected within all new Class 1 dwellings, within sole-occupancy units of Class 2 or 3 buildings and in a Class 4 part of a building. This means that when one alarm is activated, it will activate all other alarms in the occupancy.

From **1 May 2014**, smoke alarms will be required to be interconnected in all new Class 1 dwellings, within sole-occupancy unit of a Class 2 or 3 building and in a Class 4 part of a building.

The requirement for the interconnection of smoke alarms will be conveyed to licensed electrical contractors via the Office of the Technical Regulator, which is the authority that regulates electrical work, licenses electrical contractors and monitors compliance (undertaking enforcement action when appropriate).



Existing dwellings

For the purposes of these provisions, an existing dwelling is one where the application for building rules consent was lodged prior to 1 May 2014.

Regulation 76B of the *Development Regulations 2008* does not require multiple smoke alarms to be interconnected, unless required by the BCA for new building work. This requirement remains the same if there is no change to an existing building.

New additions/extensions to existing dwellings

From 1 May 2014 an addition/extension that requires more than one smoke alarm will have to interconnect those smoke alarms in order to comply with the BCA. However, they are not required to be interconnected with any other smoke alarms in the existing dwelling.

Any subsequent addition/extension which requires a smoke alarm must interconnect with any other smoke alarm previously installed as part of any other extension/addition that was lodged for building rules consent after 1 May 2014.

Monitored smoke detection/security systems for houses

Interconnected smoke alarms must comply with the Australian Standard *AS 3786 Smoke Alarms*.

Monitored smoke detection/security systems utilising smoke detectors and sounders installed in new or existing dwellings **may not comply** with *AS 3786* and therefore **may not comply** with the requirements of regulation 76B of the *Development Regulations 2008* or the BCA.

Where monitored smoke detection/security systems are installed in new or existing dwellings, owners and installers need to ensure that one or more *AS 3786* complying smoke alarms are also installed within each dwelling in order to meet the requirements of regulation 76B.

Further information

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