

Sprinkler systems – alternative solutions and role of chief officer

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1 Summary

This *Practice Note* provides advice on involving the chief officer, wherever sprinkler systems fail to meet the deemed-to-satisfy provisions of the Building Code of Australia (BCA).

2 Background

2.1 Building Regulations 2006

When a building permit is issued and the fire sprinkler system to be installed does not meet the deemed-to-satisfy provisions of the BCA, regulation 309(3) of the Building Regulations 2006 (the Regulations) requires that the relevant building surveyor forward details of the installation to the chief officer.

2.2 Performance-based BCA

The BCA is a performance-based building code. Compliance can be achieved by meeting the prescriptive requirements, or by developing an Alternative Solution which demonstrates that the proposal meets the relevant Performance Requirement/s.

Building practitioners developing an Alternative Solution should ensure that an appropriate assessment method and appropriate expertise is used. For more information on using the performance-based BCA, see [Practice Note 2006-29](#).

3 Role of chief officer

3.1 Sprinkler systems and the fire service

Unlike passive construction and alarm systems, a sprinkler system relies on input from the responding fire service – including boosting and isolation. Sprinkler systems have a significant impact on the operational strategy of the responding fire service.

Variations from a Deemed-to-Satisfy sprinkler system (as part of an Alternative Solution) could

lead to incompatibility with the equipment and procedures of the responding fire service.

3.2 Consultation with chief officer at design stage

It is for the foregoing reasons that it is suggested that the chief officer be consulted wherever fire sprinklers are required under the BCA Deemed-to-Satisfy provisions, but it is proposed to omit all or part of the system, or to not meet those provisions with regard to any of the following:

- (i) sprinkler system design in relation to the hazard class of occupancy (within the meaning of Section 2 of AS 2118.1—1999)
- (ii) type of sprinkler system in relation to the building location or building use
- (iii) sprinkler system fire alarm transmission signal (includes omitting or removing the direct alarm connection to the fire service or other monitoring service)
- (iv) water pressure or water flow requirements for the sprinkler system, in relation to the hazard class of occupancy (within the meaning of Section 2 of AS 2118.1—1999)
- (v) reliability of water supply to the sprinkler system
- (vi) connections for potable water (or for industrial purposes) that may reduce the reliability of the sprinkler system
- (vii) stored water capacity for use by the sprinkler system.

3.3 Notification period

Regulation 309(3) does not specify a time period for forwarding details to the chief officer. In practice, it is expected that this would be done within the timeframe specified for notifying council of the building permit's issue – within 7 days.

Details forwarded to the chief officer should clearly identify aspects of the installation that do

not meet the Deemed-to-Satisfy provisions of the BCA.

4 Modification and compliance assessment by Building Appeals Board

The Building Appeals Board (BAB) is an independent statutory body, established under the Building Act 1993 to hear appeals and disputes in relation to building control matters. Based on the merits of the particular case, it can waive, modify or vary the provisions of the Regulations and the BCA, including those relating to sprinkler systems.

The BAB would consult with the relevant fire service before making a decision relating to a fire matter. Information on applying to the BAB for modification and compliance assessments is contained in [Practice Note 2006-39](#).

5 Further information

For more information, please contact the following organisations:

Building Commission

(03) 9285 6400

Country Fire Authority

(03) 9262 8403

Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board

(03) 9420 3874

