

Essential Safety Measures ESM 06 | Fire alarm monitoring systems

Audience

The audience/s for this Practice Note include/s:

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| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architects / Designers | <input type="checkbox"/> Owner Builders |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Builders | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Plumbers |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building Surveyors / Inspectors | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Real estate management agents |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Engineers | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Trades and Maintenance (inc. Electricians) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Home Owners / Residential Tenants | |

Purpose

This Practice Note provides guidance on alterations to the monitoring of fire alarm systems.

The content below provides guidance on:

- Fire alarm monitoring systems
- Building permit requirements
- Building inspection requirements

Abbreviations & Definitions

The abbreviations and definitions set out below are for guidance only. They are not intended to vary those set out in the Building Act 1993 or the Building/Plumbing Regulations 2018 or the National Construction Code.

- **Act** – Building Act 1993
- **ASE** – Alarm signalling equipment
- **AS** – Australian Standard
- **CFI** – Certificate of final inspection
- **Health-care building** – A building whose occupants or patients are undergoing medical treatment who generally need physical assistance to evacuate the building during an emergency
- **NCC** – National Construction Code 2022
- **OP** – Occupancy Permit
- **RBS** – Relevant Building Surveyor
- **Regulations** – Building Regulations 2018
- **Section** – section of the Act



Fire alarm monitoring systems

In the event of fire, the purpose of an automatic fire alarm monitoring system is to notify the fire brigade so they can undertake fire-fighting operations. The on-site components of a required fire alarm monitoring system form part of the essential safety measures of a building and must always be in working order.

For instance, a monitored installation such as a sprinkler or a smoke detection system is connected to a fire alarm monitoring system connected to a fire station or a fire station dispatch centre. Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) and the Country Fire Authority (CFA) have ceased the operation of their former fire alarm monitoring services and the monitoring of fire alarm systems is now undertaken by private sector service providers and it is important to note that any proposed on-site changes to those systems requires a building permit application to a registered building surveyor prior to the work being undertaken.

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Building permit requirements

A building permit is required to convert the required connection of an installation to a fire station or fire station dispatch centre from an existing fire alarm monitoring system to another approved monitoring system or for the disconnection from a fire alarm monitoring system.

System monitoring requirements are set out in NCC Volume 2 Part E2 Smoke hazard management, and NCC specification S20C8.

In accordance with the NCC, the following installations must be connected to a fire alarm monitoring system connected to a fire station or fire station dispatch centre in accordance with AS 1670.3:

- A smoke detection system in a Class 3 building provided in accordance with S20C2(b)(i) or S20C2(b)(ii).
- A smoke detection system in a Class 9a *health-care building*, if the building accommodates more than 20 patients.
- A smoke detection system in a Class 9c building.
- Smoke detection in accordance with S20C6 provided to activate—
 - a smoke exhaust system in accordance with Specification 21; or
 - smoke-and-heat vents in accordance with Specification 22.
- An automatic fire detection and alarm system required by E2D10 for large isolated buildings subject to C3D4.

A building permit exemption is not applicable under Schedule 3 of the Regulations as the work could adversely affect the safety of the public or occupiers of the building and alter a required essential safety measure. For additional guidance on ESM requirements refer to Practice Note ESM 02 Maintenance of essential safety measures.



Each application for a building permit must include:

- an allotment plan;
- details of the building work proposed;
- details of the proposed alarm monitoring system;
- location of the work within the building;
- details of any penetrations or fixings through, or into, the existing building;
- copies of existing OPs, CFIs, maintenance determinations, maintenance schedules, and performance solutions relating to the building; and
- any regulation 129 report and consent issued by the Chief Officer.

The report and consent of the Chief Officer of FRV or the CFA under regulation 187, must be obtained in relation to an OP where the building work involves the transmission signal of alarms or proposal to connect to a fire station or other alarm monitoring service. Where a CFI is issued, the RBS must notify the Chief Officer within 10 days of issuing the CFI under regulation 201(1).

In addition, the RBS may require that precautions be taken before and during the carrying out of the work, especially if the monitoring system will be non-operational. For example, trained on-site fire wardens may be required while the existing alarm monitoring system is non-operational and a transition from a Fire Brigade connection to a private service provider is required.

For further guidance on monitored automatic alarm systems, refer to Fire Rescue Victoria fire safety guideline GL-46 Managing Monitored Automatic Alarm Systems.

Building inspection requirements

The RBS may determine that a final inspection is the only mandatory inspection required and prior to issuing a CFI (section 38) or OP (section 44). Under section 34 of the Act the RBS must cause the building work concerned to be inspected. In addition, the RBS must be satisfied that commissioning has been adequately completed. The RBS may consider this requirement to be satisfied with evidence of commissioning and a statement of compliance by a person with suitable qualifications and experience.

Required fire alarm monitoring systems are an essential safety measure and subject to the provisions of Part 15 of the Regulations. This means that if the building work is approved after a final inspection is carried out, and a certificate of final inspection is issued, the RBS must make a maintenance determination under regulation 215.

Related Documentation

- Building Act 1993
- Building Regulations 2018
- AS 1670.1-2018 Fire detection, warning, control, and intercom systems — System design, installation, and commissioning — Fire
- AS 1670.3-2018 Fire detection, warning, control, and intercom systems — System design, installation, and commissioning — Fire alarm monitoring
- Building Practice Note ESM 02 Maintenance of essential safety measures
- Fire Rescue Victoria Fire safety guideline: GL-46 Managing Monitored Automatic Alarm Systems: <https://www.frv.vic.gov.au/fire-safety-guidelines>



List of Amendments

- Changes to references to align with the new NCC 2022 version.
- Update format and content review

Document history

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