

Fire Safety in Strata Buildings

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provides general
information only and
does not substitute
legal advice.

Solutions In
Engineering offers
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Strata Community
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Membership includes
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What are the Fire Obligations for your Bodies Corporate?

All residential apartment buildings that are Building Format Plans (Building Unit Plans) are Class 2 buildings* and will have annual fire obligations. Stand alone residential houses and townhouses that are Standard Format Plans (Group Titles Plans) are Class 1A buildings* and have no fire obligations. All commercial strata buildings are Classes of buildings* that have fire obligations.

*The Building Code of Australia defines classes of buildings. All Class 1b to 9 buildings must comply.

What are the objectives of the fire legislation?

The Building Fire Safety Regulation 2008 states -
'The main objects of the regulation are:

- (1) To ensure persons can evacuate buildings safely and quickly if a fire or hazardous materials emergency happens; and
- (2) To ensure prescribed Fire Safety Installations for buildings are maintained.'

What do you need to do to meet the requirements for your apartment building?

A summary of annual fire obligations below applies. There is an additional obligation for HOBs (High Occupancy Buildings) which are more than 25 metres in height and have 30 workers plus in any one workplace.

Annual Fire Obligations Checklist:-

1. Keep defined evacuation route/s clear and safe
2. Complete a Fire and Evacuation Plan
3. Install and annually review Evacuation Diagrams. Applies to all 300m2 + buildings.
4. Appoint and train a Responsible Person annually
5. Have an evacuation practice at least annually
6. Complete an occupier's statement annually
7. Maintain prescribed Fire Safety Installations (FSI)

What does that mean?

1. Keep defined evacuation route/s clear and safe

The evacuation routes are defined in the Fire and Evacuation Plan and diagrams. These clearly defined paths of escape must remain compliant at all times. They must be reviewed and inspected at least annually.

2. Complete a Fire and Evacuation Plan (and review it annually)

A Fire and Evacuation Plan contains the Evacuation

Coordination Procedures, which are procedures for:

- alerting and communicating with people in the building;
- alerting the fire service;
- arranging for the evacuation of people with special needs, members of the public & other persons;
- checking whether all people have been evacuated;
- informing the Responsible Person of how many people have been evacuated, who has been evacuated & who are not accounted for;
- instruction on how to use the fire safety installations and much more.

3. Install and annually review Evacuation Diagrams.

These signs assist people in evacuating the building in the event of a fire. This requirement applies to all buildings with a 300m2 plus floor plate.

4. Appoint and train a Responsible Person annually

The Building Fire Safety Regulation 2008 -
Subdivision 5, Evacuation Coordination instructions, 38. General requirements:

- (1) The occupier of a building must give the Evacuation Coordination instructions for the building, at intervals of not more than one year, to the Responsible Person(s) for the building'

5. Have an evacuation practice at least annually

The Building Fire Safety Regulation 2008, Division 7
Evacuation practice,

44 Evacuation practice – other buildings

- (2) The occupier of the building must ensure that an evacuation of the building is carried out-
 - A) By an appropriate number of persons; and
 - B) In an appropriate way; and
 - C) At intervals of not more than one year.'

6. Complete an occupier's statement annually

'A2 Building occupiers-

Complete an occupier's statement-

- within one year of taking up occupation; and
- yearly, within one year of the date of the last occupiers statement'

7. Maintain prescribed Fire Safety Installations (FSI)

'104D Occupier of a building to maintain prescribed Fire Safety Installations:

- (1) The occupier of a building must maintain at all times every prescribed Fire Safety Installation to a standard of safety and reliability in the event of a fire.'

To find out about High Occupancy Buildings and the special requirements for Short Term Letting,

please turn page...

Fire Safety in High Occupancy Buildings

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What are High Occupancy Buildings (HOB) and what extra obligations do they have?

A HOB is defined as a building that is:

- more than 25 metres in height (generally buildings nine stories and above); or
- has more than 30 workers in any workspace (as the minimum allowable workspace per worker is ten sqm it is suggested that all buildings with commercial tenancies that are more than 300 sqm be deemed high occupancy); or
- is an at-risk licensed building under the *Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990*;
- for Class 6, 7, 8 or 9 buildings or areas of building if the floor area is more than 18,000 sqm

A HOB has all the requirements of other strata buildings (see list of seven Annual Fire Obligations on page 1) plus.....

HOBs must appoint a Fire Safety Advisor (FSA)

A FSA is a qualified person who is familiar with all aspects of building fire safety, whose primary duties are to provide advice to the occupiers to ensure that appropriate emergency planning has taken place and to ensure that appropriate instruction and training is undertaken within the required timeframes.

The FSA does not need to work or live in the building, as their role is primarily to provide advice on planning and training to more complex, higher-risk buildings. A single FSA can be appointed to multiple buildings.

SHORT TERM LETTING APARTMENTS

Extra requirement Accommodation units: short term/hotel/serviced apartments/holiday apartments

Some special requirements for short term letting units apply.

The Building Fire Safety Regulation 2008: '46 Meaning of accommodation unit (1) In this division, an **accommodation unit** means an apartment, room or other part of a building, used for providing accommodation to a person.'

Examples of an accommodation unit:

- an apartment used by holiday makers
- a serviced apartment
- a room in a guest house, hotel or motel used for accommodating guests'

The special requirement is for a sign with the evacuation route, fire fighting equipment and evacuation procedures in the unit, placed in a conspicuous place and securely attached to the wall or internal side of the unit door.

What's the risk owners take in case of non-compliance?

Penalties — range from \$11,000 for a simple offence up to \$220,000 and three years jail for an offence which leads to a fire causing multiple deaths

Insurance risk — You must meet your obligations under your policy

Legislative non-compliance — the legislation changes constantly. Keep up to date.

Risking lives — Are your residents ready in case of a fire?

SUMMARY

Annual Fire Obligations Checklist:-

1. Keep defined evacuation route/s clear and safe
2. Complete a Fire and Evacuation Plan
3. Install & annually review Evacuation Diagrams. (All 300m2 + buildings.)
4. Appoint and train a Responsible Person annually
5. Have an evacuation practice **at least** annually
6. Complete an occupier's statement annually
7. Maintain prescribed Fire Safety Installations (FSI)

Special Requirements

High Occupancy Buildings must appoint a Fire Safety Adviser

Short Term Letting apartments must install evacuation signs in every short term/hotel/serviced apartments/holiday apartments

