



The Western Australia Building Commission has provided guidance on fire safety in apartment buildings. A fire safety system is one or any combination of the methods used in a building to -

- warn people of an emergency;
- provide for safe evacuation;
- restrict the spread of fire;
- control a fire,

and includes both active and passive systems.

Active fire safety measures include fire extinguishers and early warning and detection systems to assist in case of a fire. These safety measures could be either automatic or for manual use (such as fire hose reels, fire sprinklers, smoke detection and alarm systems).

Passive fire safety measures include fire doors, fire walls and other fire rated and non-combustible construction to contain fire or restrict fire spread and provide protection to allow time for escape.

Good housekeeping, effective maintenance and routine servicing are paramount in ensuring the building occupants are safe in the event of a fire. This means ensuring both active and passive fire safety measures are not compromised and are always in good working order. It is the responsibility of all owners and occupants to ensure good housekeeping and effective building management is met.

Building legislation in Western Australia requires owners of Class 2 to Class 9 buildings (which includes residential apartments) to ensure the building's safety measures are maintained. This is to ensure that safety systems remain capable of performing to a standard not less than they were originally required and commissioned to achieve.

Under Regulation 48A of the Building Regulations 2012, safety measures are required to be maintained in accordance with relevant building standards:

The Building Commission considers the adoption of Australian Standard AS1851-2012 Routine service of fire protection systems and equipment as good practice and a means for owners to ensure fire safety measures are serviced at regular frequencies to demonstrate suitable operation, and rectified or repaired if necessary to meet their regulatory obligation on maintenance.

A log book for recording the routine servicing of fire protection systems and equipment will assist with good management in meeting maintenance obligations.

**Multiple sleeping occupants is the most important risk to consider when designing a fire protection solution for residential buildings.**

**It is essential that smoke detectors and a compliant warning system is provided to allow sleepers enough time to wake and evacuate before the fire becomes too intense.**

Building owners and occupiers should be familiar with the evacuation procedures in their building and importantly, what to do in case of a fire. Emergency planning for evacuation, in the event of a fire, will differ depending on the merits of each building.

All refurbishment work is required to comply with the BCA and must not impact on the fire safety of the occupants of the existing building. Some proposed refurbishment, which may appear minor in nature, may have a significant impact on fire safety.

Any plans to upgrade an existing building must have the safety of occupants as the first priority – over and above any aesthetic or cost considerations.

Consult with the relevant local government permit authority before starting any building work to determine whether the work requires a building permit.