



Strata



The 2020 Western Australia strata laws require all Council of Owners to act honestly, with loyalty and in good faith. Selecting the right contractor to look after a building's fire systems is an important decision.

Owners have a duty of care to ensure building services are always operating effectively and are compliant. A significant portion of a Strata Company's budget is allocated to repairs and maintenance. To gain greater control of the budget the Council of Owners should nominate and train a responsible person to oversee all matters relating to the fire systems, even if a Strata Manager coordinates the work. The Strata Manager or responsible person should understand what tests are required and when they fall due.

Most fire service companies only allow to carry out routine maintenance that is required by Australian Standard 1851 to be done in yearly cycles. For example, fire detection systems are required to undergo a series of tests every month, every six months more tests are done and then once a year a more complex test is required. Fire sprinkler systems have a similar requirement.

Australian Standard 1851 also requires some fire systems to have long term tests to be completed – 5, 10, 25 and 30 years. The service company should provide notification when the additional tests are required, however, this can be difficult if they do not know the full service history of the building.

It is important for the Strata Company to retain all records, should a fire incident occur the insurance company will review the service records, if all the required inspections and maintenance has not been completed then it is likely a claim will be denied.

Only reputable companies should be employed to maintain your fire systems. Modern systems are complex in design; therefore, only engage companies that have knowledge about the components, configuration and performance specifications of your building.

**Fire can have a devastating effect on a structure and is a serious risk to the safety and welfare of building occupants. Property loss and damage can result in lengthy disruption while repairs and rebuilding take place.**

**All strata-titled properties including residential buildings are required to carry out a fire safety inspection of the common property. This should be carried out at least annually to identify issues relating to the fire services within the building.**

A responsible person should implement an education program for all occupants of the premises to make them aware of the building's systems, how they operate and what the common faults are. This will ensure faults are investigated and quickly fixed. It is important to ensure procedures are in place for managing contractors, maintenance workers and other visitors. They should be aware of the building's systems and who is responsible for managing the systems during disruptive work e.g. isolating the fire panel if dust is likely to activate the smoke detectors.

The Western Australian Building Commission urges building owners and managers to review the fire safety of existing buildings to confirm that previous building work has not left building occupants vulnerable in the event of a fire. An appropriately qualified registered building surveyor, with relevant knowledge of the Building Code of Australia, can coordinate a fire safety assessment of the existing building.

Complex buildings with fire safety performance solutions, and older high rise buildings that may have had a number of ad hoc alterations throughout its life, may also require review by a suitably qualified fire safety engineer.