

FIRE SAFETY UPDATE:

What's changing?
*What do we need to do
about it?*

WHY



<https://homefiresprinklers.org.au/resources/videos/side-by-side-burn-demonstration/>

TERMINOLOGY

- ▶ **AFSS** - Annual Fire Safety Statement = the document issued on behalf of the owner of a building stating that all fire systems required for that building still perform as designed & installed.
- ▶ **EP&A** - Environmental Planning & Assessment (Act or Regulation) - the law that requires maintenance & AFSS be issued
- ▶ **D&BP Act** - Design & Building Practitioners Act 2020 - the law that underpins the accreditation regime of APFS.
- ▶ **EFSM(s)** - Essential Fire Safety Measure(s) - the individual types of fire-related equipment/ systems and the performance codes they are required to achieve for that building - e.g. “Fire Hydrants” or “Automatic Fire Detection & Alarm Systems”.
- ▶ **APFS** - Accredited Practitioner (Fire Safety) - previously known as “CFSP” or Competent Fire Safety Practitioner- the person that inspects, verifies and ‘endorses’ an essential fire safety measure as performing in accordance with the codes required for that building.
 - ▶ **FSA** - Fire Safety Assessor - the qualification/ role to become accredited as an APFS to endorse measures on an AFSS
- ▶ **Endorse** - To have assessed, inspected and verified (in person) the performance of each fire safety measure and inspected the fire exit systems of a building.

FIRE SAFETY UPDATES - 2025

- ▶ Fire & Rescue NSW - Involvement in design
- ▶ The missing link - Certification!
- ▶ Documentation - What is it - where, how will it help?
- ▶ Maintenance - what we always should have been doing.

What does this all mean for me?

FIRE & RESCUE NSW INVOLVEMENT

- ▶ In place since August 2023
- ▶ Largely applies to new developments or new works.
- ▶ Where a design is non-standard/ non-Deemed-To-Satisfy (DTS)/ is a performance solution/ FER; consultation with FRNSW must take place before a construction certificate is requested.
- ▶ In-short - it ensures solutions still allow FRNSW to carry out their duty without non-viable' performance solutions preventing them.
 - Examples objected could be:
 - Single stair for egress in high-rise.
 - Hydrants on-floor in-lieu of in fire isolated stair/ passage
 - Sprinklers omitted.

THE MISSING LINK - CERTIFICATION

- ▶ In-place from Feb 2025 or 18 months after an accreditation scheme is approved.
- ▶ Was originally to have been legislated in 2017 alongside accreditation for Fire Systems Design & Fire Safety Assessor but was not.
- ▶ No schemes approved yet.
- ▶ Means that an accredited person, with the correct qualifications & insurance takes personal responsibility for certification stating a fire safety system *complies*.
- ▶ It means that when a building is completed or a fire safety system modified, it should be genuinely compliant upon completion.
- ▶ It means that when your fire safety assessor conducts the assessment of *performance* for an Annual Fire Safety Statement, it is done as-intended, knowing the building *did* comply and they can genuinely just assess *performance* - discuss.
- ▶ Currently, the assessor must often work outside their scope due to lack of documentation &/or lack of compliance and this creates tension between practitioners and building owners.

DOCUMENTATION –BUILDING MANUAL

- ▶ TBC implementation - but arguably has been a requirement for some time.
- ▶ Is a manual that outlines all design aspects of a building's safety systems incl:
 - ▶ Layout, Building Class, Construction Type, Drawings, Specifications, Maintenance Schedules, Asset Registers and more.
 - ▶ Split into a user section - easy to read & understand and will outline maintenance obligations.
 - ▶ Split into a practitioner section - technical info to use and re-use in the future to ensure maintenance, fitouts, future upgrades and more are done holistically with the building's original construction, intent and usage.
- ▶ Will make everything easier as we're always looking for more info on:
 - ▶ Original Schedule of Essential Fire Safety Measures
 - ▶ Passive Registers
 - ▶ Damper Registers
 - ▶ Maintenance Schedules.
 - ▶ Drawings & more.

INSPECTION, TESTING & MAINTENANCE

- ▶ As at 13th February, 2025, Owners must maintain essential fire safety measures in accordance with Australian Standard 1851-2012 Routine service of fire protection systems and equipment.
- ▶ Arguably always been a requirement in strata.... But.....
- ▶ What's it mean, what might have been ignored in the past, what's coming, what should we do about it NOW?
- ▶ The big issues:
 - ▶ Passive
 - ▶ 5 yearlies (& 10 yearlies, 25 yearlies, etc)
 - ▶ Dampers
 - ▶ Interface testing
- ▶ Who's responsible?
- ▶ Cost/ Planning/ Budgeting/ Why (NSW F&R reliance)?

THANKS!

▶ Any questions:

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SELECTING AN APFS

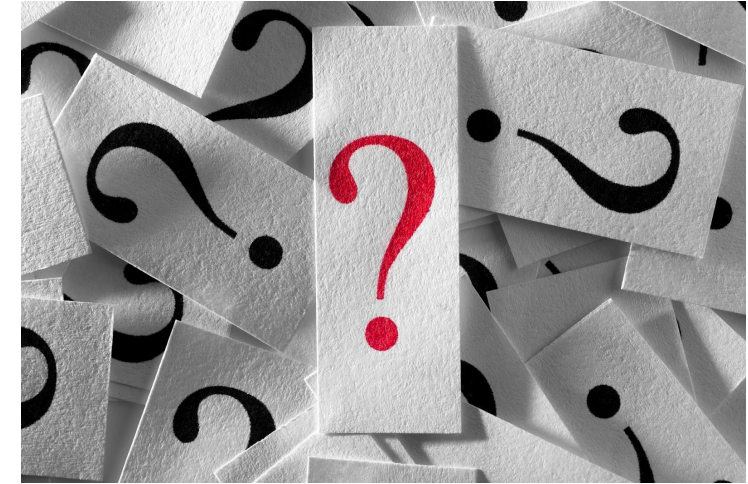
- From July 1st 2020, the APFS you engaged to endorse your essential fire safety measures must be accredited for *each* measure and must attend site, inspect & verify every measure.
- Not every APFS is accredited to endorse every measure – e.g. your current APFS may be a sprinkler expert, but not yet competent to endorse hydrants or smoke alarms, etc.
- The register: <https://connect.fpaa.com.au/FireSafetyAssessor> was applicable from July 1st, 2020 and the accreditation status/ level/ type and accreditation number of each APFS is visible.
- Anyone on the register has:
 - Passed preliminary exams
 - Carries Professional Indemnity Insurance including run-on-cover
 - Has committed to moving from ‘experienced’ to ‘qualified’ within 4 years of formal recognition
 - Has signed a code of practice allowing external auditing of their work – meaning their accreditation status can be revoked if they are found to be incorrectly endorsing measures. (58 x investigations & 13 x suspensions as at 09th July 2021)
- The fire industry is changing to become a trusted profession that can be relied on!



WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR STRATA & BUILDING OWNERS?



- Since October 2017, Strata and Building Owners have effectively been endorsing the APFS as competent and also signing to say the paths of travel in the building were safe..... In simple terms – owners are taking the risk
 - PI risk for Strata Managers
 - Insurance AND Civil risk for building owners
- From July 1st, 2020, Strata Managers and Building Owners will be signing to say they engaged a Accredited Practitioner (Fire Safety) from a register.
 - Providing the APFS is on the register & endorses only measures they are accredited for, huge risk reduction for all involved.
 - The APFS being accredited, insured and 'professionally liable', is however, taking-on some responsibility on behalf of the owner and can no-longer allow things previously deemed less important to be ignored.



WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR STRATA & BUILDING OWNERS?

2020 FIRE

- The APFS must ***go to site & be able to prove it***, personally verify all records and systems to ensure they can prove when audited that the system perform as endorsed.
 - This also means personally re-inspecting after repairs if required to verify performance.
 - Requirements for the APFS to attend site in person to inspect & verify are outlined in:
 - FPA Australia Good Practice Guide – 04 – Fire Safety Statements – Section 8
 - NSW Govt - Planning & Environment – Fact Sheet on new fire safety requirements – dated August 2017
- The APFS is different to testing to AS1851-2012 Inspection & Testing results do not satisfy ALL requirements to *verify* performance.
- As there were no qualifications required for fire protection until July 1st, 2020, the price of fire protection services – as benchmarked by our industry association has not substantially changed since 2003.
- The price for an AFSS has risen as significant costs, risks and training are required to reach accreditation.
- Repairs that may not have been deemed important in the past must now be rectified if required for the ESFM to perform.
- The owners; while outlaying more, will receive increasingly professional, reliable advice that increases safety & reduces their risk.



GAPS?

- The APFS accreditation scheme is still new & requires further adjustments.
 - We are still only approaching the time that all APFS must be qualified rather than transitional.
- Not all Essential Fire Safety Measures covered by accreditation yet.
 - Discuss ideas on how to choose in the interim.
- Performance/ Alternative Solutions/ FER's not yet a category of accreditation
 - Discuss ideas on how to choose in the interim.
- Cost –touchy!
 - Owners often having to pay for the mistakes of the past – be them latent building defects or the lack of regulation in this space meaning they've never been raised.
 - Time, scope & cost of accreditation + assessment increasingly complex.
 - Insurance cost increasing as run-on-cover for individuals and companies required.

