

Requirements for the use of Transportable Buildings in Defence Facilities

Definitions

Transportable Buildings: Within the context of this policy, the term '*transportable building*' shall be taken to mean a small single storey building manufactured in a factory and transported to a site in one piece. Transportable buildings can be skid mounted or installed on stumps and are generally used to provide temporary accommodation of some kind.

Demountable Buildings: In contrast, '*demountable buildings*' are constructed in sections in a factory and the components are transported to a site where they are reassembled. Demountable buildings are usually installed on stumps as either temporary or permanent buildings.

References

- a. Manual of Fire Protection Engineering (MFPE)
- b. Building Code of Australia – BCA
- c. Australian Standard AS 1670.1 – Fire detection, warning, control and intercom systems- System design, installation and commissioning – Fire.
- d. Australian Standard AS 3000 – Electrical Installation.
- e. Australian Standard AS 3001 – Electrical Installation – Relocatable premises and their site installations.
- f. Australian Standard AS 3959 – Construction of buildings in bush-fire prone areas.
- g. Defence Security Construction Manual (DSCM).

Introduction

By virtue of their construction, the traditional style transportable buildings incorporating sandwich panels provide a lesser degree of fire resistance and structural stability of building elements and materials when compared to those of buildings constructed using conventional methods and materials. Similarly, the fire hazard properties generally associated with transportable buildings, with regards to Flammability, Spread-of-Flame, and Smoke-Development Indices of materials used, will normally be higher when compared to the fire hazard properties of building elements and materials of traditional buildings. For these reasons, the level of life safety and inherent building fire safety of transportable buildings may be lower than those of conventional buildings.

Transportable buildings also present difficulties and limitations in complying with the Building Code of Australia (BCA) and Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requirements for Sound Insulation and Access for Disabled Persons respectively.

Aim

The aim of this policy is to highlight:

- a. The requirements for certification to the MFPE of any building solution for Defence facilities that comprise of transportable buildings; and
- b. The main areas of deficiency of transportable buildings when compared to buildings delivered by the traditional construction methods and to demountable buildings.

Manual of Fire Protection Engineering

The Manual of Fire Protection Engineering (MFPE) is nominated by DI(G) ADMIN 20-26 as the primary policy document determining fire safety requirements for Defence facilities and its provisions are mandatory. Government policy requires that government departments comply with the Building Code of Australia (BCA) as the minimum construction standard for Defence facilities, and recognising the unique nature of some Defence facilities and the equipment they house, the MFPE takes a risk management approach to fire safety and generally nominates higher levels of fire safety than those required by BCA.

Even for short term lease or use, sandwich panel construction transportable buildings are unlikely to meet the Defence Fire Protection and Security requirements for Critical Equipment in accordance with the MFPE (Chapter 20) and the Defence Construction Security Manual (DCSM) respectively.

Certification

The MFPE sets out the requirements for certification of all buildings constructed, purchased or leased by Defence. These certification requirements also apply to transportable buildings when it is proposed to use them to meet Defence accommodation needs.

Whole of Life Cost Issues associated with Transportable Buildings

Transportable buildings should only be used as a facilities solution if they represent a value for money building solution for the Commonwealth.

Whole of life costs of transportable buildings must be considered when determining their suitability for use in Defence facilities and projects. Any analysis must take into account such factors as the useful life of the buildings, the associated design and construction costs as well as the operation and maintenance costs over the useful life of the buildings.

Short Term Lease

Transportable buildings should only be considered an appropriate building solution to meet a short term accommodation shortfall and when:

- a. the building can be leased;
- b. the lease term is no more than 12 months; and
- c. the building has been certified to MFPE by an accredited building certifier.

Request for Dispensation

Where it is proposed that:

- a. a transportable building be purchased by Defence; or
 - b. a proposed lease period exceeds 12 months; or
 - c. the requirements of the MFPE cannot be met,
- a Request for Dispensation in accordance with MFPE Chapter 26 shall be submitted.