



Fact Sheet – Decommissioning Fire Detection and Alarm Systems

General

The following general guidance is provided where it is proposed to decommission fire detection and alarm systems in Defence occupied buildings where the system is no longer required by either the Department of Defence Manual of Fire Protection Engineering (MFPE) or the National Construction Code Series Volume One – Building Code of Australia (NCC).

A number of options are available for smoke detection and alarms that are installed but not currently required by the MFPE or NCC:

1. leave in place and maintain;
2. retain system till end of life then follow the steps for decommission and remove; or
3. decommission and remove.

The following advice relates only to the option to decommission and remove a fire detection system.

Decommissioning a fire protection system is not considered as work that is exempt from a Building Approval – refer to annex 3A of the Defence Building Works Manual (BWM) found at the [Building Works Section](#) page of the Defence Estate Quality Management System (DEQMS).

As such, decommissioning a fire detection and alarm system requires a Building Approval and an updated Certificate of Completion at the completion of works. This process is to be undertaken by a building surveyor in accordance with the BWM.


As part of the Building Approval process, a review of the structure needs to be undertaken to determine – where possible – whether the system was originally installed to meet MFPE requirements or NCC or other applicable codes at the time of the original construction.

Where it is not possible to determine whether the system was required by the applicable building code or Defence requirements at the time of construction, the process noted below for ‘required by the MFPE at the time of construction’ is to be adopted.

Required by MFPE at time of construction

Where a system was only installed to meet the MFPE requirements at that time, then the Building Approval should note this and confirm that neither the current MFPE – nor NCC – has a current requirement for a fire detection and alarm system.





The review must also include assessment of current MFPE requirements for existing buildings and ensure compliance with these requirements is achieved.

Any decommissioned fire detection and alarm system must also be fully removed to avoid future confusion as to whether a system is installed or not.

The Building Approval and updated Certificate of Completion must be saved in Objective into the building folder in the Estate Management files as required by the BWM.

Required by NCC or other applicable code at time of construction

Where a system was required by the NCC at the time of the original construction, then further considerations are necessary. This is because, whilst not required under the current NCC, the effect of the deleting these systems needs to be assessed holistically to ensure that the resultant building fire safety is in line with the intent of current requirements.

For example, the building code in 1990 may have had a requirement for fire detection, but different or lesser requirements for fire hydrants or other fire systems. Deleting the detection system may reduce fire brigade response times and when this is considered with reduced or lesser hydrant coverage than permitted under current requirements, the result may be that the overall buildings fire safety is reduced.

As part of the Building Approval to decommission an existing fire detection and alarm system in a building where the NCC required this system at the time of construction, the building surveyor must ensure that:

- the new works comply with the MFPE and the fire safety provisions of the NCC; and
- the new works don't unduly affect the fire safety within the remainder of the existing building.

The review must also include assessment of current MFPE requirements for existing buildings and ensure compliance with these requirements is achieved.

Any decommissioned fire detection system must also be fully removed to avoid future confusion as to whether a system is installed or not.

Where it is impracticable to remove all parts of the system, that part may remain in situ provided signage is installed stating that these parts are decommissioned. The signage must be in a visible area adjacent to the decommissioned parts.

The Building Approval and updated Certificate of Completion must be saved in Objective into the building folder in the Estate Management files.

Guidelines for certification, performance solutions and dispensations are available at the [Building Works Section](#) page of DEQMS.

