

Building Practice Note **ESM-06: Fire Alarm Monitoring Systems**

This Practice Note provides guidance on alterations to monitoring of fire alarm systems.

The context below provides guidance for:

- Fire alarm monitoring systems
- Building permit requirements
- Building inspection requirements

Abbreviations & Definitions

The abbreviations and definitions set out below are for guidance only. They are not intended to vary those set out in the Building Act 1993 (Act), Building Regulations 2018 (Regulations) or the National Construction Code.

- **Act** – Building Act 1993
- **ASE** – Alarm signalling equipment
- **AS** – Australian Standard
- **BCA** – Building Code of Australia Volume One
- **CFI** – Certificate of final inspection
- **OP** – occupancy permit
- **RBS** – Relevant Building Surveyor
- **Regulations** – Building Regulations 2018
- **Section** – section of the Act

Fire alarm monitoring systems

The purpose of an automatic fire alarm monitoring system is to notify the fire brigade in the event of fire so they can undertake fire-fighting operations. On-site components of a required fire alarm monitoring system form part of the essential safety measures of a building and must operate at all times.

A monitored installation (such as a sprinkler system or a smoke detection system) is connected to a fire alarm monitoring system connected to a fire station or a fire station dispatch centre.

Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) and the Country Fire Authority (CFA) have ceased the operation of their former fire alarm monitoring services. The monitoring of fire alarm systems is now undertaken by private sector service providers. Any on-site change to those systems requires a building permit before the work is carried out.

Building permit requirements

A building permit is required to convert required connection of an installation to a fire station or fire station dispatch centre from an existing fire alarm monitoring system to another approved monitoring system or for the disconnection from a fire alarm monitoring system.

System monitoring requirements are set out in Part E2, including Specifications E2.2a and E2.2d of the BCA, and specified in AS 1670.1-2018 and AS 1670.3-2018.

A building permit exemption is not applicable under Schedule 3 of the Regulations as the work could adversely affect the safety of the public or occupiers of the building and alter a required essential safety measure.

For additional guidance on ESM requirements refer to Practice Note 23 and for OPs, refer to Practice Note 24.

Each application for a building permit should include:

- an allotment plan
- details of the building work proposed
- details of the proposed alarm monitoring system
- location of the work within the building
- details of any penetrations or fixings through, or into, the existing building
- copies of existing OPs, CFIs, maintenance determinations, maintenance schedule, and performance solutions relating to the building; and
- any regulation 129 report and consent issued by the Chief Officer.

The report and consent of the Chief Officer of FRV or the CFA must be obtained in relation to an OP where the building work involves the transmission signal of alarms or to be connected to a fire station or other alarm monitoring service. Where a CFI is issued, the RBS must notify the Chief Officer within 10 days of issuing the CFI under regulation 201(1).

To protect the safety of building occupants, the RBS may require under regulation 116 that precautions be taken before and during the carrying out of the work, especially if the monitoring system will be non-operational. For example, trained on-site fire wardens may be required while the existing alarm monitoring system is non-operational

For further guidance on monitored automatic alarm systems, refer to Fire Rescue Victoria safety guideline GL-46 Managing Monitored Automatic Alarm Systems.

Building inspection requirements

The RBS may determine that a final inspection is the only mandatory inspection required. Prior to issuing a CFI (section 38) or OP (section 44), the RBS must be satisfied that commissioning has been adequately completed.

Section 34 of the Act requires the RBS to cause the building work concerned to be inspected. The RBS may consider this requirement to be satisfied if a statement of compliance is issued pursuant to AS 1670 by a person with suitable qualifications and experience.

Required fire alarm monitoring systems are an essential safety measure and subject to the provisions of Part 15 of the Regulations. This means that if the building work is approved after a final inspection is carried out, and a certificate of final inspection is issued, the RBS must make a maintenance determination under regulation 215.

Related Documentation

- AS 1670.1-2018 Fire detection, warning, control, and intercom systems — System design, installation, and commissioning — Fire
- AS 1670.3-2018 Fire detection, warning, control, and intercom systems — System design, installation, and commissioning — Fire alarm monitoring
- Building Act 1993
- Building Regulations 2018
- Fire Rescue Victoria Fire safety guideline: GL-46 Managing Monitored Automatic Alarm Systems: <https://www.frv.vic.gov.au/fire-safety-guidelines>

Version History

- Version 2.0, published 28 June 2021, supersedes Practice Note 40: Fire alarm monitoring systems

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