

Demolition work

Purpose

The purpose of this Practitioner information Sheet is to alert practitioners to their responsibilities under the *Building Regulations 2018 (Regulations)* in relation to proposed demolition work.

Background

A recent coronial inquest into an incident resulting in the death of a worker on a building site in 2003 found that the workman had been conducting a partial demolition of a house to accommodate a proposed extension and was removing the roof and roof framing around an existing chimney. The chimney was to remain. The ceiling joists, broken by the worker's fall, transferred movement within the structure back to an already unstable chimney and the chimney collapsed onto him. While this case highlights the risk of partial demolition around existing structures such as a chimney, the following advice also applies to any demolition where parts of the building are to remain, such as a masonry wall.

WorkSafe Victoria regulates safe work practices at a work site, including demolition work under the *Occupational Health & Safety Act 2004*. *Building practitioners*

must comply with Worksafe Victoria requirements.

Building permit applications (for demolition work)

Applications for a building permit to demolish or remove a building must comply with the requirements of regulation 26 of the Regulations.

Regulation 26 requires in part, that where a part of a building is to be demolished or removed, the application for a building permit must include a written description of the demolition or removal procedure and computations or other information to show that the remainder of the building will be structurally stable after the proposed demolition or removal takes place or after other works are undertaken.

Responsibilities of builders proposing demolition work

Building practitioners must—

- include in an application for a building permit all information required by regulation 26 including a written description of the demolition procedure and computations or other information to show that the remainder of the building will be structurally stable after

the proposed demolition or removal takes place;

- not commence building demolition work until the building permit has been issued by the relevant building surveyor (RBS);
- implement precautionary measures in accordance with regulation 117 and AS 2601-2001;
- Not commence the demolition work until the precautions have been inspected and approved by the RBS; and
- Review the progress of demolition and take further precautions during the demolition as the need is identified.

Regulation 117 requires in part, that the builder (demolisher) take precautions in accordance with AS 2601 – 2001 *The demolition of structures* (the Standard) before and during demolition.

Compliance with the Standard reduces the risk of injury and property damage in a work place safety setting. It is recommended that demolishers observe Part 2 of the Standard.

This Part sets out a procedure to inspect the site and structure prior to work commencing to identify potential hazards on the site and in the structure. It then requires the preparation of a

work plan. The work plan requires (in part) documentation of any precautions to be implemented and a description of the demolition procedure.

This document can not only provide valuable information to workers on the site in terms of identifying where hazards are and what precautions are required to mitigate the risk of those hazards, it can also be used to satisfy that part of regulation 26 which requires a written description of the demolition procedure to be lodged with the application for a building permit.

Responsibilities of the RBS

When assessing an application for a building permit, the RBS must –

- ensure that adequate documentation has been lodged in accordance with regulation 26. This includes computations or other information to show that the remainder of the building will be structurally stable where only part of the building is to be demolished;
- review and approve the application for a building permit if satisfied that it complies with the requirements of regulation 26, the Act and the Regulations;
- inspect and approve the precautions the demolisher has implemented prior to commencement of the demolition work.

The RBS may exempt minor demolition work from all or parts of the measures set out in regulation 117 if he or she determines that the demolition work proposed does not warrant those measures.

In considering whether to grant an exemption where a partial demolition is proposed, the RBS must pay due regard to the potential for any remaining part of the building to become structurally unstable after the demolition or partial building removal is completed.

Minister's Guideline 09 provides further advice in relation to issuing building permits for demolition work proposed by an owner builder.