



# Building Code smoke alarm requirements for residential buildings

The Building Commission released an e-letter on 28 November 2016 to remind building industry practitioners about interconnection of smoke alarms (buildings post 1 May 2015) and also the new Australian Standard for smoke alarms.

This industry bulletin serves as a further reminder about those requirements that are applicable from 1 May 2017 in respect to Class 1 buildings, sole-occupancy units in Class 2 or 3 buildings and Class 4 parts of a building (residential dwellings).

## **New Australian Standard for smoke alarms**

### **New dwellings**

The Building Code of Australia (BCA 2015 and BCA 2016) adopted AS 3786:2014 (Incorporating Amendment No. 1) – Smoke alarms using scattered light, transmitted light or ionization on 1 May 2015. The 2014 version of the standard supersedes AS 3786:1993.

A two year transitional period was provided which allowed the use of both the 1993 and 2014 versions for a deemed-to-satisfy solution. This transitional period ends on 30 April 2017.

This means that all new Class 1 buildings and sole-occupancy units in Class 2 or 3 buildings and Class 4 parts of a building, where the application for a building permit is lodged on or after 1 May 2017, should be fitted with smoke alarms that comply with AS 3786:2014.

### **Existing dwellings**

The requirement for smoke alarms to comply with AS 3786:2014 also applies to any installation of smoke alarms from 1 May 2017 in dwellings subject to transfer of ownership, lease or hire (refer Part 8 Division 3 of the Building Regulations 2012).

This includes replacement smoke alarms in leased or hired dwellings where the smoke alarms are no longer in working order, or are more than 10 years old. This does not however trigger a requirement to replace existing compliant smoke alarms.

### **How to identify a smoke alarm that complies to the new standard**

Building practitioners, owners and electrical contractors should be looking for an “AS 3786:2014” marking on the smoke alarm itself.

A smoke alarm manufactured under the 1993 version of the standard (i.e. AS 3786:1993) will no longer be a BCA deemed-to-satisfy product from 1 May 2017.

## **Interconnection of smoke alarms in residential buildings**

Mains powered smoke alarms in new residential buildings (being Class 1 buildings, sole-occupancy units in Class 2 or 3 buildings and Class 4 parts of a building) for which a building permit application was submitted after 30 April 2015, should be interconnected where more than one alarm is required to be installed.

Certifying building surveyors should be satisfied that the relevant plans and specifications contain sufficient information on smoke alarm requirements relevant to the particular building, including for a deemed-to-satisfy solution:

- mains power connection;
- correct location for smoke alarms;
- interconnection requirements; and
- compliance with AS 3786:2014 (Incorporating Amendment No. 1) – Smoke alarms using scattered light, transmitted light or ionization.

Builders should ensure the electrical contractors install smoke alarms in accordance with the requirements of the BCA.

## **Requirements for transferring ownership, renting or hiring an existing dwelling**

The Building Regulations 2012 requires that compliant smoke alarms be installed in a dwelling prior to its transfer of ownership, rent or hire. Those smoke alarms are not required to be interconnected if an application to build the dwelling was made before 1 May 2015 (and subsequently approved), unless interconnecting smoke alarms was otherwise approved as part of the dwelling.

### **Disclaimer**

The information contained in this bulletin is provided as general information only and should not be relied upon as legal advice or as an accurate statement of the relevant legislation provisions. If you are uncertain as to your legal obligations you should obtain independent legal advice.

February 2017