

Building Regulation Advisory Note

BRAN No. 04/2008
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FIRE ALARM MONITORING CHANGES

Purpose

The purpose of this Advisory Note is to advise fire equipment installers, building surveyors, designers and associated stakeholders of the changes in the monitoring of fire alarms by the Tasmanian Fire Service and how the change over is to be treated under the *Building Act 2000*.

Background

Telstra has advised that it will cease providing new Voice Grade Dedicated Lines (VGDL) for the purpose of data transfer for fire alarms as of December 31st December 2008, and will completely withdraw this service by December 31st 2009. This will affect monitoring of fire alarms systems installed in the vast majority of buildings in Tasmania, which is presently done via these land lines to the Tasmania Fire Service (TFS). This significant change will affect the way both new and existing fire alarms are monitored in the future. The TFS proposes to replace the system with a fire alarm connection over Telstra's Mobile IP Network with the TFS providing a new ASE/IP device to attach to fire panels together with a SIM card. The system will be owned by the TFS. The cost of the change over will be the responsibility of the building owner.

How, is the change over to be considered under the Building Act 2000?

For the replacement of existing ASE installations:

An automatic fire alarm system and its components are prescribed essential health and safety features under r.43 of the *Building Regulations 2004* and as such are required to be maintained so as to perform to a standard that is not less than the standard to which they were originally required to perform. Buildings built after the commencement of the regulations also required all essential health and safety features to be maintained to a standard not less than that set out in the Director of Building Control's Specified List.

The ASE change over is considered "changing like with like" and only affects the monitoring side of the system. This forced change, bought about by Telstra, is not at the request or doing of the building owner however if their existing ASE is not replaced by 31 December 09, the system will cease to perform to the required standard, placing the owner involuntarily in breach of the regulations. On this basis it is proposed that the work to replace existing ASE's with wireless compatible ASE's be considered essential maintenance for the purpose of compliance with r.45 and therefore be exempt under r.4 (l) from the need for a building permit.

For new building work involving Alarm Signalling Equipment (ASE) installations:

There will be no change to the current requirements of obtaining a Building Permit.

For further information please contact the Tasmania Fire Service on Ph 03 6230 8600 or the Building Control Branch on Ph 03 6233 3819