

MBIE Fire Safety Regulations Review (A hot topic)

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) is currently undertaking an extensive review of fire safety regulations and practice in New Zealand.

The purpose of the review is to inform the development of a strategic direction for MBIE's fire safety work, drawing on the views and experiences of practitioners. The review covers the building life-cycle from project inception to demolition, and considers alterations, changes of use and subdivisions. It draws on perspectives from stakeholders at each stage in the building life-cycle. It also draws on research elements to inform MBIE where improvements can be made in fire safety, cost, and practical outcomes.

What has happened in the review to date?

MBIE has held initial stakeholder sessions in Christchurch, Wellington, Auckland, Dunedin, and Tauranga, which more than 250 participants attended to provide feedback on the review.

Following the initial stakeholder sessions a questionnaire was developed to explore in more detail the key points heard at these sessions. A Fire Safety Review presentation on the 20 November, at the Novotel Auckland Airport gave a preliminary analysis of the data gathered.

Top 5 issues for BCA from the fire review preliminary analysis were:

1. Section 112 and Section 115 (were 1 & 2)
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3. Verification Method C/VM2 issues
4. Costs of the current system / surface finishes
5. Availability of qualified people and education

Questions were asked by other stakeholders why 'Compliance Schedules and Building Warrant of Fitness issues' were not a high priority of concern for BCAs as in other groups - this had ranked in their top 5 for concerns.

Other stakeholder's reviews showed that passive fire, FEB and the role of the New Zealand Fire Service were high on their agenda of concerns.

MBIE also took this opportunity to introduce their new fire engineer Michael Belsham. Michael has been overseas in Scotland but had previously worked for the Ministry before his departure. He has taken over the vacant position which was left by Nick Saunders.

The presentation also introduced international experts involved in the next stage of the review and a brief discussion on the future strategy for fire. Dr Brian Ashe and Dr Brian Meacham provided their views on New Zealand current fire design system.

There is a need to have the three scenario's to achieve compliance as building is always evolving and not all building will be able to fall into the acceptable / verification method. First principles must always have a place in fire design compliance as this will encourage innovation but potentially find practical solutions to life safety without increasing cost.

They will release their recommendation in 2015.

On an international scale, Australia is looking at implementing N.Z verification method design in 2015 and will take these review findings on board.