



27 November 2009

## **Passive Fire Protection Systems**

The Department of Building and Housing has been working with the Fire Protection Association New Zealand (FPANZ) and BRANZ to identify whether passive fire protection installed in New Zealand buildings is properly constructed, documented, inspected and maintained.

The Fire Protection Association has published a report 'Determining Barriers to Industry Delivery of Fire Safe Buildings in New Zealand'; you can download a copy from [http://www.fireprotection.org.nz/publications/FPANZ\\_research\\_report.pdf](http://www.fireprotection.org.nz/publications/FPANZ_research_report.pdf).

The report discusses some investigations into the state of passive fire and smoke protection (PFP) systems which were found to be deficient in many cases. Thankfully the incidence of escalating fires in commercial buildings is rare, but the consequence of a fire in a building with defective passive protection is potentially very serious.

The Department is seeking to remind Building Consent Authority (BCA) staff that PFP is as important to the fire safety performance of a building as active fire protection systems and that it needs to be constructed, documented, inspected and maintained properly.

As best practice for new building consents going forward, in addition to PFP forming part of the "means of escape" being identified in a building's compliance schedule we recommend that the PFP to be inspected and maintained is identified on plans of the building and included with the compliance schedule document.

In addition, the Department is seeking the assistance of BCAs to remind independent qualified persons (IQPs) and building owners that PFP is an important part of the overall fire safety of a building and that it needs to be inspected and maintained whether or not it is a Specified System and appears on a compliance schedule.

For existing buildings we suggest that:

- BCAs write to IQPs and building owners close to the time of the BWoF anniversary to remind them about the importance of PFP. I have included information that you might consider using when corresponding with IQPs and building owners within your jurisdiction.
- Any necessary changes to the compliance schedule should be applied for on Form 11 (application for amendment to compliance schedule). This will provide a phased in approach in amending compliance schedules.

If a building has defective PFP then the defect should be corrected by maintenance and repair in order for the building to continue complying with the Building Code and Building Act.

Further information and guidance is available in:

- the Compliance Schedule Handbook,
- Codewords, at:  
<http://www.dbh.govt.nz/UserFiles/File/Publications/Building/Codewords/pdf/codewords30.pdf>



- Building Owners Building Warrant of Fitness Manual available from:  
<http://www.bnets.co.nz/BWOFS/index.htm>

If you would like to clarify any aspect of passive fire protection or discuss the report's findings, please contact Nick Saunders on 04 817 4833. Peter Sparrow on 04 817 4881 can also provide assistance with queries about compliance schedules.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dave Kelly', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dave Kelly  
Deputy Chief Executive Building Quality Branch  
Department of Building and Housing