



DFES Guidance Note: Combustible Cladding

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Authorised: Superintendent Built Environment Branch

Guidance for Building Owners' affected by External Cladding

1. Purpose:

The Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) understands the uncertainty caused for people living and working in buildings with non-compliant external cladding. The appropriate approach needed to address this issue is being actively pursued by Industry experts.

This guidance note is therefore primarily issued to help Building Owners' reduce the fire risk posed from existing non-compliant external cladding installed on their building, as the appropriate approach to the issue is resolved. It is important to note that if a Building owner has been issued with a Cladding Risk Report from the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety's (DMIRS) State-Wide Cladding Audit that they seek further information on its implications from: <https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/state-wide-cladding-audit>.

2. Scope:

The Department of Fire and Emergency Services holds an advisory role only in relation to any building compliance requirements mandated in the Western Australian Building Act 2011 and within the National Construction Codes Building Code of Australia (NCC). The receipt of a Cladding Risk Report by the DMIRS does not automatically trigger any legislated requirement for a Building Owner to consult or seek advice from DFES. Determining whether your cladding complies with the NCC should be sought from a registered building surveyor.

3. Who should I speak to if I am concerned about my building's cladding or I have received a DMIRS Cladding Risk Report?

There is no 'one size fits all' approach on how to address combustible cladding installed on a building. Generally, however, a fire safety engineer will be required to consider the product type, extent of the cladding on the building and the building's fire safety measures.

Other relevant stakeholders who may become part of the process include:

- i. **DMIRS.**
- ii. **Local Government.**
- iii. **DFES.**
- iv. **Your Insurance Company.**
- v. **Registered building surveyor.**

4. Immediate Actions to Reduce the Risk of Fire:

An external wall cladding fire has the potential to create significant issues for firefighters. In response to the non-compliant use of combustibile cladding, DFES has reviewed its Operational Requirements, existing procedures, and appliance mobilisation. However, relying on the attendance of firefighters should not be used to mitigate the risk created by non-compliant cladding on your building. DFES will be relying on the building's preventative fire safety design and construction characteristics to limit the potential of the cladding hazard.

It is important that you refer to DFES Guideline 17 (link provided below). This provides information on how the issue of non-compliant cladding is expected to be addressed by DFES and will be a useful guide for you and your fire safety engineer.

<https://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/regulationandcompliance/buildingplanassessment/Guidelines/GL-17%20External%20Walls%20and%20Cladding.pdf>

To reduce the risk of a fire today and to the potential consequences to your life and safety, the following measures can be taken:

- Ensure you have working smoke alarms in your building.
- Ensure all your installed fire safety systems, such as building occupant warning systems, hydrants and sprinklers are working as intended, being maintained and are accessible to firefighters. If unsure, talk to your building's management or maintenance contractor.
- Familiarise yourself with and understand your building's fire escape plan. If unsure, talk to your building's management.
- Ensure that cooking with gas barbeques is done so in a cleared space and away from any installed cladding. Someone should also remain in attendance.
- Reduce the storage of furniture and flammable materials on your balcony.
- Consider the immediate removal of cladding around potential ignition sources. E.g. balconies, bin storage and car parking areas.
- Consider the immediate removal of cladding around your Fire Booster Assembly and building Exit(s).
- Identify/label the installed combustibile cladding through physical means and/or within your building's maintenance schedule. This action will help reduce inappropriate works and required hazard management procedures from lapsing when awaiting the removal of the cladding or where it has been decided that the cladding will remain in place.

For more detailed information related to fire safety, including that in multistorey living, please refer to the link below to the DFES website:

https://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/safetyinformation/fire/fireinthehome/FireintheHomeManualsGuidelines/Fire_Safety_Multi-Storey_Residential_Buildings.pdf

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Contact us at:

Department of Fire and Emergency Services | Built Environment Branch

Phone: 9395 9300 | Email: bebadmin@dfes.wa.gov.au | Web: www.dfes.wa.gov.au