

Compliance Document for New Zealand Building Code Clause F7 Warning Systems – Third Edition

Prepared by the Department of Building and Housing

This Compliance Document is prepared by the Department of Building and Housing. The Department of Building and Housing is a Government Department established under the State Sector Act 1988.

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www.vicbooks.co.nz
ISBN 0-477-01606-5

New Zealand Government

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Users should make themselves familiar with the preface to the New Zealand Building Code Handbook, which describes the status of Compliance Documents and explains alternative methods of achieving compliance.

Defined words (italicised in the text) and classified uses are explained in Clauses A1 and A2 of the Building Code and in the Definitions at the start of this Compliance Document.

F7: Document History			
	Date	Alterations	
First published	July 1992		
Second edition incorporating Amendment 1	December 1993	p. v, Contents p. vi, References	p. vii, Definitions p. 3 to 8, Complete rewrite
Amendment 2	19 August 1994	pp. i and ii, Document History p. 4, 1.2.5, 1.3.3, 1.3.4, 1.4.3	p. 5, 1.4.4, 1.4.5, 1.5.4 p. 7 and 8, Index
Amendment 3	1 December 1995	p. ii, Document History p. vi, References p. 3, 1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.1.3, 1.2.1, 1.2.2, 1.2.3	p. 4, 1.4.2 p. 5, 1.5.1 p. 6, 2.2.5 added
Reprinted incorporating Amendments 1, 2 and 3	April 1998		
Third edition	1 December 2000 Effective from 1 June 2001	Document revised – third edition issued	
Amendment 4	24 April 2003	p. 3, Code Clause p. 5, Contents p. 7, References	p. 13, 1.2.1 Type 1 pp. 17 and 18, 3.1-3.4 p. 20, Index
Reprinted incorporating Amendment 4	April 2004		
Amendment 5 4 July 2005	Effective 1 October 2005	pp. 1-2, Document History and Status pp. 7-8, References	pp. 9-10, Definitions pp. 13-14, F7/AS1
Amendment 6	Effective 1 November 2008	p. 2, Document History p. 5, Contents p. 7, References p. 9, Definitions p. 13, 1.2.1	p. 14, 1.2.5, 1.2.6, 1.2.8, 1.3.1 p. 15, 1.3.5, 1.3.6 p. 16, 2.1, 2.1.2 p. 17, 2.2.4 pp. 19-20, Index
Note: Page numbers relate to the document at the time of Amendment and may not match page numbers in current document.			

Document Status

The most recent version of this document, as detailed in the Document History, is approved by the Chief Executive of the Department of Building and Housing. It is effective from 1 November 2007 and supersedes all previous versions of this document.

People using this Compliance Document should check for amendments on a regular basis. The Department of Building and Housing may amend any part of any Compliance Document at any time. Up-to-date versions of Compliance Documents are available from www.dbh.govt.nz

New Zealand Building Code

Clause F7 Warning Systems

The mandatory provisions for building work are contained in the New Zealand Building Code (NZBC), which comprises the First Schedule to the Building Regulations 1992. The relevant NZBC Clause for Warning Systems is F7.

FIRST SCHEDULE—continued	
Clause F7—WARNING SYSTEMS	
Provisions	Limits on application
<p>OBJECTIVE F7.1 The objective of this provision is to safeguard people from injury or illness due to lack of awareness of an emergency.</p> <p>FUNCTIONAL REQUIREMENT F7.2 <i>Buildings</i> shall be provided with appropriate means of warning people to escape to a <i>safe place</i> in an emergency.</p> <p>PERFORMANCE F7.3.1 A means of warning must alert people to the emergency in <i>adequate</i> time for them to reach a <i>safe place</i>.</p> <p>F7.3.2 Appropriate means of detection and warning for fire must be provided within each <i>household unit</i>.</p> <p>F7.3.3 Appropriate means of warning for fire and other emergencies must be provided in <i>buildings</i> as necessary to satisfy the other performance requirements of this code.</p>	<p>Performance F7.3 does not apply to <i>Outbuildings</i> or <i>Ancillary buildings</i>.</p>

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References

For the purposes of New Zealand Building Code compliance, the New Zealand and other Standards, and other documents referred to in this Compliance Document (primary reference documents) shall be the editions, along with their specific amendments, listed below. Where the primary reference documents refer to other Standards or other documents (secondary reference documents), which in turn may also refer to other Standards or other documents, and so on (lower order reference documents), then the applicable version of these secondary and lower order reference documents shall be the version in effect at the date this Compliance Document was published.

		Where quoted
Standards New Zealand		
Amend 5 Oct 2005	NZS 4512: 2003 Fire alarm systems in buildings	AS1 1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.1.3, 1.1.4, 1.1.5, 1.2.2, 1.2.3, 1.2.4, 1.2.6, 1.2.7, 1.3.2, 1.5.1, 2.1.2 b)
Amend 5 Oct 2005	NZS 4515: 2003 Fire sprinkler systems for residential occupancies	AS1 1.2.8
Amend 6 Nov 2008	NZS 4541: 2007 Automatic fire sprinkler systems	AS1 1.2.8
British Standards Institution		
	BS 5446:- Components of automatic fire alarm systems for residential premises	
	Part 1: 1990 Specification for self-contained smoke alarms and point-type smoke detectors <i>Amends: 6863, 7648, 9628</i>	AS1 3.2.2
Standards Australia		
Amend 4 Apr 2003	AS/NZS 1668:- The use of ventilation and air conditioning in buildings	
Amend 5 Oct 2005	Part 1: 1998 Fire and smoke control in multi-compartment building <i>Amend: 1</i>	AS1 1.5.3
	AS 1670:- Fire detection, warning, control and intercom systems – System design, installation and commissioning	
	Part 6: 1997 Smoke alarms	AS1 3.3.2
	AS 3786: 1993 Smoke alarms <i>Amends: 1, 2, 3</i>	AS1 3.2.2
Underwriters Laboratories Inc		
	UL 217: 1997 Single and multiple station smoke alarms	AS1 3.2.2
Underwriters' Laboratories of Canada		
Amend 4 Apr 2003	CAN/ULC S531: 1995 Smoke alarms	AS1 3.2.2

Definitions

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This is an abbreviated list of definitions for words or terms particularly relevant to this Compliance Document. The definitions for any other italicised words may be found in the New Zealand Building Code Handbook. See Compliance Document C/AS1 for the full list of fire safety definitions.

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Adequate means *Adequate* to achieve the objectives of the *Building Code*.

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Building has the meaning given to it by sections 8 and 9 of the *Building Act 2004*.

Exitway All parts of an *escape route* protected by *fire* or *smoke separations*, or by distance when exposed to open air, and terminating at a *final exit*.

Fire The state of combustion during which flammable materials burn producing heat, toxic gases, or smoke or flame or any combination of these.

Firecell Any space including a group of contiguous spaces on the same or different levels within a *building*, which is enclosed by any combination of *fire separations*, *external walls*, roofs, and floors.

COMMENT:

Floors, in this context, includes ground floors and those in which the underside is exposed to the external environment (e.g. when cantilevered). Note also that internal floors between *firecells* are *fire separations*.

Fire safety precautions (FSPs) The combination of all methods used in a *building* to warn people of an emergency, provide for safe evacuation, and restrict the spread of *fire*, and includes both active and passive protection.

COMMENT:

This definition has the same meaning and wording as the definition of "fire safety systems" in the Building Regulations.

Hold-open device A device which holds a *smoke control door* or *fire door* open during normal use, but is released by deactivating the device by an automatic *fire* detection system, allowing the door to close automatically under the action of a self-closing device.

Household unit

- a) means a *building* or group of *buildings*, or part of a *building* or group of *buildings*, that is:
- i) used, or intended to be used, only or mainly for residential purposes; and
 - ii) occupied, or intended to be occupied, exclusively as the home or residence of not more than 1 household; but
- b) does not include a hostel, boarding house or other specialised accommodation.

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HVAC An abbreviation for heating, ventilating and airconditioning.

Occupant load The greatest number of people likely to occupy a particular space within a *building*. It is determined by:

- a) Multiplying the number of people per m² (occupant density) for the activity being undertaken, by the total floor area, or
- b) For sleeping areas, counting the number of beds, or
- c) For fixed seating areas, counting the number of seats.

Person with a disability means a *person* who has an impairment or a combination of impairments that limits the extent to which the *person* can engage in the activities, pursuits, and processes of everyday life, including, without limitation, any of the following:

- a) a physical, sensory, neurological, or intellectual impairment
- b) a mental illness.

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Purpose group The classification of spaces within a *building* according to the activity for which the spaces are used.

Safe path That part of an *exitway* which is protected from the effects of *fire* by *fire separations*, *external walls*, or by distance when exposed to open air.

Safe place A place of safety in the vicinity of a *building*, from which people may safely disperse after escaping the effects of a *fire*. It may be a place such as a street, open space, public space or an *adjacent building*.

Suite A *firecell* providing residential accommodation for the exclusive use of one person or of several people known to one another. It comprises one or more rooms for sleeping and may include spaces used for associated domestic activities such as hygiene and cooking.

COMMENT:

1. Bed numbers are limited to 6 in *purpose groups* SC and SD or 12 in *purpose group* SA in accordance with C/AS1 Paragraphs 6.6.5 and 6.7.6. Examples may be found in hotels, motels and residential care facilities, such as old people's homes or in hospices providing temporary family accommodation.
2. It is assumed that the social cohesion of the occupants by virtue of the personal relationship (as family members, friends or associates) would ensure that any individual, becoming aware of *fire*, would naturally assist others within the *firecell* to escape. The term *suite* does not apply to a group of bedrooms where each room is available to different "key-holders". In some cases a *suite* may be a single bedroom.

Verification Method F7/VM1

No specific test methods have been adopted for verifying compliance with the Performance of NZBC F7.

Acceptable Solution F7/AS1

1.1 Installation and Maintenance of Fire Alarm Systems

Manual fire alarm systems

1.1.1 Manual *fire* alarm systems shall be installed and maintained in accordance with NZS 4512 and the specific requirements of this Acceptable Solution.

1.1.2 In *buildings*, with no more than three floors, the “monthly” inspections required by NZS 4512 for manual alarm systems, may be performed at no more than 3 monthly intervals:

- a) Where there is no provision for sleeping, and total *occupant load* does not exceed 100 in a single-floor *building* or 50 in a two floor *building*, or
- b) Where the *building* contains SA or SR *purpose groups* and has:
 - i) only a single floor level, or
 - ii) two or three floor levels and contains no more than 10 beds or four *suites* for SA occupants, or four *household units* for SR occupants.
- c) During the off-season, for a *building* erected especially for seasonal use, provided that the only use of sleeping accommodation is by maintenance staff.

Automatic fire alarm systems

1.1.3 Automatic *fire* alarm systems shall be installed and maintained in accordance with NZS 4512 and the specific requirements of this Acceptable Solution.

1.1.4 Call points shall be identified in accordance with F8/AS1 or NZS 4512.

1.1.5 The installation, detectors, control panel, sounders and other components shall comply with the requirements of NZS 4512.

Smoke detectors

1.1.6 Smoke detectors are devices that detect the visible or invisible particles of combustion. They shall have a common power supply either at low voltage or by mains voltage, and shall not rely solely on an internal battery for operation.

1.1.7 High sensitivity smoke detection, very early smoke detection systems or similar may be used only where supported by *fire* engineering calculations.

1.2 Descriptions of Alarm Systems

1.2.1 The types of *fire* alarms to be provided in *buildings* shall be determined in accordance with Part 4 of Compliance Document C/AS1. The following text provides specific details on each *fire* alarm system.

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Type 1 – Domestic smoke alarm system

See Paragraph 3.1 – Domestic Smoke Alarms.

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Type 2 – Manual fire alarm system

1.2.2 A single or multiple zone system with an alarm panel to provide a zone index diagram and defect warning and suitable for connection to the Fire Service. The *fire* alarm shall comply with the relevant sections of NZS 4512.

Type 3 – Automatic fire alarm system activated by heat detectors and manual call points

1.2.3 This system comprises a Type 2 system plus heat detectors and shall be installed in accordance with NZS 4512.

Type 4 – Automatic fire alarm system activated by smoke detectors and manual call points

1.2.4 This system comprises a Type 2 system plus smoke detectors and shall be installed in accordance with NZS 4512.

Type 5 – Automatic fire alarm system with modified smoke detection and manual call points

1.2.5 A variation of the Type 4 and Type 7 alarm systems requiring part of the smoke detection component to comprise only a local alarm.

The local alarm system, activated by the presence of smoke, has audible alerting devices to warn only the *firecell* occupants and the *building* management, where such management exists. Examples of such management situations are motels, hotels or multi-unit residential accommodation in a retirement village.

The local alarm component of a Type 5 system:

- a) Is restricted to single *firecells* containing sleeping accommodation, being *household units* in *purpose group* SR or individual *suites* in *purpose group* SA. The local alarm system shall not be extended to other areas such as *exitways* or common spaces. These shall retain a Type 4 smoke detection system, and
- b) Shall have the facility to be silenced (muted) by a 'hush' switch located at an accessible level in accordance with D1/AS1. The hush switch shall mute the alarm for a time not exceeding 2 minutes, and
- c) Shall be permitted only where an automatic *fire* detection and alarm system activated by heat detectors (part of the main alarm system) is also installed in sleeping *firecells* which do not already have an automatic *fire* sprinkler system.

Where a Type 5 system is installed, mechanical ventilation in accordance with G4/AS1 shall be provided in the kitchen area of the *household unit*.

1.2.6 In *exitways* and common spaces the required Type 4 or Type 7 system shall not be modified. The system installation for Type 3 and Type 4 components shall comply with NZS 4512.

1.2.7 The system installation for the local smoke alarm component shall also comply with NZS 4512.

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Type 6 – Automatic fire sprinkler system with manual call points

1.2.8 This is a combined automatic *fire* sprinkler system and Type 2 alarm. Activation of the sprinklers shall automatically activate the audible alerting devices of the alarm system. Sprinkler installation shall comply with either NZS 4515 (which is limited to smaller *buildings*), or NZS 4541 as modified by Appendix D of Compliance Document C/AS1.

COMMENT:

NZS 4541 and NZS 4515 require listed quick response sprinklers to be used throughout all *firecells* containing sleeping accommodation, except that fast response or standard response sprinklers may be used in the roof space.

Type 7 – Automatic fire sprinkler system with smoke detectors and manual call points

1.2.9 This is a combined Type 6 and Type 4 alarm system (including a Type 2 system). Sprinkler installation shall comply with the requirements for a Type 6 alarm.

COMMENT:

Smoke detectors are used to gain an earlier warning to life-threatening situations than may be achieved from the response of sprinklers, particularly where a smouldering *fire* does not produce enough heat in its early stages to activate a sprinkler head.

1.3 Location of Heat and Smoke Detectors

1.3.1 Table 4.1 of Compliance Document C/AS1 describes the appropriate *fire* alarm system for the *purpose group* being considered. Automatic *fire* alarms which include heat detectors or smoke detectors shall have the appropriate detectors installed throughout the *firecells* of that *purpose group*, and the *safe paths*, unless specifically exempted by Table 4.1 of C/AS1.

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1.3.2 Every space shall have at least one detector (heat, smoke or sprinkler). In Type 4 alarm systems, heat detectors shall be used where smoke detectors are not installed. Smoke detectors are not necessary in toilet spaces, provided they are replaced with heat detectors or sprinklers. Detectors must be installed in cupboards or wardrobes where required by NZS 4512, except within *household units of purpose group SR*.

1.3.3 Smoke detectors shall not be installed in any space where the activity occurring in that space may cause a smoke detector to initiate false alarms, e.g. areas for cooking or certain types of processing, or roof and ceiling spaces with difficult access to clean detectors. See Paragraph 1.3.5 for spaces where substitution of smoke detectors is not permitted.

1.3.4 Alarm systems Types 3 and 6, activated by heat detectors shall have heat detectors or sprinkler heads located throughout the *firecells* concerned, and *safe paths*.

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1.3.5 Except where Table 4.1 of Compliance Document C/AS1 has a contrary requirement, alarm systems Types 4 and 7, which include smoke detectors, shall have the smoke detectors installed throughout the *firecells* of the *purpose group* concerned, except that heat detectors may be used in certain circumstances (see Paragraph 1.3.3) where smoke detectors are not appropriate. Substitution of smoke detectors by heat detectors shall not be permitted in:

- a) Sleeping spaces in SC, SD, SA and SR *purpose groups*, or
- b) Corridors in SC, SD, SA, SR, CS, CL and CM *purpose groups*, or
- c) Internal *exitways* in all *purpose groups*.

COMMENT:

1. Where cooking and sleeping activities occur in the same space, smoke detectors must be located to minimise the risk of false alarms.
2. Note that a Type 5 system, being a modified Type 4 or 7 system, requires heat detectors or sprinklers throughout the *firecell*.

Hold-open devices

1.3.6 Regardless of the type of alarm system, smoke detectors are required for activating the release of *hold-open devices*. Doors held by *hold-open devices* shall be released by a signal generated by a smoke detector. For locations where *hold-open devices* and associated smoke detectors are required, see Compliance Document C/AS1 Paragraph 3.17.9.

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Exitway pressurisation

1.3.7 Smoke detectors shall be placed in all areas of an *exitway* which is to be pressurised (see C/AS1 Paragraphs 6.21.2 and A2.1.1 Type 13).

Smoke extract systems

1.3.8 Smoke detectors shall be placed in all smoke reservoirs to initiate mechanical smoke extraction, and to open vents which are part of a smoke control system (see C/AS1 Paragraph A2.1.1 natural smoke venting Type 10 or mechanical smoke extract Type 11).

1.4 Placement of Detectors

1.4.1 Point type smoke detectors shall be located either by a *fire* engineering study, or by meeting all the following requirements for horizontal spacing of detectors:

- a) not more than:
 - 10.0 m between detectors
 - 7.0 m from any point of the room
 - 5.0 m from any wall
 - 0.5 m from the high point of a sloping ceiling, and
- b) No less than 0.2 m from any wall.

1.4.2 Any projection below the ceiling (beams, joists etc.) of more than 0.25 m shall constitute a wall, and ceilings with a slope of less than 5° from the horizontal can be considered as having no high point. Detector placement in stairwells shall follow the requirements for sloping ceilings.

1.5 Interface with Ancillary Control Systems

1.5.1 The primary use of the Type 4 and 7 systems is to provide early warning within the *building* and to send signals to the Fire Service when required. These systems may also generate alarm signals which shall be transferred to a separate control panel to activate ancillary *fire safety precautions* in the *building*, in accordance with NZS 4512 Clause 203.

1.5.2 The ancillary systems for activating *fire safety precautions* shall be identified on the design plans, and may include controls for *hold-open devices* and one or more of the following:

- Type 9 Smoke control in air-handling system
- Type 10 Natural smoke venting
- Type 11 Mechanical smoke extract
- Type 13 Pressurisation of *safe paths*
- Type 15 Fire Service lift control
- Type 16 Emergency lighting in *exitways*.

HVAC systems

1.5.3 Smoke detectors which are part of a Type 4 or 7 system shall not be used directly to detect smoke in a *HVAC* system. Where smoke detectors are included in a *HVAC* system, they shall be part of the controls of that system and be installed as required in AS/NZS 1668: Part 1 (see C/AS1 Paragraph A2.1.1 Type 9).

2.1 Requirements of Fire Alarm Systems

Type and method of activation

2.1.1 Every *fire* alarm system shall be activated by a method appropriate to the *occupant load* and *purpose groups* contained in the *building*. Compliance with Table 4.1 of Compliance Document C/AS1 satisfies this requirement.

2.1.2 *Fire* alarm systems used for *fire safety precautions* 2 to 7 in Table 4.1 of Compliance Document C/AS1, shall satisfy all the following requirements:

- a) Have a means of communicating with the Fire Service as set out in Paragraph 2.2.
- b) Have the *building*, excluding the sprinkler system, zoned as required by NZS 4512.
- c) Have alerting devices which may give either audible or visual warning signals, except as allowed for in e) below for *purpose groups* SC and SD.
- d) Where a system serves *purpose group* SA, have alerting devices installed in every accommodation unit provided for the use of *persons with a disability*.
- e) Where a system serves *purpose groups* SC and SD, alerting devices may be installed so that only staff are informed of the alarm.

COMMENT:

This requirement is intended to apply to patient care areas or prison cells where occupants cannot escape without staff assistance; and where audible sounders will cause confusion and unnecessary panic.

- f) Where *persons with a disability* are employed, alerting devices shall have both audible and visual warning signals.

2.2 Alerting the Fire Service

2.2.1 Where an alarm system is required by Table 4.1 of Compliance Document C/AS1, there shall be available a means of communication with the Fire Service.

2.2.2 The three means of communication are:

- a) A direct connection (approved by the Fire Service) between the alarm system and the Fire Service, or

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- b) A "111" telephone call to the Fire Service from a continuously attended telephone with outside line access serving all *buildings* connected to the alarm system, and having the main *fire* alarm panel or mimic panel visible to the switchboard operator. A warning device shall be provided to alert the operator of a *fire* alarm in any *building* on the site (see Paragraph 2.2.3 for *purpose groups* SC or SD), or
- c) Where Paragraph 2.2.4 applies a telephone (or telephone system) is installed within the *building* and readily accessible at all times to enable "111" calls to be made to the Fire Service.

2.2.3 Direct connection to the Fire Service is the only acceptable means of communication for *purpose groups* SC and SD.

2.2.4 Telephone communication using the "111" call system (given in Paragraph 2.2.2 c)) may be used only where specifically permitted by "special application" 'f' in Table 4.1 of Compliance Document C/AS1.

2.2.5 Where direct connection to the Fire Service is either unavailable or impractical, alternative methods of summoning assistance shall be detailed in the plans and specifications.

COMMENT:

This makes allowance for remote situations where telephone line communication is impractical.

3.1 Domestic Smoke Alarms

3.1.1 Smoke alarms shall be installed in every *household unit* of *purpose groups* SH and SR where an automatic smoke detection and alarm system is not required by Table 4.1.

3.1.2 Appendix A and the other paragraphs of F7/AS1 do not apply to the installation of domestic smoke alarms specified under Paragraph 3.1 of F7/AS1. Paragraph 3.1 stands alone and only details the requirements for domestic smoke alarms within *household units* (where an automatic smoke detection and alarm system is not required by Table 4.1).

3.2 Type 1 Domestic Smoke Alarm System

3.2.1 This system is based around one or more domestic/residential type smoke alarms with integral alerting devices. Coverage shall be limited to selected parts of a single *firecell*, subject to the conditions below:

3.2.2 Smoke alarms shall be listed or approved by a recognised national authority as complying with at least one of: UL 217, CAN/ULC S531, AS 3786, BS 5446: Part 1.

3.2.3 The smoke alarms **may** be battery powered and are not required to be interconnected. In addition, they shall provide a hush facility having a minimum duration of 60 seconds.

COMMENT:

A hush facility is a button on the smoke alarm which silences the alarm for a limited time after activation. This allows the cause of a nuisance alarm to be cleared without removing the battery to silence the smoke alarm.

3.2.4 Smoke alarms shall have an alarm test facility readily accessible by the building occupants. This facility may be located on the smoke alarms.

3.3 Location of smoke alarms

3.3.1 Smoke alarms shall be located on the *escape routes* on all levels within the *household unit*. On levels containing the sleeping spaces, the smoke alarms shall be located either:

- a) In every sleeping space, or
- b) Within 3.0 m of every sleeping space door. In this case, the smoke alarms must be audible to sleeping occupants on the other side of the closed doors.

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COMMENT:

Smoke alarms also need to be located so that an alarm is given before the *escape route* from any bedroom becomes blocked by smoke. This includes those parts of *escape routes* on other floors. Although not required by the Acceptable Solution, the interconnection of individual smoke alarms should be considered if audibility is a problem.

Smoke alarms need to be heard by sleeping occupants. In this Acceptable Solution, audibility is assumed if the sound pressure level is 60 dB(A) within the sleeping area with all doors closed.

of components will eventually necessitate replacement of the smoke alarm units. Lack of maintenance will shorten this lifetime.

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3.3.2 Smoke alarms shall be installed on or near the ceiling in accordance with AS 1670.6 and the manufacturer’s instructions.

COMMENT:

AS 1670.6 gives instructions for the physical location of smoke alarms. Smoke alarms need to be situated on (or near) the ceiling for optimum detection of smoke in a *fire* situation.

Observance of the manufacturer’s instructions is important to ensure smoke alarms are physically mounted correctly. Such information is usually device-specific.

3.4 Maintenance

3.4.1 Recommended maintenance procedures are:

- a) In-situ annual cleaning with a vacuum cleaner (no disassembly of smoke alarm).
- b) Monthly testing by use of the smoke alarm’s “test” facility.

COMMENT:

These smoke alarms are exempt from the usual ongoing compliance schedule regime. A test facility is necessary to allow basic maintenance by the building owner/occupier.

The above are maintenance procedures that do not require any special technical knowledge, or disassembly of any part of the system.

The other maintenance recommendation is for the smoke alarms to be annually cleaned in-situ using a vacuum cleaner, with no disassembly of the smoke alarm. The purpose of this is to remove dirt and dust from both the outside of the smoke alarm (blocks smoke entry) and the smoke-sensing chamber inside (makes it either less sensitive, or over-sensitive).

It must be recognised that any smoke alarm installed will have a limited service life (approximately 10-15 years maximum) provided it is well maintained and cared for. Gradual deep-seated soiling and degradation

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