

Child Care Facilities Located Above Ground Floor

Approval level:
First issued:
Review date:
Version number:

Fire Safety
November 2003
August 2020
9

Guideline No. 23

Author: FRV Fire Safety Advisory Group

Sponsor: Technical Department

Authorised by: Director, Built Environment

1. PURPOSE

To provide guidance to child care providers and building designers on the risks associated with the evacuation of children:

- from the upper levels of buildings
- during an overnight stay where there is a higher demand and responsibility on carers

Note: this guideline provides additional information and guidance to child care providers and should be considered in conjunction with the requirements of the BCA, *the Children's Services Act 1996*, and the Children's Services (Child Care) Regulations 2009 and any other current/relevant requirements that may exist.

2. SCOPE

This guideline applies where children are cared for under a parent/carer agreement, or where they are subject to care provided by institutional arrangements. This includes kindergarten, child care services, centre-based long day care, occasional care, family day care, out of hours care, and other institutional care.

3. DEFINITIONS

The definitions contained within the Children's Services Act 1996, and the Children's Services (Child Care) Regulations 2020 shall apply to this guideline. Where the Children's Services (Child Care) Regulations 2002 are not applicable, the relevant national Standards will apply.

"Upper level" refers to any floor level or levels within a building that are situated above the ground floor level.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Where child care centres are proposed to be located on or above the second level of a mixed class building, or a standalone child care centre with a rise of three storeys or more, they should be provided, as a minimum, with the following means of fire protection:

- sprinkler protection in accordance with AS 2118.1;
- smoke detection and alarm system to AS 1670.1;
- smoke lobbies complying with D2.3 of the BCA;
- egress complying with D1.18: *Egress from early childhood centres* of the BCA; and
- where a child care facility is on a level that is shared with other types of occupancy, it is to be fire and smoke separated from the other occupants.

Where it is proposed to construct a child care centre of a maximum rise in storey of two, the building should comply with the BCA and be provided, as a minimum, with the following means of fire protection:

- photo-electric type smoke alarms that are hardwired to a 240 volt AC power supply, interconnected and be located in all sleeping areas and in all paths of travel between sleeping areas and exits to common corridors
- portable fire extinguishers being provided in areas to cover Class A fire risks. The extinguishers must be selected, located and distributed in accordance with sections 1, 2, 3, and 4 of AS 2444
- where there are special risks within the building, for example the electrical switch board etc., the appropriate extinguisher is to also be provided.

Staff/child ratio is to be sufficient to ensure that that all children can be evacuated in one group while staff maintains full accountability.

The evacuation strategy should identify the likely evacuation assembly areas both within the building and externally. Particular emphasis and forethought should be given when planning evacuation procedures to consider that children may be sleeping, or that there may be babies that require carrying.

Staff to be trained in the use of fire equipment, participate in regular fire drills and to be aware of the emergency procedures for the building.

AS 3745-2010 (*Planning for emergencies in facilities*) should form the basis for evacuation planning.

5. USE OF LIFTS

Where lifts are provided for vertical travel these should only be used for evacuation when designed in accordance with the BCA and FRV Fire Safety Guideline *GL-31 – Use of Lifts for Evacuation* and when a firefighter, or other authorised person, is present who can take control of lift override functions and the Australian Building Codes Board's Handbook, *Lifts Used during Evacuation*.

6. USE OF STAIRS

Carers should be aware that when descending a staircase, children will have difficulty coping with the steps as they have generally been designed for adult use.

7. PRIVATE DWELLINGS (AND SMALL COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES WITH A FLOOR AREA OF < 300m² AND UP TO TWO LEVELS)

Where care for children is provided in a private dwelling under a parent/carers agreement, FRV recommends, as a minimum, the following:

- where children are sleeping overnight, carers should have documented an evacuation plan which is practiced on a 3-6 monthly basis;
- installed smoke alarms should be photo-electric type, hardwired to a 240-volt AC power supply, interconnected and be located in all sleeping areas and in all paths of travel between sleeping areas and exits to common corridors; and
- under no circumstances are "dead-lock" type door fasteners to be activated while the dwelling is occupied.

8. DESIGN AND APPROVAL DOCUMENTATION

Prior to the commencement of child care arrangements, it is critical that building owners, managers and child care providers have the following:

- obtained an 'occupancy permit' relative to a change of occupancy or change of use of the premises, including any additional local government requirements (if applicable);
- a list of essential safety measures and appropriate evidence of 'essential safety measures' maintenance;
- records of current and ongoing staff training with regard to the use of installed fire safety equipment and evacuation procedures;
- displayed fire and evacuation orders;
- implemented any requirements from the Department of Human Services or the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing;
- displayed information relating to the facility's emergency control organisation, (i.e., warden system), where such a system is implemented; and
- comply with all requirements as described by relevant Acts, Regulations and Codes applicable that may exist.

9. REFERENCES

FRV/CFA/DHS	Emergency Procedures – Guidelines for Kindergartens & Child Care Centre
DHS	Fire & Emergency Response Procedures & Training Framework
DHS	Capital Development Guideline (http://www.capital.dhs.vic.gov.au/capdev)
AS 3745	Planning for emergencies within facilities
AS 2118	Automatic Fire Sprinkler Systems
AS 1670.1	Fire Detection, Warning, Control and Intercom Systems – System Design, Installation and Commissioning
FRV GL-31	Use of Lifts for Evacuation
SAMFS	South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service Built Environment Section Guideline 24 – Child Care Facilities in Multi-Story Buildings
ABCB's Handbook	Lifts Used during Evacuations

Note: *this is a controlled document and may only be modified by authorised personnel after review by FRV's Fire Safety Strategy, Policy and Reform Department.*