

Built Environment Advisory Bulletin No. 2026-01

Title

Withdrawal of Fire Safety Guideline GL-07: Single-Stair High-Rise Building Solutions

Purpose

This bulletin advises industry stakeholders of Fire Rescue Victoria's (FRV) decision to withdraw fire safety guideline GL-07, which outlined the Fire Rescue Commissioner's position on single-stair high-rise building designs. These designs frequently required statutory report and consent under Regulation 129 of the Building Regulations 2018.

Background

Since adoption of the first performance-based National Construction Code (NCC) in 1997, FRV delegates have reviewed nearly 150 multi-storey building proposals incorporating a single means of egress. Delegates have also assessed numerous subterranean designs for carparks, transport terminals, and public facilities—many of which required statutory report and consent.

Across design, construction, and occupancy phases, FRV delegates have conducted inspections to verify compliance with approved plans and conditions. These inspections have produced mixed outcomes, with many Regulation 187 submissions receiving conditional support or refusal.

Ongoing visits to completed buildings over the past 25 years have highlighted significant performance concerns regarding essential safety measures (ESMs). Collectively, these observations have diminished FRV's confidence in supporting single-stair building solutions and the associated guidance previously provided through GL-07.

Key Observations

Inadequate Performance-Based Design Approaches

Some performance solutions unfairly benchmark against compliant deemed-to-satisfy (DTS) designs without adequately addressing fire brigade operational needs. Designs often fail to consider risk location, firefighter access, tenability, and system reliability during emergency intervention.

Complex and Unreliable Smoke Hazard Management Systems

Proposed systems are often bespoke, difficult to commission, and prone to failure during testing. These systems frequently have shorter lifespans, higher maintenance costs, and limited industry understanding of their complex modes.

Increased Essential Safety Measures Burden

Performance solutions often impose increased essential safety measures (ESM) requirements compared to DTS designs. Building owners already experience difficulties meeting basic ESM obligations; additional complexity and financial burden heighten long-term compliance risks.

Evolving Risks in Subterranean Environments

Changes in vehicle technology, renewable energy systems, and automated mechanical storage have increased fire risk in basements. A single firefighter access point compromises suppression, containment, structural stability, and firewater runoff management.

Operational Risks in High-Rise Buildings

Single-stair configurations hinder firefighting by eliminating dedicated staging areas, reducing hydrant redundancy, and creating stairwell congestion during simultaneous evacuation and fire attack.

Withdrawal of GL-07

Due to ongoing concerns identified by FRV firefighters and delegates, GL-07 was formally withdrawn from publication in 2022.

NCC Clause A2G2 – Stakeholder Consultation

Despite the withdrawal of GL-07, Clause A2G2 of the National Construction Code requires designers to consult with the Fire Rescue Commissioner when preparing a performance-based design brief for any building proposing a single-stair solution.

The A2G2(4)(a) application form is available at: Building Industry – Applications for Fire Safety Reports and Consultation (frv.vic.gov.au).

For enquiries or to arrange a meeting, contact FRV BSR-Admin on (03) 9665 4478.

Authorised

Director, FRV Built Environment

23 March 2026