



External wall cladding – fire safety

Fire safety concerns have been raised on the use of certain aluminium composite panels for external wall cladding where that product had not been tested or demonstrated to meet the requirements of the Building Code of Australia (BCA) for that use. Such products can lead to a rapid vertical spread of a fire via the façade of the building which raises serious safety concerns.

Building legislation in Western Australia requires buildings to comply with the BCA which includes requirements on fire safety. In general the BCA Volume 1 contains provisions for external walls of buildings falling under type A and type B construction (typically medium rise and high rise commercial buildings including residential apartment buildings) to be non-combustible.

Building surveyors, builders, designers and owners must ensure that the fire resistance levels of external walls comply with the requirements of the BCA and any attachments to those walls must also meet the BCA Deemed-to-Satisfy provisions under clause 2.4 of the Specification C1.1, or alternatively are the subject of a performance based building solution that has been approved as meeting the Performance Requirements of the BCA.

It is important to note that while a product may have relevant certification for compliance with certain provisions of the BCA and be suitable to use in certain circumstances, that product may not have been tested or assessed for all relevant building standards. For example, an external wall cladding product may have compliance certification for building standards relating to weatherproofing and/or structural fixing requirements, but may not have been tested for relevant fire resistance requirements. Therefore it may not be suitable to use that product where an external wall is required to meet fire resistant safety requirements.

Building surveyors must be satisfied that products being specified as part of a building proposal comply with applicable building standards before signing a certificate of design compliance. Furthermore building surveyors should be satisfied products used in buildings comply before signing a certificate of construction or building compliance.

Builders are reminded of their obligations to ensure the building is completed in accordance with the plans and specifications specified in the applicable certificate of design compliance in relation to the building permit and the overarching requirement to comply with applicable building standards.

When using a building product you should ensure it is suitable for the specific circumstance and that it complies with all relevant building standards. If you have been involved in the design, certification or installation of aluminium composite external wall panels for a multi-storey building you are advised to check the compliance of the product.

Any non-compliant use of aluminium composite type panels should be reported to the Building Commission and the relevant permit authority in the first instance.

Disclaimer: The information contained in this bulletin is provided as general information only and should not be relied upon as legal advice or as an accurate statement of the relevant legislation provisions. If you are uncertain as to your legal obligations you should obtain independent legal advice.

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