



POSITION STATEMENT SUMMARY

Fire safety in early childhood centres

Position

Effective 12 September 2024, the following is a position of Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW):

FRNSW consider children within an 'early childhood centre', as defined by the *National Construction Code* (NCC), to be 'vulnerable occupants' due to their need for assisted evacuation in the event of fire.

Owing to a higher occupant risk profile than for other Class 9b buildings, FRNSW recommends that an early childhood centre be:

- protected by an automatic fire sprinkler system throughout the whole building.
- located no more than five storeys above ground level.
- provided with a smoke lobby in accordance with D3D7 of the NCC, if served by any lift/s.
- where situated within a building with a rise in storeys of two or more, the early childhood centre is to be served by fire-isolated exits (e.g. fire-isolated stairways).
- where the fire-isolated exits (e.g. fire-isolated stairways) serving the early childhood centre serve a rise in storeys of more than two, they are to be provided with either:
 - an automatic air pressurisation system in accordance with AS/NZS 1668.1:2015, or
 - open access ramps or balconies in accordance with D3D6 of the NCC.
- where a building is required to have not less than two fire compartments on each storey (in accordance with C3D6(2) of the NCC), it is recommended that appropriate smoke sealing also be provided to any doorways situated within this fire compartmentation.
- written emergency and evacuation procedures must be developed, maintained and implemented for the early childhood centre, and should:
 - identify a safe and secure assembly area away from the evacuated building including method of safe transfer of all children to that area (e.g. carriage of babies and infants and appropriate staff/child ratios)
 - be compatible with any existing emergency and evacuation procedures for the whole building, where the early childhood centre forms part of that building.

Note: FRNSW recommends the emergency plan complies with AS 3745-2010.

Note: These provisions, which may exceed minimum NCC requirements, are intended to ensure adequate life safety is provided commensurate to the higher risks associated with vulnerable occupants.

Reference must be made to the FRNSW website to ensure this position is current at the time of use, and this position has not been superseded or revoked.

Summary

This position statement rescinds the previously published FRNSW technical information sheet *Fire safety in early childhood centres*. The position has been simplified to identify recommended provisions not otherwise prescribed by legislation and/or the NCC and updated to reference NCC 2022 provisions.

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An early childhood centre is classified as a Class 9b building. FRNSW consider the occupant risk profile of babies, infants and preschool-age children to be comparable to residents of an aged care facility, persons in residential care, or patients in a health care building.

Note: The tragedy of the Quakers Hill nursing home fire of 2011 demonstrated the possible outcomes when life safety of vulnerable occupants is not duly protected.

This position outlines provisions that will assist to safeguard life safety of vulnerable occupants who require physical assistance and additional time to evacuate in the event of fire. Consideration is given to the physical abilities of occupants such as children descending flights of stairs, or staff who need to re-ascend stairs and re-enter to evacuate non-ambulant babies and infants.

This position statement has been authorised for release by Chief Superintendent Fire Safety, FRNSW.

Contact us

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