

# Building and Plumbing Newsflash 580

Streamlined fire protection licensing to commence from 1 May 2021

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## Purpose

To advise that important reforms that create a stronger and modernised fire protection licensing framework will come into effect from 1 May 2021, and to provide information about the transition to the new framework.

## Background

Providing high quality fire protection standards is crucial to ensuring the safety of building occupants. When fire protection equipment is incorrectly installed, maintained or tested, there can be tragic consequences.

A fire protection licence is needed if a person contracts for, supervises or personally carries out fire protection work in Queensland regardless of the value of the work. The [Queensland Building and Construction Commission](#) (QBCC) regulates the licensing framework for fire protection work.

In line with the 2017 Queensland Building Plan (QBP) recommendations, the Queensland Government committed to investigate the rationalisation of the existing fire protection licensing framework.

## What are the key changes?

The [Queensland Building and Construction Commission and Other Legislation \(Fire Protection Licensing\) Amendment Regulation 2020](#) (Amendment Regulation) introduces a new, streamlined fire protection licensing framework from 1 May 2021. The Amendment Regulation makes changes to the Queensland Building and Construction Commission Regulation 2018 (QBCC Regulation).

The new framework is industry-led and is based on extensive consultation across industry and government. The changes will help improve standards of fire protection work by ensuring licensees have the right competencies and skills. They will also reduce administrative burden by simplifying the number of fire protection licence classes and clarifying the work that licensees can perform.

### ***New streams of licences***

Under the new framework, QBCC licences will be offered in the following streams of fire protection work:

- passive
- special hazard fire systems
- water-based fire systems
- portables

- electrical.

Within relevant streams, individual licence classes will be available to design, certify, install and maintain, and inspect and test certain fire protection equipment.

### ***Licences to cover new aspects of work***

Additional occupational and contractor licence classes will be introduced to design water-based fire systems and fire alarm systems and to install and maintain some aspects of passive fire protection equipment. This will ensure people carrying out this work are appropriately skilled and accountable.

There are transitional arrangements to give those already working in these fields time to obtain the required licence.

### ***Changes to some existing scopes of work***

There are some changes to the Hydraulic Services Design licence scope of work to limit the design of fire sprinkler systems to domestic systems only, but existing licensees will not be impacted and can continue to perform their current scope of work.

The scope of work for the Fire Safety Professional licence will also be amended to restrict this licence to conducting inspections and reports on buildings against fire performance legislation. New entrants will need to hold a relevant accreditation (e.g. with the Australian Institute of Building Surveyors or Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors), which will inform the classes of building they can inspect and report on.

### ***Changes to qualifications***

The new fire protection licensing framework includes changes to the technical qualifications required to obtain a licence with a focus on maintaining or enhancing competencies and skills.

These changes will be adopted through the prescribed Technical Qualifications for Licensing document. A draft of this document will be published on the Department of Energy and Public Works' website prior to commencement of the new framework.

## **Transitional arrangements**

For most fire protection licensees, there will be little or no change to the work they are currently undertaking. However, changes will apply to some existing licensees, depending on the class of fire protection licence they currently hold. The new, streamlined licensing framework includes important transitional arrangements to support industry and provide certainty through these changes.

Most existing licensees can continue to do the same work and will automatically transfer to the new licence classes on 1 May 2021 with no further action required.

However, for certain licences some upskilling is required and existing licensees will need to show the QBCC they have completed an additional qualification or competencies by a specific date in order to keep the new class of licence. The periods for upskilling range from two to six years depending on the additional qualifications required.

Not all existing licensees will receive a new licence under the new framework. Changes to the QBCC Regulation provide for certain continuing licences that may continue to be held and renewed by existing licensees only.

There are also transitional arrangements for new licence or renewal applications that have been submitted to the QBCC but are still pending on 1 May 2021.

Further transitional arrangements apply to individuals who may still be studying for a current prescribed qualification on 1 May 2021 with the intent of applying for an existing fire protection licence

For newly regulated areas of work (e.g. certain design licences and some aspects of passive fire protection), in most instances, businesses and workers who were undertaking this work immediately before the changes commenced will have additional time to obtain the necessary qualifications (if required) and apply for the new licence.

From 1 May 2021, individuals can continue to work for an appropriately licensed contractor however they will need to apply for the new fire protection occupational licence prior to a specific date. For newly regulated passive fire protection licences (except for install and maintain fire doors and shutters), the application date is 1 May 2025. For newly regulated design licences, the application date is 1 May 2024. A temporary licensing exemption has also been provided for subcontractors.

For detailed information about the changes and how they apply to specific licences, please refer to the [new fire protection web page](#).

## How the changes will be implemented

The changes will be introduced through the Queensland Building and Construction Commission and Other Legislation (Fire Protection Licensing) Amendment Regulation 2020, which amends the Queensland Building and Construction Commission Regulation 2018.

The Amendment Regulation can be viewed at the [Queensland Legislation website](#).

## More information

For [general information](#) about the changes:

- visit the [Department of Energy and Public Works website](#).

For [specific information](#) about individual licences and impacts for existing licensees:

- visit the [Queensland Building and Construction Commission website](#).
- submit an [online enquiry to the QBCC](#).
- call the QBCC on 139 333.

## Contact us

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