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**Helping  
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fact: n. 1. an event or thing known to have  
applied. 2. a truth or principle  
applied or observed. 3. a piece  
information; get me all the facts of this case.

# FACT SHEET

## FIRE PROTECTION OCCUPATIONAL LICENSING FAQs

### What is BSA fire occupational licensing?

BSA fire occupational licensing means all practitioners carrying out or supervising fire protection work require a licence. Everybody doing this work requires this licence (or a nominee supervisor or contractor licence), regardless of their employment status. There are some exceptions for plumbers and electricians as detailed in this factsheet.

### When did BSA fire occupational licensing commence?

Fire Occupational Licensing was mandatory from 1 January 2011.

### Why was this introduced?

The 'Building Fire Safety in Queensland Budget Accommodation Report' was released in light of the Childers backpacker hostel fire and made recommendations to tighten up the fire protection industry. As a result of the findings the *Queensland Building Services Authority Act 1991* (QBSA Act) was amended to include installation, maintenance or certification of a fire protection system for a building (under an occupational licensing scheme).

Extensive consultation was carried out with the fire protection industry and other stakeholders prior to the Queensland Parliament passing the legislative changes.

### What is fire protection work?

Fire protection work is defined under the QBSA Act as any of the following for a building or part of a building:

- The installation, restoration, repair or maintenance of a fire protection system;
- The preparation of any certificate, statement or record —
  - (i) relating to the installation, restoration, repair or maintenance of a fire protection system; or
  - (ii) stating whether a fire protection system meets a standard, requirement or specification;
- The design of a fire protection system;
- The development, approval or certification of emergency evacuation procedures for a controlled evacuation during a fire emergency;
- The formulation or provision of alternative solutions relating to fire safety;
- The inspection or investigation of, and the provision of advice or a report about, compliance with the *Building Act 1975* or the Building Code of Australia relating to fire safety.

## What is a fire protection system?

A fire protection system is a system of fire protection comprising some or all of the following:

- Portable fire-fighting appliances, including, for example, wheeled fire extinguishers, fire hoses, fire blankets and portable fire extinguishers;
- Fire hydrants, with or without pumps;
- Fire hose reels, with or without pumps;
- A fire or smoke detection system, a heat or smoke alarm or another alarm system or emergency warning and communication system;
- A fire suppression system or fire sprinkler system, whether solid based, liquid based or gas based;
- Fire doors, fire shutters and fire damper assemblies; and
- Emergency lighting.

## Who will need a licence?

Any person (including an employee or someone working under a subcontract arrangement) who personally performs or supervises fire protection work will be required to hold an appropriate licence (occupational or contractor).

## What licence will have to be held?

One of the following licences must be held to be able to personally carry out or supervise fire protection work:

- A fire protection occupational licence issued under the QBSA Act that authorises the licensee to personally carry out the work;
- A contractor's licence issued under the QBSA Act that authorises the licensee to personally carry out the work; or
- A licence, registration or authorisation under an Act, other than the QBSA Act, that authorises the person to personally supervise or carry out the work (for example, an occupational licence issued under the *Plumbing and Drainage Act 2002*).

## Is anyone exempt from holding this licence?

Yes. Persons exempt from the requirement to hold a fire protection occupational licence are apprentices, trainees and students.

What defines an Apprentice, Trainee & Student?

- An apprentice is a person undertaking employment based training with a signed apprenticeship contract as prescribed in the Vocational Education, Training and Employment Act 2000.
- A trainee is a person undertaking employment based training with a signed traineeship contract as prescribed in the Vocational Education, Training and Employment Act 2000.
- A student is a person who carries out fire protection work as part of training under the supervision of teaching staff at a university, college, school or RTO.

## Does the holder of a current BSA contractor or nominee supervisor licence have to apply for the occupational licence too?

No. If the work being performed falls within the scope of works of the current licence held an occupational licence is not required.

However if work to be performed falls outside of the scope of work of the current licence, an occupational licence will be required where the person is going to work as an employee or subcontractor to an appropriately licensed contractor.

Where the person wants to contract with builders or consumers, the normal application process will apply and the applicant will have to apply to hold the appropriate contractor licence, meeting all the licensing requirements.

## Examples

| Work Being Carried Out  | Type of Licence Required  |
|---|---|
| Contractor enters into a contract with the public to certify reticulated water based sprinkler and suppression systems.                               | Contractor is required to hold a licence in Sprinkler and Suppression Systems (Reticulated Water Based) – Certify.  |
| Employee of a contractor, who holds a licence in Special Hazards Suppression Systems, certifies chemical and foam special hazard suppression systems. | Occupational licence in Special Hazards Suppression Systems – Certify (restricted to chemical and foam special hazard systems) is required by the employee.                       |
| Contractor holds a licence in Fire Detection, Alarm, and Warning Systems and contracts to a builder to carry out fire fighting appliances work.       | Contractor is required to hold a contractor licence in both Fire Detection, Alarm, and Warning Systems and Portable Fire Equipment and Hose Reels (Down Stream of Stop Cock only) |

### Can the holder of a fire protection occupational licence contract to homeowners and builders?

No. This licence allows the person to work as an employee or subcontractor to a licensed contractor. To contract to homeowners or builders the person will have to apply for the required contractor licence and meet the technical, financial and managerial requirements.

### Can a licensed builder employ a person holding a fire protection occupational licence?

Yes, he may *employ* (not contract with) a person holding a fire protection occupational licence and then contract to carry out fire protection work permitted under the employees respective fire licence.

### Can a licensed builder carry out any fire protection work?

No. A licensed builder is not able to personally perform any fire protection work. i.e. any work that falls under the scope of work of a fire protection licence. If the builder also holds a fire protection licence, then he is able to carry out the fire protection work permitted under the respective fire licence.

A licensed builder is able to engage appropriately licensed fire practitioners, as subcontractors, to perform fire protection work.

A licensed builder is able to construct fire separating walls.

### Can a person holding a 'certify' fire class of licence design fire protection systems?

No, a person holding a 'certify' fire class of licence is not permitted to design fire protection systems as the qualification for this licence does not include design competencies. Persons holding the BSA 'Install & Maintain' licence class are able to design the fire protection system they are installing. They are not able to design for others.

Designs may also be carried out by Registered Professional Engineers in Queensland.

### I hold a fire safety professional licence. Can I design or install fire protection systems?

A fire safety professional can *certify* the design or installation of a fire protection system. They are not able to design fire protection systems and are not able to install or maintain a fire protection system.

### Can a building designer (holding a BSA design licence in low, medium or open) design fire services in a building?

Where those items are as per the deemed to satisfy provisions of the BCA, they may be included on the plans by the designer. Other items will need to be designed by the appropriate practitioner e.g. A BSA hydraulic services designer licensee or a RPEQ.

### Can a carpenter or joiner install and repair fire doors and shutters?

Yes, however a licence in Passive Fire Protection - Fire Doors & Shutters (Certify) is required for the certification as a carpenter or joiner cannot certify. A carpenter or joiner cannot inspect and test either unless they hold the Passive Fire Protection - Fire Doors and Shutters (Inspect and Test) licence.

## **Can a licensed builder install fire doors and shutters?**

If the licensed builder holds a trade qualification in carpentry, they can install fire doors and shutters. They are not able to install fire doors and shutters if they do not hold a carpentry trade qualification. They are not able to certify or inspect and test fire doors unless they hold the Passive fire protection - fire doors and shutters licence.

## **What work can locksmiths carry out on fire doors without a BSA licence?**

Work of the type usually performed by a locksmith is exempt from the definition of building work. No licence is required for locksmith work involving installation and repairs to opening hardware, locks, hinges, closers, stops, door furniture, seals, thresholds, viewers, etc, on doors.

## **I have an appropriate occupational plumbing or sprinkler fitting licence with the Plumbing Industry Council (PIC), am I able to install pump-sets, sprinkler systems, hydrants and hose reels for my employer?**

Yes, you are able to install and maintain (including inspect and test) those items permitted under your PIC licence as an employee, without holding the BSA fire occupational licence. This means you are also able to prepare an installer's statement upon installation. As an employee, you are not able to certify that work unless you hold the BSA fire occupational licence in the certify class. You are not able to contract with a builder or consumer without a BSA contractor's licence.

An installers statement is a statement about the installation of a fire protection system.

## **I am a licensed Electrical Mechanic. Am I able to install emergency lighting and fire detection, alarm and warning systems?**

Yes, you are able to install and maintain (including inspect and test) those items as an employee, without holding the BSA fire occupational licence. This means you are also able to prepare an installer's statement upon installation. As an employee, you cannot certify that work unless you hold a BSA fire occupational licence in the certify class.

An installers statement is a statement about the installation of a fire protection system.

## **I have a fire protection contracting company. My company is licensed in some fire classes but not all. One of my employees holds a fire occupational licence in emergency lighting and my company does not. Can I contract for emergency lighting work?**

No, the company cannot contract for work for which it does not hold the appropriate BSA contractor licence.

## **Is a fire licence required for an air-conditioning contractor to install fire dampers during the installation of a ducted air-conditioning system?**

No. Fire dampers are part of the air-conditioning system and therefore can be installed by the air-conditioning contractor. The contractor can also carry out passive fire protection work including fire rated penetrations of the air-conditioning system they install but cannot certify this work. Certification for the damper installation can only be carried out by a holder of a Passive Fire Protection - Fire Doors & Shutters (Certify) licence. Certification for penetration and joint sealing can only be carried out by a holder of a Passive Fire Protection - fire collars, penetration and joint sealing (Certify) licence.

## **Is a BSA licence required to 'Certify' or 'Inspect & Test' stairwell pressurisation systems?**

Yes, a BSA licence in Fire Safety Professional or Refrigeration, Air-conditioning and Mechanical Services including unlimited (or limited) design is required. If the work involves professional engineering services under the Professional Engineers Act 2002, then they will need to be a registered engineer (RPEQ).

## **Can a building certifier approve the building plans for a building which includes fire services?**

Yes, a valid certification licence allows the holder to perform this work.

## **Can a building certifier certify the installed fire services for a building that is the subject of a Building Development approval ?**

Yes, a valid certification licence allows the holder to perform this work.

## **Can a building certifier certify the fire services for a building that is *not* the subject of a Building Development Approval?**

No, in this case he is not able to certify the fire services without holding the relevant fire licence (certify class).

## **Can a building certifier carry out an audit or inspection or provide advice on fire services for a completed building?**

No, in this case he is not able to do this work without holding a relevant fire licence.

## **Can a building certifier provide pre-construction preliminary advice on fire services where not engaged as a building certifier?**

No, in this case he is not able to do this work without holding relevant fire licence.

## **Who can sign a Form 15 or 16?**

A form 15 or 16 can be signed by a person deemed to be competent by the building certifier. The decision on whether to accept a person as competent rests with the building certifier. BSA does not regulate the legislation governing Forms 15 and 16. This is regulated by the Department of Local Government and Planning, Building Codes Queensland division. For more advice on this matter, BCQ can be contacted on (07) 3239 6369.

## **Who needs an emergency procedures licence?**

- A BSA emergency procedures licence is required by practitioners who are developing emergency evacuation procedures for the controlled evacuation of buildings, structures and workplaces during a fire emergency.
- A Fire Safety Advisor (FSA) is able to develop these procedures for the building where they are acting as FSA without holding the BSA emergency procedures licence. They are not able to develop them for other buildings.
- A building owner, building manager or facilities manager is able to develop these procedures for their own building without holding the BSA emergency procedures licence. They are not able to develop them for other buildings.

## **I am a RPEQ. Do I need a BSA licence as well?**

Registered Professional Engineers in Queensland do not need a BSA licence to carry out work under their professional engineering practice. This generally means a RPEQ is able to design and certify (incl. inspect and test) fire protection systems but are not able to install or maintain them. To install or maintain fire protection systems, the appropriate BSA licence is required.

## **Do I need a BSA licence as a diesel fitter working on fire pumps?**

No, diesel fitters do not require a BSA licence to install or maintain the diesel engines forming part of the fire pump system.

## **Who can carry out work on the respective electrical and mechanical components of a fire suppression system?**

*Electrical components* – A BSA licensee holding the fire detection, alarm and warning systems licence can isolate the mechanical components of the fire suppression system to carry out work on the electrical components of the fire suppression system - extra low voltage only. A licensed electrical mechanic can also perform this work.

*Mechanical components* - A BSA licensee holding the special hazard suppression systems licence can isolate the electrical components of the fire suppression system to carry out work on the mechanical components of the fire suppression system.

## **Can a practitioner with a BSA fire detection, alarm and warning systems licence in the install or maintain licence class disconnect and reconnect the gas cylinder of a special hazards suppression system?**

Yes, he is able to remove and replace stored pressure cylinders of a gas suppression system.

## **Can a practitioner with a sprinkler and suppression systems (reticulated water based) licence carry out work on reticulated water mist systems?**

Yes, he is also able to carry out work on water mist systems.

## **Can a BSA or PIC licensed plumber install fire collars?**

Yes, they are able to install cast-in or retrofit fire collars to plumbing services.

## **Can a drywall plasterer install fire-rated mastic as part of the construction of a fire-rated wall or ceiling system?**

A BSA licensed drywall plasterer can “construct and install plasterboard non-load bearing, fire-rated walls and ceilings”. If the fire-rated wall or ceiling (tested) system requires fire-rated mastic around the perimeter or in control/expansion joints (all as per the “tested” system), the BSA licensed drywall plasterer is able to install these. He can also install sheeting to load bearing fire-rated walls. A BSA licensed drywall plasterer can install fire-rated access panels. A BSA licensed drywall plasterer is not able to perform any other fire-rated penetration or joint sealing work unless he holds a BSA licence in Passive fire protection - fire collars, penetrations and joint sealing.

## **What are the approval requirements when repairing damaged fire-rated walls or ceilings?**

All repairs must be carried out by a BSA licensed contractor. Any repairs to fire-rated walls or ceilings (irrespective of their age) will need to be assessed and approved under a building development approval with all work complying with current standards. Contact your Building Certifier for advice.

## **As a building owner, can I carry out fire protection work myself?**

While a building owner does not require a BSA licence to personally perform fire protection work with a value less than \$1,100, under the *Building Fire Safety Regulation 2008*, fire protection work performed to comply with QDC MP6.1, must be performed by a person holding an appropriate BSA licence. Similarly, if an occupational licence issued by the Plumbing Industry Council or Electrical Safety Office is required to carry out the work (e.g. fire protection work that comprises plumbing or electrical work), the owner must hold the relevant occupational licence.

## **I work on fire detection, alarm and warning systems and hold an appropriate BSA licence or an appropriate electrical licence. Do I also need to hold Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) cabling registration?**

If the work you are carrying out connects, or has the ability to connect, to a telecommunications network then you are required to be an ACMA registered cabler. You must hold the ACMA cabling registration as well as the BSA or electrical licence. For more information on cabling registration please visit the ACMA website [www.acma.gov.au/WEB/STANDARD/pc=PC\\_300153](http://www.acma.gov.au/WEB/STANDARD/pc=PC_300153) or phone 1300 850 115.

## **What class of licence is required to carry out annual surveys under AS1851?**

These surveys must be certified ('signed off') by a BSA licensee holding the certify category of licence. They can be based upon evidence obtained in the field by other BSA licensed fire practitioners holding the same class of licence in any category (I&M or I&T). Supplementary evidence may also be obtained from the building owner or occupier.

## **EXTINGUISHING AGENT HANDLING LICENCE**

Under Federal Government legislation, systems and extinguishers using ozone depleting substances and synthetic greenhouse gases are permitted. However they must be serviced and maintained by technicians who hold an Extinguishing Agent Handling Licence (EAHL).

Before working on any gaseous fire suppression system or portable fire extinguisher, technicians should check they hold an appropriate EAHL licence.

For more information please contact: Executive Officer - Ozone Protection, Fire Protection Industry (ODS & SGG) Board, T: 03 9890 1544, E: [ozone@fpaa.com.au](mailto:ozone@fpaa.com.au)

Fact sheet: [www.fpaa.com.au/licencing/?licencing=factsheets&register=ozone](http://www.fpaa.com.au/licencing/?licencing=factsheets&register=ozone)

## **How to obtain a fire occupational licence**

To apply for a fire occupational licence you must provide the following:

- A completed copy of the application form
- Payment of the application fee
- Proof of identity
- Meet the relevant technical requirement

## **How can I change my fire occupational licence to a nominee supervisor or contractor licence?**

To apply for a nominee supervisor or contractor licence you must provide the following:

- A completed Individual Licence Application Form
- Payment of the application fee
- A copy of the approved managerial qualification
- Experience and references

## **Further information**

For further information about fire occupational licensing and any other licence-related issue, contact BSA on 1300 BSA BSA or visit [www.bsa.qld.gov.au](http://www.bsa.qld.gov.au).