



2 April 2020

The Hon. Brad Hazzard MP
Minister for Health and Medical Research
GPO Box 5341
Sydney NSW 2001

Dear Minister,

RE: Impact of Coronavirus on fire safety

Fire Protection Association Australia (FPA Australia) is the national peak body for fire safety, providing information, services and education to the fire protection industry, governments and the community.

We are a not-for-profit organisation representing over 1,750 organisations and 30,000 individuals nationally across the fire protection sector.

Over the last couple of weeks we have been inundated with calls from our members as the coronavirus pandemic has escalated and greater restrictions have been placed on the community.

FPA Australia believes that essential fire safety maintenance is an essential service pursuant to Part 1 Section 4 (1)(c) and (l) of the Essential Services Act 1988 No 41. The relevant clauses are highlighted in bold below;

4 Essential Services

- (1) *For the purposes of this Act, a service is an essential service if it consists of any of the following:*
- (a) *the production, supply or distribution of any form of energy, power or fuel or of energy, power or fuel resources,*
 - (b) *the public transportation of persons or the transportation of freight (including the provision of rail infrastructure for those purposes),*
 - (c) ***the provision of fire-fighting services,***
 - (d) *the provision of public health services (including hospital or medical services),*
 - (e) *the provision of ambulance services,*
 - (f) *the production, supply or distribution of pharmaceutical products,*
 - (g) *the provision of garbage, sanitary cleaning or sewerage services,*
 - (h) *the supply or distribution of water,*
 - (i) *the conduct of a welfare institution,*
 - (j) *the conduct of a prison,*
 - (k) *a service declared to be an essential service under subsection (2),*
 - (l) ***a service comprising the supply of goods or services necessary for providing any service referred to in paragraphs (a)–(k).***

Fire-fighting activities rely directly upon the essential fire safety maintenance services of the the equipment and life safety features.

We therefore seek your confirmation and direction on:

- Whether essential fire safety maintenance is an essential service and organisations that provide this service are deemed an essential business; and
- How do business's deliver these services with restricted access and potential further shutdowns.

Essential fire safety maintenance includes all work (including routine service activities and repairs) to ensure the reliability, integrity, functionality and performance of essential fire safety systems, equipment and life safety features in a building or structure that have been installed principally for the protection of life or property.

This includes but not limited to sprinkler and fire hydrant systems, fire detection and alarm systems, emergency lighting and exit signs, emergency training, exits and paths of travel, smoke hazard management of mechanical handling systems, fire hose reels, fire extinguishers, passive fire protection systems and other related systems and equipment.

This sometimes involves accessing areas where people are self-isolating, being treated, or where otherwise practitioners may potentially be exposed to individuals affect by COVID-19, particularly in the residential and healthcare sectors.

Based on previous statements by the Federal Government and others, we have assumed that functions covered by construction are to continue. This would include carrying out design, manufacture, installation, commissioning and certification of relevant fire safety systems. Please advise if this is not the case.

The industry is currently trying to strike a balance between ensuring community safety by maintaining systems and protecting the occupational health and welfare of our practitioners.

This is partly achieved through the use of safety equipment (such as masks, gloves, and hand sanitiser), but these resources are being stretched.

We look forward to your prompt response so we can provide some much needed guidance and confidence to our industry on how they undertake their work activities during this time.

Yours sincerely,



Nathan Semos
Chief Technical Officer
Fire Protection Association Australia