

Public Release – Position Paper 10a REV001.2020 – November 2020

The Industry Association of Building and Property Inspectors in WA Inc – Inspect WA is pleased to announce the release of its Position Paper on RCD's, Smoke Alarms and Electrical Circuits

Background

There were a number of key issues that contributed to the release of this Position Paper:

1. There is a variety of legislative and regulatory requirements which related to Smoke Alarms and Residual Current Devices (RCD's) which need to be considered when a property is being sold. As a consequence these items are often referred to in Pre Purchase Building Inspections Reports. Further there are some building inspectors who are purporting to test power points, lights, circuits, smoke alarms and RCD's and record the results in Pre-Purchase Building Inspection reports.
2. There is inconsistency and confusion within the broader industry about what Building Inspectors can and cannot do in relation to this issue.
3. The Building Code of Australia, which all Building Inspector Members of Inspect WA are conversant, identifies the need for and required location of Smoke Alarms. Hence, members are competent to comment on this item only.
4. Apart from the physical number of Smoke Alarms, there is a host of additional requirements including the need for the Smoke Alarms to generally be hardwired (some exemptions apply), fully operational, meet minimum Australian Standards, be in "service" and in some cases be interconnected where more than one alarm is required.
5. Prior to 1 January 2019 residential properties required to have a minimum of 2 RCD's protecting all power and lights in the residential property. Depending on the requirements of the individual property, there may have been a requirement for more than two RCD's. From 1 January 2019, all final electrical circuits require RCD's so it is likely that residential properties constructed after this date will require more than 2 RCD's, the final number being determined by the requirements of the property.
6. Persons who carry out any electrical work commit an offence unless the carrying out of that work by that person is authorised by a licence or permit. It is accepted that "testing" and electrical appliance (Smoke Alarms or RCD's) is defined as electrical work. Providing any assessment as to whether or not the electrical appliance is compliant or not would also be considered electrical work.
7. Unless a Building Inspector is a Licenced Electrical Contractor they are not permitted to undertake an assessment of electrical work. Non-Licenced (Electrical) Building inspectors are permitted to test and record non-technical operational observations only.
8. Checking the install / replacement date of smoke alarm involves opening the device. Opening the device can be problematic as some installations are inadequately fixed, and or the device itself could be faulty or damaged after opening / handling. This potentially could hold the inspector liable for repairs.
9. Where the inspector wishes to check the install / replacement date, InspectWA recommends first gaining permission from the homeowner, outlining all care taken but no responsibility accepted should issues arise from checking the install / replacement date.

The Associations position is: Carrying out an assessment of an electrical installation - other than for operational checks - is not allowed in Western Australia unless authorised by a licence or permit

Smoke Alarms

1. Under the regulatory environment which exists in WA, Building Inspectors can:
 - a. Note the number of Smoke alarms in a residential property and whether those Smoke Alarms are located in accordance with the BCA
 - b. Note whether or not those alarms appear to be hardwired or not.
 - c. Confirm non-technical operation. i.e. push the “test” button.
 - d. Check the install / replacement date noted.
2. Building Inspectors are not permitted to
 - a. Attest to the Smoke Alarms being Compliant or not.

Residual Current Devices

3. Under the regulatory environment which exists in WA, Building Inspectors can:
 - a. Note the number of RCD’s in a residential property.
 - b. Confirm non-technical operation. i.e. push the “test” button.
4. Building Inspectors are not permitted to
 - a. Attest to the RCD’s or the number of RCD’s being Compliant or not.

Circuit and Earth Testing

5. Building Inspectors are not permitted to
 - a. Test Circuits
 - b. Test Earth Leakage

Power points, lights, electrical equipment and appliances.

6. Under the regulatory environment which exists in WA, Building Inspectors can:
 - a. Complete a non-technical assessment – i.e. only confirm operation or state “not operating”:

The Association requires its Building Inspector Members to abide by the above position.

Committee
Inspect WA
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