New amendments improve sprinkler installation process in aged care homes

The NSW Government has made the implementation of fire sprinkler safety systems in aged care facilities simpler and more effective with a set of amendments to the life-protecting regulations.

The changes, which come on the back of tough laws requiring all NSW nursing homes to have fire sprinkler systems installed, have the tick of safety approval from Fire and Rescue NSW.

All residential living quarters must still be fire sprinkler protected, but operators will now have more flexibility to meet high fire safety standards in some other areas of their facilities.

Almost half of the 885 Commonwealth-accredited aged care facilities registered with the NSW Government are already fully fitted with fire sprinkler systems. These amendments will assist the remaining facilities to meet installation deadlines.

“We take fire safety very seriously, that’s why we’ve taken further action to ensure that aged care facilities are able to implement our new measures effectively,” Department of Planning & Infrastructure Deputy Director General Jill Reich said.

“Provided that non-residential areas, such as offices, that are situated under a sprinkler-protected resident area have in place suitable fire and smoke barriers and smoke detection, operators have the option of not installing further fire sprinklers in them.

“Non-residential areas that are below a resident area that is assessed as high fire hazard, for example car parks, will always require sprinklers.

“Importantly, Fire and Rescue NSW support these changes, which are subject to specific and strict conditions and which maintain overall fire safety.”

Fire and Rescue NSW Commissioner Greg Mullins confirmed the amendments would not compromise safety.

“Residents and employees of aged care facilities can be confident that these amendments do not reduce protection,” Commissioner Mullins said.

The regulatory amendments also remove the requirement that the cost of fire protection measures in individual facilities be published on the Department of Planning and Infrastructure’s website.

“The last thing the department, operators or residents want is cost escalation by suppliers who may use this data to set their prices,” Ms Reich said.
“Transparency and safety will not be compromised as facilities will still be required to provide the cost of sprinkler installation to the independent committee overseeing the installation of sprinklers in aged care homes.”

For more information on these amendments go to http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/buildinginnsw/safetycampaigns/firesafetyinagedcarefacilities.aspx

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