

## **Victorian Building Commission Encourages Professional Inspection of Bushfire Shelters**

19 November 09

**The Victorian Building Commission is encouraging any individual who has installed a private bushfire shelter or bunker prior to 11 November 2009, to engage a Registered Fire Safety Engineer to inspect the shelter/bunker and to ensure that the shelter/bunker is suitable and fit for the purpose of providing refuge in the event of a bushfire.**

In recent press releases from the ACCC, the Victorian Building Commission and interim findings from the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, concern has been raised as to the level of tenability of some bunkers in the absence of a national standard and the claims by some bunker manufacturers which have misled consumers to think that bunkers comply with and are approved to an Australian Standard, where in fact no standard exists.

An announcement was made on 11 November 09 by the Planning Minister for Victoria that all private bushfire shelters or bunkers sold and constructed in the State of Victoria will now need a Building Permit and potentially a Planning Permit as well, under new interim regulations.

Private bushfire shelters and bunkers built from 11 November 2009 onwards must now comply with the performance requirements regarding design and construction as set out in the Interim Regulations. The performance requirements relate to things such as accessing and exiting the shelter and the facilities to be provided, including fire safety measures. The Interim Regulations can be downloaded from the Victorian Building Commission website at [www.buildingcommission.com.au](http://www.buildingcommission.com.au).

The Australian Building Codes Board (ABCB) will begin work immediately on a national standard for the design and construction of private bushfire shelters and bunkers for personal use.

FPA Australia strongly recommends that anyone currently planning to build or install one, consults a Fire Safety Engineer. A listing of FPA Australia members registered with the Building Practitioners Board and who are willing to provide advice regarding private bushfire shelters is available on the FPA Australia website – [www.fpaa.com.au](http://www.fpaa.com.au).

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