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Vigilance needed after Sydney nursing home fire

The tragic events of a fire at a Sydney nursing home on the morning of Friday, November 18 has emphasised the importance of early warning and adequate fire protection systems and maintenance, according to the country's peak fire protection body, Fire Protection Association Australia (FPA Australia).

At the time of writing, eight people had been confirmed dead and over 20 injured after a blaze at the Quakers Hill Nursing Home in Sydney's northwest.

Speaking from the Fire Australia 2011 Conference and Exhibition in Adelaide, FPA Australia CEO, Scott Williams, said the incident served as a reminder that residents of buildings and building owners need to be vigilant when it came to fire protection.

"The events of this morning can only be described as tragic and our hearts go out to the family and friends of everyone who has been affected," Williams said.

"Unfortunately fire does not hold any prejudices and events like this highlight the importance of residents and owners of all buildings to be vigilant with their plans and procedures when it comes to fire protection.

"This type of facility should have the highest level of protection to both alert occupants and the emergency services to danger, and suppress or limit the spread of smoke, fire and damage caused.

"The Building Code of Australia establishes minimum requirements for this class of building for all new construction.

"Some states have also included retrospective fire protection requirements for existing buildings of this use recognising the risks inherent due to the mobility of the occupants.

"FPA Australia encourages the installation of appropriate fire safety measures to address the risk posed by the building type, age and use," Williams said.

Williams said the incident highlighted the importance of well-rehearsed and well planned emergency evacuation procedures.

FPA Australia organised and held conferences such as Fire Australia 2011, which this year focused on Education and Maintenance, to ensure experts in the industry remained educated on fire protection.

"The proper design, installation, commissioning and maintenance of fire protection equipment is critically important to protect life, property and the environment."

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The Fire Protection Association Australia is the country's peak body for fire safety, providing information, services and training to the fire protection industry and broader community. For more information, please see www.fpa.com.au or contact FPA Australia – (03) 9890 1544.