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New rules for fire retardant materials in new buildings - Get yourself up to speed with the new requirements

From April this year the NZ Building Code has adopted a new set of rules around the way products are tested for fire safety. Buildings have been divided into seven risk groups, each with its own acceptable solution to best manage the risk that the building has if it caught on fire. There are certain buildings that are outside the scope of the Acceptable Solutions but an ongoing understanding of the changes going forward is crucial to all in the building industry. **The new changes came into effect in April 2013 after a year's grace period.**

What's changed?

Until April this year, the NZ Building Code compliance documents used Early Fire Hazard indices based on an Australian fire test method AS 1530 Part 3, however this test did not adequately evaluate actual fire performance where initial burning is difficult to establish but the material has a high heat content. Apparently stable products, once ignited posed significant risk in an actual fire.

The Internal Surface Finishes performance standard in the NZBC is now based on a combination of both small scale and large scale testing using the ISO 5660 or ISO 9705 fire test. There are now seven risk groups for buildings and detailed information can be found at www.dbh.govt.nz/c-as1-as7-info-022012 and further information at www.dbh.govt.nz/protection-from-fire.

Products used in all new buildings are now required to have group numbers which demonstrate how well the inside surface finish resists the spread of fire. Group numbers range from 1 to 4, 1 being the best and 4 being a product that fuels a fire. Existing buildings which are being altered or their use changed must meet the new fire design code.

There are a number of implications on suppliers of products in the roofing industry. For example underlays (requiring a flammability index), steel and natural lighting products (which require testing and certification to the appropriate group).

Ampelite NZ's SL Group 3 Fire Retardant and SL-2 Group 2 Fire Retardant range comply with the new changes. Our SL-2 product has achieved a Group 2 rating under the required testing, further details on these products can be viewed at our web site on www.ampelite.co.nz or you can talk to one of our sales team on 0800 AMPELITE.

www.ampelite.co.nz

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