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Fresh Thinking

Fresh Insight

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The Precise Air group of companies PreciseAir™ PreciseFire™ AirGene™

From the 13th of February 2026, Australian Standard 1851: Routine Service of Fire Protection Systems and Equipment standard will be legislated in NSW.

This update will have significant impacts on HVAC systems that are integrated with fire safety measures. In this 'Fresh Insight', we outline implications for operating and servicing buildings, including the new requirements for fans operating in fire mode.

AS1851 Legislation Changes

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

AS1851 was revised back in 2012 and is still the current version of the Routine Service of Fire Protection Systems and Equipment.

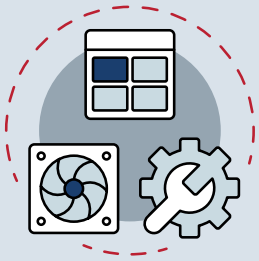
The 2012 standard aims at improving fire safety system reliability while reducing unnecessary maintenance costs. It lays out requirements for maintenance schedules, responsibilities for fire safety compliance, and includes risk based approaches, ensuring maintenance schedules align with fire safety needs and specific building tasks.

AS1851 has always been best practice in NSW as it was not specified under any legislation. In December 2022 the NSW Government amended and revised the Environmental Planning and Assessment (Development Certification and Fire Safety) Regulation 2021 which included the introduction of AS1851. These amendments become mandatory on 13th of February 2026.

Adopting AS1851 in NSW will:

- Improve fire safety by standardising maintenance practices to reduce fire risks and system failures
- Give increased operational efficiency through clearly laid out requirements to reduce disputes over compliance interpretation
- Provide consistency across jurisdictions as AS1851 is already legislated in Queensland, Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia.

KEY CHANGES AND IMPLICATIONS



1. Servicing Time frames

The legislation mandates stricter servicing schedules and additional testing requirements:

- **Quarterly Fire Mode Testing for Fans:** Any fans that are required to operate in fire mode (e.g., smoke exhaust fans, stair pressurisation fans) must now be tested in fire mode every quarter. This testing typically involves collaboration between the fire technician and the HVAC technician.
- **Extended Service Times:** Quarterly testing may extend the time that fire and HVAC technicians need to remain on-site compared to monthly routine checks.

2. Cost Implications

Compliance with the new legislation may impact your budget in several ways:

- **Additional Charges:** The fire technician's extended time on-site for fire mode testing and the HVAC technician's involvement may incur extra charges. These services may not be included in the standard contract with your fire services provider.
- **Coordination Costs:** Facility managers must arrange for both the fire contractor and HVAC technician to be present, which could involve additional coordination fees if using separate providers.
- **Upgrades to Equipment:** Systems that do not meet fire mode requirements may require retrofitting or upgrades to achieve compliance.
- **Potential After Hours Costs:** Any testing that may not be able to be undertaken during normal business hours may now need to be undertaken after hours, which will incur additional costs.

KEY CHANGES AND IMPLICATIONS
(CONTINUED)

3. Operational Disruptions

The quarterly fire mode testing of fans may also impact business operations:

- **System Shutdowns:** During fire mode testing, HVAC systems may temporarily shut down or operate in fire mode, affecting indoor comfort and generating noise.
- **Scheduling Challenges:** Coordination between your fire contractor and HVAC technician may require careful planning to minimise disruptions during peak business hours.

4. Owner's Requirements Regarding Documentation and Baseline Data

With baseline data:

- Owners are required to provide and maintain baseline data for the fire protection systems. Baseline data refers to the original performance data, design parameters, and specifications of the fire protection systems and equipment.
- It serves as a reference point for maintenance, testing, and comparison to ensure the systems are operating correctly.

Baseline data unavailable

If baseline data is unavailable (e.g., due to loss or unavailability of original documentation), AS 1851 provides guidance:

a. Establish New Baseline Data: Owners must arrange for new baseline data to be created. This involves conducting a comprehensive assessment of the existing systems and equipment.

b. Engage Competent Persons: Owners should employ qualified fire safety professionals or consultants to review, inspect, and test the systems. These professionals can determine the current

KEY CHANGES AND IMPLICATIONS (CONTINUED)

performance standards and establish new baseline data based on industry best practices and applicable codes.

c. Documentation of Assumptions: Any assumptions made in creating the new baseline data should be documented, justified, and retained as part of the maintenance records.

Responsibility of Maintenance Providers

Under AS 1851, maintenance companies play a vital role in assisting building owners with baseline data:

a. Identify Missing Data: Maintenance companies are not responsible for creating baseline data but must notify the owner if baseline data is incomplete or missing.

b. Assist in Creating New Data: Maintenance companies may assist building owners and their nominated engineers, consultants or similar professionals in establishing new baseline data by:

- Performing additional non-maintenance inspections and functional tests under instruction.
- Documenting system performance for design professionals to review.
- Performing adjustments or repairs as advised or instructed.

c. Provide Expertise:

- Maintenance providers should use their expertise to verify the condition and performance of the systems.
- They must document all findings and ensure they are aligned with the owner's legal and regulatory obligations.

AS1851 Legislation Changes

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

To prepare for these changes, Facility Managers should understand their roles and responsibilities:

1. Responsibility for Coordination

Facility managers are responsible for arranging the fire contractor (if not the same as the HVAC contractor) to work alongside HVAC technicians for fire mode testing.

2. Review Service Agreements

Confirm whether fire mode testing scope is sufficiently defined in your fire contractor's service agreement or if out of scope works will be required.

3. Collaborate with Experts

Work with your HVAC and fire service providers to establish a streamlined plan for quarterly testing.

We're Here to Help!

At Precise Air, we are committed to supporting your compliance journey. Contact us to coordinate fire mode testing, optimise scheduling, and minimise disruptions to your operations.

Contact us:

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