

Fire Safety Advice: Healthcare Facility Managers



With complex medical equipment and infirm, often immobile residents, fire protection in healthcare facilities requires careful planning and technical knowledge. Inadequate or improper fire protection can expose patients and staff to dangers, lead to potential injury or in a worst case scenario, loss of life.

It is important that healthcare providers seek a fire protection solution that is tailored for the specific needs of their facility, staff and patients. These include special evacuation procedures for mobility restricted patients and protecting vital medical equipment.

Wormald offers healthcare facility managers the following advice to help protect staff, patients and premises against fire:

1. Conduct a fire safety audit to highlight potential fire risks around the facility. This will help to determine the fire protection solution required.

- Hazards will vary depending on the nature of the healthcare centre or hospital but can include medical equipment, chemicals and bio-hazard substances, kitchen or heating appliances, flammable liquids and combustible waste material. Consulting a fire protection specialist can help to ensure all hazards are identified and the most appropriate fire protection solution is installed.

2. Keep up to date with regulation and legislation.

Healthcare facility managers must know their responsibilities when it comes to ethical and legal fire safety requirements. Australian legislation and standards relating to fire safety change regularly so it's important to stay on top of things.

- Keep up to date on all national and state-based fire safety regulations and standards in relation to fire protection equipment, maintenance or training. It's a good idea to contact a fire protection specialist.

- Develop a fire prevention plan in accordance with *Australian Standard AS3745-2010 - Planning for emergencies in facilities*.

3. Install adequate fire protection equipment.

Fire protection equipment can include basic fire extinguishers or fire hose reels, passive fire solutions such as fire doors, or more advanced fire detection and suppression systems. When deciding on the most suitable fire protection solution, considerations include:

- Legislation and standards
- Materials being handled on the premises
- Size and type of building
- Purpose of the building (e.g. offices, materials storage, manufacturing)

Healthcare facilities are typically divided into smoke compartments which can be closed off by fire doors to prevent the spread of fire and smoke.

4. Service and maintain.

When it comes to fire protection, a high level of reliability is essential. Fire protection systems and equipment should always perform to the standard to which they were originally designed and installed.

- Regular testing can validate the functionality of the systems and equipment and help uncover any faults or issues that may cause malfunction.
- *Australian Standard AS1851-2012 - Routine service of fire protection systems and equipment* recommends that fire protection systems be regularly inspected.

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5. Provide appropriate signage for all hazards, fire protection equipment and emergency exits.

- Fire extinguishers and other fire safety equipment should be clearly marked.
- Emergency exits signs should be visible so that in the event of an evacuation, people can be directed to escape quickly.

6. Train.

A confident team that is able to respond appropriately in the event of a fire is an invaluable investment and can substantially reduce the impact of a crisis.

- Hospital staff should know how to respond to a fire emergency and how to use the fire equipment onsite.
- Fire safety training can be included in staff induction where new employees are briefed and trained on what to do in the event of a fire.
- Fire wardens should be appointed and fully trained on their responsibilities.

Fire protection specialists can provide professional advice, helping to take the stress out of maintaining fire protection systems and provide peace of mind for healthcare facility management. If you'd like more information on how Wormald can help protect your healthcare facility, contact us on 133 166 or visit our website www.wormald.com.au

About Wormald

Wormald is Australia's leading provider of fire protection solutions. Since 1889, it has designed, manufactured, supplied, installed and services fire detection and protection systems for a wide variety of industries, including building and construction, healthcare, military, government, leisure management, corporate, education and domestic.



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