

Building Bulletin (BB) 100 – Sprinklers in Schools

It is very pleasing to be able to inform members that after 10 years of campaigning by the Fire Service and other groups with an interest in fire safety, the Department for Children, Schools and Families has now published guidance stating that all new schools should have sprinklers fitted. The document states that any exceptions to this will have to be justified by demonstrating that a school is low risk and the use of sprinklers will not be good value for money.

The guidance covers schools in England and Wales. It applies to nursery, primary and secondary schools, including sixth form colleges, special schools and pupil referral units.

The guide covers compliance with requirements B1 to B5 of the Building Regulations, which is concerned with life safety, but also provides guidance on the design of school buildings to reduce arson and property loss through fire. Therefore, the guide seeks to address both the life safety needs and property protection needs at the same time. The guide acknowledges the important role of sprinklers in reducing the degree of damage caused by fire and can reduce the risk to life.

Although the provision of sprinklers is not a requirement of the Building Regulations, it is expected that a risk assessment be undertaken to assess the validity of providing sprinklers in the scheme. To assist in this aspect, a risk analysis tool has been developed and schools being planned that score medium or high risk will need to have sprinklers fitted. A cost benefit analysis tool has also been provided to help users decide whether sprinklers represent good value for money.