

Built Environment Advisory Bulletin No. 2025-01

Title

Fire activated retaining devices in fire doors (e.g. bolts).

Context

This bulletin communicates Fire Rescue Victoria's (FRV) position on the use of fire activated retaining devices in fire doors, such as fire bolts.

Position

Fire doors that are installed within exits and paths of travel to exits, including those settings where horizontal exits are installed, are required to remain functional, i.e., openable and closeable, for the duration of any fire (or other emergency incident). To allow for safe occupant egress, fire brigade intervention activities of attending FRV firefighting personnel and the required fire separation; fire doors should not be fitted with supplementary retaining devices that render the door inoperable once activated by fire.

FRV, alongside fellow AFAC member agencies Fire and Rescue New South Wales (FRNSW) and ACT Fire and Rescue, is aware that fire activated retaining devices, such as fire bolts, have been installed within some fire resisting door sets to allow the door to pass the fire resistance requirements of AS 1530.4:2014 *Methods for fire tests on building materials, components and structures, Part 4: Fire-resistance tests for elements of construction*.

Fire activated retaining devices are supplementary anchoring hardware that latch the door leaf to the frame of the door set when activated by fire. The device can be triggered by various means (e.g., intumescent, fusible link, magnetic), which secure the door shut to minimise warping and ensure integrity. There is however no specific standard or requirement that prescribes a temperature criterion or other condition, which indicates when a fire activated retaining device, should operate.

If these retaining devices activate whilst occupants of the building begin to evacuate or during the conduction of fire brigade intervention activities, it is FRV's belief that Performance Requirements C1P2 and D1P2 of the *National Construction Code (NCC)* are not being satisfied. In this scenario, occupants may have their egress impeded and they may become trapped in the building. Fire brigade intervention activities are also likely to be impeded as firefighting personnel will not be able to complete any initiated search and rescue activities nor seek refuge within an adjoining area or compartment.

NOTE: Fire activated retaining devices may trigger early during fire, or even prior through unintended deployment, and render the door inoperable well within the maximum duration of the door's corresponding fire test period.

Actions

In determining compliance with C1P2 and D1P2, the Relevant Building Surveyor (RBS) should consider the following:

- Is the fire door situated within an exit or within the path of travel to an exit?
- Will fire brigade intervention be impeded by the activation of the fire activated retaining device?

- Will the activation of the fire activated retaining device impact compartmentation if activated when the door is open, therefore preventing the door from closing?

FRV believes that the RBS should exercise a significant degree of caution in circumstances where fire activated retaining devices are present within fire doors that serve as exits, and not solely rely on the provision of AS 1530.4:2014 test reports as evidence of suitability.

In circumstances where a building solution is the subject of a statutory report and consent under Regulation 129 of the Building Regulations 2018, the Fire Rescue Commissioner may refuse to provide subsequent consent under Regulation 187 where fire activated retaining devices impact the operation of the installed fire door and impede necessary fire brigade intervention activities.

If a building solution's fire safety strategy proposes to utilise fire doors that are provided with fire activated retaining devices, it is recommended that the design team contact FRV's Built Environment Department to organise a meeting to discuss the proposal on (03) 9665 4478 or bsr.admin@frv.vic.gov.au.

Director, Built Environment

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