

Queensland Development Code

Mandatory Part 3.7—Farm buildings

Background

On 1 June 2015 a new Queensland Development Code (QDC), Mandatory Part (MP) 3.7—Farm buildings commenced (MP 3.7).

MP 3.7 provides appropriate concessions to certain requirements of the National Construction Code (NCC) to reduce costs and red tape for the construction of new farm buildings, as well as additions or significant alterations to existing farm buildings.

MP 3.7 also provides greater certainty and consistency in how building work for contemporary farm buildings is assessed. This helps to ensure minimum standards of fire and life safety, health and amenity are met that are suitable for their use.

Application of MP 3.7

MP 3.7 applies to a class 7 farm building (e.g. a farm vehicle storage shed) or a class 8 farm building (e.g. a chicken/egg shed, piggery, dairy, vegetable greenhouse or a fruit or vegetable packing shed).

Concessions are provided under MP 3.7 for access and egress, artificial lighting, exit signs, emergency lighting and fire safety systems, equipment and water supply (including reduced water supply for fire hydrant systems, or installation of on-site water tanks instead of fire hydrant systems).

MP 3.7 includes concessions for three categories of farm buildings:

1. For low occupancy farm buildings, all of the above concessions apply.
2. For high occupancy farm buildings, concessions apply for fire hose reels (provided fire extinguishers are installed instead) and water supply for firefighting.
3. Concessions for vehicle storage farm building include some of the lesser building requirements similar to those for class 10a buildings (e.g. a non-habitable private garage), provided additional life and fire safety measures, such as exit signs and fire extinguishers, are included. The concession for fire hydrant systems (above) also applies if the building is over 500 metres² in floor area.

When MP 3.7 does not apply to a farm building

MP 3.7 is not intended to apply to farm buildings where a sprinkler system is required under the NCC.

Note: A building certifier may also need to consider section 79 of the *Building Act 1975* for hazardous buildings.

How to determine a low or high occupancy farm building

The definition of 'low occupancy farm building' sets a limit on the number of people that the building is designed to accommodate. To be considered a 'low occupancy farm building', the total number of people the building is designed

to accommodate cannot exceed:

- six people if the total floor area of the farm building is up to 1200 metres²; or
- one person per 200 metres² of floor area if the the total floor area of the farm building is greater than 1200 metres².

Example 1

A farm building with a floor area of 800 metres² would meet the definition of a low occupancy farm building if it was designed to accommodate no more than six people.

Example 2

For a farm building with a floor area of 1600 metres², one person per 200 metres² equates to eight people. Therefore, if the building is designed to accommodate no more than eight people it would meet the definition of a low occupancy farm building.

If a farm building exceeds the occupant density for a 'low occupancy farm building' then it would instead be defined as a 'high occupancy farm building'.

Example 3

If in Example 2 above, a building with a floor area of 1600 metres² is instead designed to accommodate 11 people, it would be considered a high occupancy farm building.

MP 3.7 provides additional examples for how to apply the formula for occupant density.

Vehicle storage farm buildings

A 'vehicle storage farm building' is defined under MP 3.7 as a farm building that is:

- used for the storage of three or more vehicles that are used in relation to farming, such as a tractor, harvester, utility truck or quad/motor bike; and
- designed to the same occupancy limits as a low occupancy farm building.

A vehicle storage farm building may also be used to store other items used on the farm, such

as feed—this use is acceptable if the majority (i.e. at least 90%) of the building's space is designated for the storing of farm vehicles.

A vehicle storage farm building may be used for routine maintenance and repairs from time to time. However, if the building serves as a commercial workshop that is not used for farming on the land it is not a vehicle storage farm building.

MP 3.7 does not vary the classification system under the NCC for a class 7a building. However, MP 3.7 does vary some of the NCC provisions that normally apply to a class 7a building that is a 'vehicle storage farm building'. Instead, MP 3.7 enables a vehicle storage farm building to meet some of the lesser building requirements that would otherwise apply for a class 10a shed, provided life and fire safety provisions that are additional to class 10a buildings are met. These requirements include solutions for fire extinguishers, the number and position of exits, and separation distances from other buildings and property boundaries.

Because a vehicle storage farm building is still a class 7a building under the NCC, any NCC requirements that are not varied under MP 3.7 (such as those for disability access) still apply. Other requirements under the *Building Act 1975* that normally apply to a class 7a building will also still apply. For example, a certificate of classification still needs to be obtained for a vehicle storage farm building.

How MP 3.7 varies the NCC

Some flexibility is provided under the acceptable solutions of MP 3.7 to either apply the concessions, or apply the relevant part of the NCC in full. It is important to note any NCC requirements not varied by MP 3.7 will still apply.

Example 4

The performance criteria under P1 and P2 replicate the particular performance requirements in the NCC. The corresponding options under the acceptable solutions of MP 3.7 allow the applicant to comply with the

relevant provisions in the NCC, or comply with other requirements provided under MP 3.7.

Example 5

P5 replicates a performance requirement in the NCC. However, where exit signs may adversely affect the behaviour or welfare of farm animals, acceptable solution A5(3) must be used. .

Please refer to the 'Guide to using the QDC part' of MP 3.7 for additional information on how to use this part of the QDC.

On-site water tanks

Under MP 3.7, the acceptable solutions under A3 enable an on-site water tank to be provided for a farm building instead of a fire hydrant system.

On-site water tanks must provide a minimum capacity of 144,000 litres available for firefighting purposes at all times and be fitted with the appropriate fittings such as a hard suction outlet used by the fire brigade. It must also have an identifiable and clearly marked parking space adjacent to the tank to remain suitable for use by the fire brigade.

On-site water tanks must also be located so that no point of the farm building is more than 90 metres from the tank, measured around the perimeter of the building. Where there are multiple on-site tanks, each tank must also be located within 300 metres of another tank.

Referral agency (advice)

The *Sustainable Planning Regulation 2009* (SPR) prescribes the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) as an advice agency for the purpose of referrals under MP 3.7. referrals are required when the proposed work does not comply with the acceptable solutions of MP 3.7 for access and egress and water supply.

Other referral jurisdictions that may still apply

MP 3.7 does not alter other referral processes under the *Sustainable Planning Regulation 2009*

(SPR) for building work that may apply to a farm building for example, fire safety services.

For example, the proposed code allows on-site water tanks to be installed instead of a fire hydrant system. However, if the applicant decides to apply the NCC and install a fire hydrant, or, if the applicant decides to apply the option to reduce water supply for a fire hydrant from four hours to two then the application is referred to the QFES for advice as currently required under Schedule 7 of the SPR.

Note: On-site water tanks are not considered to be a special fire service and therefore a referral to the QFES is not required (however please refer to the requirement for Approved Form 33 below). Additionally, on-site water tanks are not a fire safety installation under the *Building Act 1975* for the purpose of commissioning and maintenance. On-site water tanks may be used for other farm purposes but must be maintained to the relevant provisions, including MP 3.7.

Approved Form 33

A building certifier is required to provide a [Form 33—on-site water tank under QDC MP 3.7](#) to the QFES. Form 33 simply states that the acceptable solutions for on-site water tanks have been applied, which allows the QFES to keep a record of the type of water supply that is available for fire-fighting.

The form must be lodged with the QFES within five business days of approval of the application.

Farm sheds not covered by MP 3.7

Under the *Building Regulation 2006* building work for certain class 10 buildings or structures is prescribed as exempt development if they are located:

- on land used for agricultural, floricultural, horticultural or pastoral purposes;
- more than 200 metres from a property boundary or road.

Exempt development is not required to meet the building assessment provisions, including MP 3.7.

If a class 10 building or structure, other those located in Wind Region C, is located closer than 200 metres to a property boundary or road, it may be considered self-assessable development provided it does not exceed an area of 10 metres², length of 5 metres, and height of 2.4 metres. Self-assessable development does not require a building development approval but must still meet any relevant building assessment provisions.

N.B. Refer to [Building and Plumbing Newsflashes 69 and 70](#) (issued in August 2000).

Related material

- [QDC MP 3.7—Farm buildings](#)
- [Form 33—On-site water storage tanks under QDC MP 3.7—Farm buildings](#)
- [Building and Plumbing Newsflash 539—Commencement of building code for farm buildings—1 June 2015](#)
- [Independent Fire Engineering Report](#)
- [Building and Plumbing Newsflash 69—Classification of farm buildings](#)
- [Building and Plumbing Newsflash 70—Classification of sheds on commercial land](#)

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