

Building newsflash number 405

Expanded polystyrene wall cladding systems

Purpose

To remind stakeholders of the requirements for assessment and approval of expanded polystyrene wall cladding systems in buildings.

Background

Expanded polystyrene wall cladding systems are not specifically addressed in the Building Code of Australia (BCA) as a deemed-to-satisfy solution. When these types of cladding systems are being assessed for approval by building certifiers, they must be presented as alternative solutions under the BCA.

Issues

When a building certifier is considering an alternative solution, they must be able to satisfy themselves that the material, form of construction or design meets the performance requirements of the BCA. When assessing and approving an alternative solution, a building certifier is required to ensure the processes outlined in the BCA are followed, including sections Ao.8, Ao.9 and Ao.10 (Volume 1) and 1.0.8, 1.0.9 and 1.0.10 (Volume 2). The assessment methods in these provisions can be used to determine that a building solution complies with the performance requirements.

The alternative solution must demonstrate compliance with the BCA performance requirements, be shown to be at least equivalent to the deemed-to-satisfy provisions or a combination of both. As part of the assessment methods, a building certifier may seek evidence to support the use of the material, form of construction or design meets the performance requirement. One method to achieve this may be to use a report from a Registered Testing Authority or a CodeMark certificate of accreditation as evidence of suitability.

If this type of evidence of suitability is used it is important for building certifiers to check that appraisals, technical reports, certificates and other relevant documentation covers all relevant BCA performance requirements of the cladding system. Building certifiers should also give consideration to the conditions or limitations of the cladding system provided to them by the applicant. Expansion and construction joint provisions may need to be determined by engineering principles. Some expanded polystyrene cladding materials may only address bending, shear or fastening testing. These tests alone may not represent a complete appraisal or compliance with the BCA performance requirements.

Contact for further information

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