



22 October 2021

Name, Secretary/Contact
Church Council of Congregation name UC

Dear Church Council

Re: Essential Fire Safety Measures (ESMs) – NSW (sent to all UCA Church Councils geographical NSW in the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania)

Legislation has over recent years progressively tightened the regulatory environment that applies to the use of non-residential buildings. The UCA just like any other property owner is obliged to adhere to the legislative changes in this increasingly complex and onerous area. Synod is aware of the challenges and uncertainties this presents to congregations and other Responsible Bodies. Through its governance committees, Synod is conscious of the need to assist church bodies in understanding the obligations that they have and must meet, and also to provide concrete help in the form of information and contractor support for the activities that must be undertaken.

The Property Applications Review Team has recently endorsed the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania's Essential Fire Safety Measures approach. This communication is being sent to all Presbyteries and Church Councils and outlines the required actions for ALL Uniting Church non-residential buildings (including churches, halls, shops, offices, kindergartens) for which your Congregation is the Responsible Body.

The actions in the table below are required whether the building is occupied or unoccupied. Essential Fire Safety Measures (ESMs) must be in place to protect persons from injury or death in an emergency. Non-compliance can result in fines and/or prosecutions for those directly responsible for maintenance of the building.

CHURCH COUNCIL ACTION (NSW)

<p>Step 1 A. Unknown location of Fire Safety Schedule or current Fire Safety Schedule is incorrect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Obtain the Fire Safety Schedule from Council issued with a Fire Safety Certificate for post 1 July 1988 buildings - Obtain a Fire Safety Schedule (Maintenance Determination) from a Registered Building Surveyor for pre 1 July 1988 buildings or where current Fire Safety Schedule is incorrect. <p>COST: \$TBC dependent on NSW Registered Building Surveyor fees if required</p>	<p>B. Fire Safety Schedule located</p> <p>Display your Fire Safety Schedule in the foyer of your building.</p> <p>COST: \$0 provided the Fire Safety Schedule is located and is accurate</p>
<p>Step 2 Service/maintain (including testing) your ESMs in accordance with the Fire Safety Schedule – must be carried out by an <u>Accredited Practitioner (Fire Safety)</u>.</p> <p>COST: depends on maintenance required</p>	
<p>Step 3 Obtain an <i>Annual Fire Safety Statement (AFSS)</i> from an agent such as Statcom Systems. At least 12 months' evidence of testing is required. If you are not utilising Statcom Systems, email your completed AFSS and Fire Safety Schedule to aesmr@victas.uca.org.au COST: \$850 per annum if through Statcom (billed quarterly)</p>	
<p>Step 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lodge your Fire Safety Schedule and Annual Fire Safety Statement with your local Council. A Council fee will apply (part of Statcom Systems services). - Lodge your Annual Fire Safety Statement with Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW) by emailing afss@fire.nsw.gov.au (part of Statcom Systems services). 	

Only an Accredited Practitioner (Fire Safety) can test and service the Essential Fire Safety Measures in NSW. The Annual Fire Safety Statement must certify that Accredited Practitioner (Fire Safety) has inspected the building, assessed the fire safety measures, and found that the measures are capable of performing to the relevant standard. The Synod's Property Services Team has negotiated discounted rates for Uniting Church buildings with Statcom Systems as an agent to sign off on the AFSS and monitor the log books completed by the Accredited Practitioner (Fire Safety). Church Councils are encouraged to take advantage of these rates (see page 3 of this letter for more information).

An Annual Fire Safety Statement must be lodged together with your Fire Safety Schedule with your local Council. If you are unable to locate your Fire Safety Schedule or in the event it needs updating, the Fire Safety Schedule can only be provided through your local Council (for post 1 July 1988 buildings) or through a Maintenance Determination by a Registered Building Surveyor. Please note the Council will only accept a Fire Safety Schedule in the prescribed form. The Fire Safety Schedule must be accurate for the Annual Fire Safety Statement to be signed off.

Where a closed (or closing) building is to be sold within the next 12 months, an ESM Audit and Report (at an approximate cost of about \$400) can alternatively be undertaken. This option will need to be approved by your Presbytery.

Once your Fire Safety Schedule has been established for a building, Church Councils are invited to be part of a tender process to service/maintain (including testing) the ESMs. This tender process will also provide for pricing of regular actions that may be required – e.g. test'n'tag of extinguishers. There is no obligation to use the services of any firm participating in the tender, provided that any alternative contractor is appropriately qualified to perform the services. To be part of this program please complete the enclosed *ESM Maintenance Contractor plus 'Test & Tag' Tender Enquiry form*.

The above Church Council Actions need to be started as soon as possible as the legislative requirement is already in place and 12 months of testing evidence is required in order to sign off an Annual Fire Safety Statement. An update on the progress of congregations working towards having their ESM program in place will be reported to the Property Applications Review Team by the end of February 2022.

Please find enclosed an ESM Information Pack to assist you in navigating and understanding this important area of safety for our buildings and occupants. The ESM Information Pack includes:

1. Pastoral message from your Presbytery
2. ESM Q&A sheet
3. Example Fire Safety Schedule
4. Example Fire Safety Certificate
5. Example Annual Fire Safety Statement
6. Letter of authorisation for congregation to obtain Fire Safety Certificate (for post 1 July 1988 buildings where the document cannot be located)
7. Example Statcom Quotes
8. ESM Maintenance Contractor plus 'Test & Tag' Tender Enquiry form

If you have any questions please contact Siobhan Reed on (03) 9116 1956 or via email to Siobhan.Reed@victas.uca.org.au

We appreciate that there are many challenges facing our congregations during the pandemic, however we have prioritised this message as ESM maintenance is a requirement regardless of buildings being occupied or unoccupied.

Yours sincerely



Rod Skilbeck
Chairperson, Property Applications Review Team



Siobhan Reed
Manager, Assets & Administration

Annual Fire Safety Statement

For ALL *Uniting Church non-residential buildings (including churches, halls, shops, kindergartens, offices)*

Statcom discounted rates for UCA Synod Vic/Tas (NSW) \$850 plus GST

Contact Aaron Mackenzie, National Project Manager, Statcom Systems
Ph: 1300 872 885, M: 0428 313 574 , E: amackenzie@statcomsystems.com.au

- This will set up the Essential Fire Safety Measures (**ESM**) program, provide quarterly inspections for compliance and maintenance monitoring and the annual sign off (ESM Annual Report).
- Statcom Systems will attend and collect the information of the Essential Safety Measures which exists onsite, identify the contractors who will carry out the inspections/testing of each ESM in accordance with the applicable Australian Standards and Fire Safety Schedule.
- When the data has been verified, a customised Essential Fire Safety Measures Manual will be supplied and this will provide the hard copy evidence which the Responsible Body can use at any time to demonstrate compliance to the local council or reporting authority. The Manual will include 12 months of maintenance records plus a copy of an Annual Fire Safety Statement Report (or state equivalent) ready to be signed off at the end of the 12-month maintenance period.

The service includes:

- Perform the quarterly exit door, path of travel and passive inspections, including the annual inspection and certification (**AFSS**).
- Conduct a quarterly audit of maintenance records to ensure all maintenance has been carried out during the past 12 months.
- Sign off the Annual Fire Safety Statement at the end of the 12-month period providing all maintenance has been carried out on the Essential Fire Safety Measures.
- Install an annual update in the ESM Manual for the next 12-month maintenance period and archive last year's records.