

# Automatic Fire Sprinkler Systems

## One of the best ways to put out the fire risk

As the saying goes, living in New Zealand means we can literally experience 'four seasons in one day'. Wild weather bringing rain, wind, snow and hail can cause damage resulting in flooding and storm surges. Here's what you can do to reduce the risks.



### Fast facts

- Automatic fire sprinkler systems are considered to be the most effective and efficient fixed fire-fighting system to control or extinguish a fire within a building.
- In New Zealand, fire sprinkler systems have a success rate of 99.5% in fire control.
- The vast majority of fires controlled by fire sprinklers are extinguished on average by only one or two fire sprinklers activating – water damage is minimal compared to traditional hose methods.
- A compliant fire sprinkler system is designed specifically to meet the type of fire risk present in a building i.e. high piled storage, or high hazard operations.
- Sprinklers can also activate an evacuation alarm to help protect people and property.

### Did you know?

Fire sprinkler systems are very reliable and if designed and properly maintained can provide years of trouble-free fire protection. There are some truths worth clarifying however:

- Not all sprinkler heads operate at once, only those directly near the fire operate.
- If well maintained, sprinklers heads are quite robust, and rarely fail causing unnecessary water damage.
- Sprinkler heads are not activated by smoke – they are only activated by heat.



## What about compliance?

- For commercial/retail and industrial buildings a compliant sprinkler must be installed and maintained to the NZ Standard NZS 4541.
- For residential/rest home type buildings a compliant sprinkler must be installed and maintained to the NZ Standard NZS 4515.
- If you're thinking about alterations to your existing building space use, or changes as to how you will be managing storage materials within your space and that may affect the fire sprinkler system, talk about these with an approved fire sprinkler contractor first. Visit the Fire Protection Association of New Zealand website for a list of approved contractors.
- Any remedial items identified in a Biennial Fire Sprinkler system report that might affect Building Warrant of Fitness compliance, must be rectified as soon as possible.
- Building owners and building managers must ensure that at least 24 hours before any fire sprinkler system isolation work takes place, a Fire System Impairment notice has been issued by the fire sprinkler contractor to Fire & Emergency NZ, building Insurers, Territorial Authorities and Sprinkler System Certifier and building occupants.

## Other things to think about

- Ensure that your site storage heights and methods of storage meet within the requirements of the fire sprinkler system.
- Check that fire sprinklers are not obstructed or covered over by storage or other items.
- Make sure that fire sprinkler heads are protected from impact damage that could lead to mechanical failure or accidental activation.
- Ensure that sprinkler coverage isn't affected by alterations to the building, room or protected area (e.g. by internal office or shop fit outs). If necessary, adapt the sprinkler system layout to provide proper coverage.
- Check that all external combustible items such as pallets or waste bins are housed outside the property. These should be kept at least 10m away from the external fire sprinklers or any exposed combustible walls and openings such as doors and window.
- Make sure all fire alarm speakers are not obstructed and that you and all staff know the building evacuation plan for your building.

## Putting out smaller fires

- Where you have appropriate fire extinguishers or fire hose reels, check that these can be easily accessed by staff. Make sure staff know how to use these properly
- Yearly maintenance is a must for all fire extinguishers and hose reels.

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