



ESSENTIAL SAFETY MEASURES POLICY

POLICY

This policy explains schools' responsibilities for complying with essential safety measures (ESM) for fire safety.

SUMMARY

- Essential safety measures are fire and life safety items installed or constructed in a building, such as exit lights and fire doors. When correctly maintained, essential safety measures help students, staff and visitors evacuate safely in the event of a fire.
- The [Building Regulations 2018 \(Vic\)](#) require schools to oversee specific essential safety measures: inspections, testing, maintenance and record-keeping.
- The activities that principals must undertake are set out in the [Essential Safety Measures in Victorian Government Schools Compliance and Guidance Framework](#), as well as the roles and responsibilities of department staff in supporting schools to meet their essential safety measure obligations.
- Schools are expected to inspect, test and maintain essential safety measures with funding from their global budget allocated through the student resource package.
- An Essential Safety Measures Panel, consisting of a number of service providers, has been appointed to perform specific essential safety measures activities on Victorian government school sites. The Department strongly advises that principals use these service providers to perform essential safety measures activities on their school sites where applicable.
- This policy falls within the 'Manage' stage of the School Asset Lifecycle.

DETAILS

Fire safety is a priority for the Victorian government, and essential safety measures (ESM) compliance is required by law. The [Building Regulations 2018 \(Vic\)](#) require schools to oversee general and specific inspections, testing, maintenance and record-keeping activities for ESM. This ensures schools are equipped with ESM that will help students, staff and visitors evacuate safely in the event of a fire.

Principals must undertake the ESM activities specified in the essential safety measures in the [Essential Safety Measures in Victorian Government Schools Compliance and Guidance Framework](#) (ESM framework). This framework contains guidance and resources to help principals undertake or commission ESM activities.

Essential Safety Measures Panel

The Essential Safety Measures Panel are building professionals recommended by the Victorian School Building Authority (VSBA). They are a resource to help principals meet their ESM compliance to the required standard.

Service providers appointed to the panel meet minimum qualifications, and can be engaged for:

- ESM inspections and testing (this does not include undertaking any required maintenance or rectification these inspections identify)
- preparing Annual Essential Safety Measures Reports
- updating ESM registers

If a principal engages an appropriately qualified service provider from the panel, the VSBA presumes that the ESM activities they perform are compliant.

This is because the VSBA has verified their qualifications and good record of providing quality services. Refer to the [Essential Safety Measures Panel Use Guidelines](#) for further details.

The Department's responsibilities for ESM

The VSBA:

- manages the resources that help principals meet their ESM compliance
- monitors schools' annual essential safety measures reports to ensure compliance with legal obligations
- presumes reports prepared by a service provider on the ESM panel are compliant

If a school uses a service provider not on the panel, the VSBA will undertake a spot-audit to ensure the report is of an adequate standard.

The VSBA and the appropriate Department regional office will contact any school failing to lodge an annual essential safety measures report, or where the report is sub-standard, and work with them to ensure they comply.

Further information about responsibilities for ESM is available in the [Asset Management Roles and Responsibilities Framework](#).

Funding for ESM

The Department expects schools to fund their ESM responsibilities from their global budget allocated through the Student Resource Package (SRP).

The Annual Contracts and Essential Safety Measures funding line is allocated to schools for inspection and routine servicing of ESM items specified under [SRP Guide Reference 36](#).

The Maintenance funding line is allocated to schools to meet costs associated with repairs, including for ESM items specified under SRP Guide Reference 36.

FURTHER SUPPORT

Professional development

The VSBA provides the [Bricks and Mortar program for professional development of school leadership teams](#). The Bricks and Mortar program provides technical leadership and training for school-based asset management, including ESM requirements.

The Essential Safety Measures Framework in Victorian Government Schools Compliance and Guidance Framework (ESM framework)

The ESM Framework provides additional guidance to schools about:

- safety measures
- ESM activities
- timeframes
- the ESM panel, who can simplify the procurement of services for ESM

The framework can also be found in the [Resources](#) tab.

ESM Maintenance Schedules

These list the ESM items on each school site and the testing, inspection and routine maintenance requirements for each item. The ESM Maintenance Schedules are available on the [School Facilities Profile](#) (staff login required).

To find your maintenance schedules:

1. visit the EMS maintenance schedule on the [School Facilities Profile](#) (staff login required)
2. enter your school number or name in the 'Search Criteria' field
3. click 'reports and plans'
4. select 'specialist files' to see your excel file name: SA_Sxxxx_Cyy_ESM 12 2018.xlsx
 1. school number is listed after the 'S': 'xxxx'
 2. campus number is listed after the "C": 'yy'

For schools constructed in 2018 or later, requirements for testing, inspection and routine maintenance for each ESM item onsite are listed on each building's occupancy permit. ESM compliance, advice and reminder emails

Schools will be sent an email, with two months lead time, to remind them to prepare and submit their annual ESM report.

School Maintenance Plans

The VSBA also helps schools prioritise maintenance through the school maintenance plans, which are developed following a condition assessment under the rolling facilities evaluation program. Further details about School Maintenance Plans and assessments under the rolling facilities evaluation can be found in the Department's [Asset Management Planning Policy](#).

DEFINITIONS

Essential Safety Measures

ESM are fire and life safety items installed or constructed in a building, such as exit lights and fire doors. When correctly maintained, ESM help students, staff and visitors evacuate safely in the event of a fire.

ESM Activities

ESM activities are inspections, testing, maintenance and record-keeping that schools are legally required to undertake (or commission) to ensure all ESM are functioning correctly. The ESM framework specifies general activities required by all schools.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION

- [Building Regulations 2018 \(Vic\)](#)

EVALUATION

This policy is taken directly from the **Department of Education and Training's Policy and Advisory Library (PAL)** dated **October 18, 2021** and will be reviewed in line with new legislation, regulations and best practice.

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	November 2021
Consultation	OHS Representative School Council
Approved	December 2021
Next scheduled review date	November 2024