Department of Environment and Heritage Protection

SAFETY AND SECURITY—MINOR AND TEMPORARY WORKS

This technical note provides information about work to address safety and security issues approved under the General Exemption Certificate—Queensland Heritage Places.

Background

Places need to be secured against unauthorised entry and made safe for occupants and visitors. Many older buildings may need upgrading to comply with current standards for safety and security. In most cases these buildings can be modified to meet the intention of building regulations and suitable security measures can be put in place without losing the qualities that give the buildings their heritage significance.

A range of safety and security work has been approved under General Exemption. This work must not damage or obscure any significant fabric or block significant views to and from the place. Safety and security installations must suit the size, scale, materials, colours, character and design of the place. Safety and security work not included in the General Exemption requires an application for a development permit or exemption certificate.

Before you start

Before upgrading or installing safety and security features, consider if the change is necessary. Is there another way of dealing with the perceived need? Consider alternatives that may be available, for example, rather than installing burglar alarms it may be more effective to install locks on doors and windows; or to prevent vehicle access to a site, removable bollards may be a more unobtrusive barrier than fencing.

General Exemption

Safety and security work includes the installation of:

- temporary fencing, scaffolding or hoardings that:
  - do not connect into significant fabric
  - prevent unauthorised access or that secure public safety
  - are installed for up to three months
- alarms and detection devices that are not hard-wired or that are wired within existing building cavities or conduits
- security lighting that is not hard-wired or that is wired within existing building cavities
- video surveillance devices that are wired within existing building cavities
- locks where original hardware remains in situ
- smoke detectors
- emergency and exit lighting
- portable fire extinguishers.

The installation and operation of safety and security components must:

- minimise their visual impact
- have minimal and reversible fixings.

They must not:

- damage significant fabric
- obstruct significant views to and from the place (except for temporary fencing, scaffolding and hoardings).

Significance

To care for a place with cultural heritage significance it must be known why the place has value and what those values are before work is undertaken. Historic buildings often have qualities not found in contemporary buildings such as generous room volumes with high ceilings, fine timber floors and joinery, decorative finishes and a unique character. When planning measures for safety and security or upgrading existing systems it is important to recognise what is important and special about a place and to ensure the new work does not damage the characteristics of value.

Providing for safety and security

Safety and security upgrades or installations in historic buildings can be damaging to significant fabric. Loss of original balustrades and handrails, removal of floor finishes, alterations to stairs and walkways, the construction of new fencing and the installation of new services can harm the significant fabric and damage what is important about the place.

Compliance with safety standards

The performance-based nature of building regulations means alternatives can be found to meet safety standards and satisfy heritage concerns when addressing safety issues.

Permanent security fencing

Permanent fencing is not included in the General Exemption and requires an application for a development permit or exemption certificate.

Temporary fencing, scaffolding and hoardings

Temporary fencing may be required to prevent unauthorised access, secure public safety or secure a property boundary when a place is not in use. Temporary scaffolding and hoardings may be required to protect people at ground level while stabilisation work is being undertaken on a building. These temporary structures can damage a building through accidental contact or if the structures are connected or fixed into the building.

For temporary fencing, scaffolding or hoardings that are erected to prevent unauthorised access or secure public safety, ensure:

- significant fabric of the building is covered or protected from accidental knocking
- they do not fix into any part of the building—they should be free-standing or be fixed with clamps that do not damage the building
- they are stable and properly fixed in place
- they are erected to prevent unauthorised access or to secure public safety
- they are removed within three months of erection.

Alarms, detection devices, video surveillance and security lighting

Alarms, detection devices and video surveillance can be useful components of a total security package. Properly designed and installed light can play a considerable part in deterring potential intruders.

Installation of these devices and their associated equipment may require penetration of the building fabric. Some components may be visually intrusive.

Ensure the system is necessary and will be effective. Minimise cutting and drilling for wiring, cabling and fixing. Ensure fixings are minimal and reversible.

For these systems:

- it is preferable to choose systems that are not hard-wired
- minimise the extent of any hard-wiring
- insert wiring within existing building cavities or conduits
- minimise any new cutting and drilling (25mm holes maximum)
- minimise fixings and ensure they are reversible
- minimise the number of lights and sensors
- use smaller colour-coordinated detectors
- do not chase into important plaster or masonry walls.

Locks

As part of a safety upgrade, doors and windows may need additional locks. Installing them may damage significant fabric. Early hardware is important and should be left in place. Install the new hardware adjacent, using minimal fixings that are reversible.

Smoke detectors, emergency and exit lighting

Smoke detectors are an important part of a fire safety program in a building, providing early warning of a possible fire. Emergency and exit lighting enable building occupants to find their way to exit paths and to leave a building in the event of a fire or other emergency. Check building and safety regulations for current requirements.

Installation of these devices should use minimal fixings that are reversible. Do not fix to or obscure significant fabric and decorative finishes.

Sprinklers

Automatic sprinkler systems can be an effective method of controlling a fire. Their installation often requires penetration of significant fabric. Potential water damage is a worrying threat to significant fabric. Locating and installing sprinklers within a registered place requires careful planning and is not approved under General Exemption.

Portable fire extinguishers

Hand-held fire extinguishers might be used as part of a fire safety system. They may help slow the spread of a fire and provide an opportunity for occupants trained in their use to make an initial attack on a fire.

Select locations that will have minimal impact on significant fabric and appearance and that are easily found in an emergency. Minimise fixings and do not fix to significant fabric or decorative finishes.

Summary checklist for safety and security

Do:

- understand what is important about the place
- establish whether the work is necessary
- consider the alternatives—is there another way of meeting the need?
- use components that are not fixed into or obscure significant fabric and decorative finishes
- minimise visual impact of components
- use visible components suit the size, scale, materials, colours, character and design of the place
- ensure fixings are minimal and reversible
- retain significant original fixtures, fittings and hardware
- minimise hard-wiring
- minimise any new cutting or drilling
- use existing conduits, ducts, chases, cupboards and shafts, where possible, for new wiring and cabling
- ensure there is no chasing into important plaster or masonry walls
- protect significant fabric from accidental bumping during installation work
- use temporary fencing, scaffolding or hoardings that do not fix into the building
- minimise the number of lights, sensors and other components
- choose the smallest size for visible components
- check and comply with safety regulations
- train staff and/or occupants to monitor the operation of equipment and to act appropriately in the event of emergencies or breakdowns

Do not:

- install systems or structures that are not needed
- over-design a new system
- damage or remove significant fabric
- undertake work to significant balustrades, stairs or walkways that is not needed
- damage or remove significant door and window hardware
- remove significant doors nor alter significant door openings
- chase into significant plaster or masonry walls
- fix to significant fragile surfaces or fabric
- damage significant finishes, mask significant features or alter significant spaces.