



Building Newsflash

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FIRE SEPARATION AND ENCLOSURE OF CARPORTS

Purpose

To clarify the provisions of the *Standard Building Regulation 1993* (SBR) and the Building Code of Australia (BCA) relating to the enclosure of carports.

Enclosure and fire separation of open carports

While there is no definition of carport in the BCA, the Macquarie Dictionary defines a carport as “a roofed wall-less shed often projecting from the side of a building, used as a shelter for a motor vehicle”. Section 3.7.1.6 (d) of Vol 2 of the BCA provides a concession for ‘open carports’ from the need to provide fire separation between a building and a boundary. The concession is subject to at least two sides of the carport being open, and not less than one third of the perimeter also being open.

This concession applies to typical carports, which are commonly situated between a house and a side boundary, as such a structure is unlikely to be used for the storage of large quantities of materials which could constitute a fire load. In the event of a vehicle in a carport catching fire, the risk of it causing the spread of fire between properties is likely to be minimal.

The question has been raised whether it is acceptable to allow a door such as a roller door, or a weather resistant screen, to be fitted to part of the required ‘open’ sides.

Any reduction of the required open area could result in the storage of materials that may increase the potential for fire to spread between properties. It is therefore not acceptable to allow the fitting of ‘solid’ doors or weather resistant screens that reduce the ‘open’ area below that required. It is however, considered acceptable to allow an open security grill style door, or a lattice screen having at least 50% openings to be fitted to a required ‘open’ side, as these are unlikely to result in the use of the carport for the storage of any substantial quantity of other materials.

If a carport constructed between a house and side or rear boundary, is provided with the level of fire separation prescribed in Figure 3.7.1.4 of BCA Vol 2, it is effectively a Class 10a building and is not required to be ‘open’, and may be enclosed with doors and walls.

Fire resistance of separating construction

Where a carport situated less than 900 mm from a boundary does not meet the concessions for an ‘open’ carport, fire protection as specified in section 3.7.1.6 (a) of BCA Vol 2, must be provided. The Department has been advised that some building certifiers may have approved the use of side walls to carports that do not appear to comply with the requirements of section 3.7.1.6. For example, the use of fire-grade plasterboard sheeting, covered externally with timber weatherboards.

If a fire protective wall is proposed as indicated in diagrams b. or c. of Figure 3.7.1.4, the wall is required to have an FRL of 60/60/60. Section 1.2.3 of Part 1.3 of Vol 2 of the BCA, requires that the FRL is determined in accordance with Spec A2.3 of Vol 1 of the BCA. Unless the building element is listed in Table 1 of Spec A2.3 as being deemed to have achieved a nominated FRL, it will generally need to be identical to a prototype that has achieved the FRL in a Standard Fire Test. Any variations must be certified by an appropriately accredited body.

Alternatively, the building certifier should be satisfied the wall achieves the relevant performance requirements.

Carports within 6 m road clearance area

Section 37 of the SBR allows the erection of an 'open carport' within the 6 m road clearance if-

- (a) the total width of the supports located within the 6 m clearance does not exceed 10 % of the perimeter of the portion of the open carport located within the 6 m clearance, and
- (b) it is necessary or expedient to build the open carport in that location.

The purpose of these 'open' provisions is different to the BCA fire separation requirements. They are intended to minimise the aesthetic impact of buildings upon the amenity of the streetscape. The general siting requirements of the SBR provide for buildings and structures to be setback 6 m from the road boundary so as to achieve an open streetscape. If it is proposed to fit doors, screens or other forms of enclosure, the approval of the local government must be sought. This will be under section 48 of the SBR, or the planning scheme if the local government has alternative siting provisions controlling the erection of carports in the 6 m road clearance area.

In either case, the local government may allow the fitting of doors or other forms of enclosure, after taking into account the criteria contained in section 48 of the SBR, or the planning scheme, and the circumstances of the particular site.

Related Newsflashes

- Fire Separation Assessment and Boundary Setbacks Relaxations (Issued 26/10/01)
- Length of Class 10a buildings (Issued 26/3/02)

Contact officer

Please contact Mr John Lamb on (07) 323 71712 should you require further information regarding this matter.