

Media Release

From the Plumbing Industry Commission

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Government and industry collaborate to tackle fire sprinkler water wastage

A fire sprinklers water conservation project has developed practices that aim to annually save 450 million litres of water by changing procedures and technologies for testing and routinely maintaining fire sprinklers.

Minister for Planning, Justin Madden, said the project has been showing the best ways to cut the water consumed through testing fire sprinklers, without compromising fire protection.

The initial focus is on fifteen case study sites, which range from high rise office buildings in the CBD to suburban shopping centres and large manufacturing sites.

“With the cooperation of leading property owners and fire maintenance firms, the project team has identified practical and effective ways to cut water use by fire sprinklers at the case study sites, and this knowledge will now be rolled out to other property owners and fire protection industry more broadly,” Minister Madden said.

The case study findings and recommendations will be reviewed on 29 October 2008 at an industry-government Roundtable, where more than 60 people from the property industry, water authorities, fire protection firms, facility management companies and Government will meet to discuss the next steps.

The three Melbourne water authorities, City West Water, South East Water and Yarra Valley Water, have banded together with Department of Sustainability and Environment, the Plumbing Industry Commission and the Building Commission to tackle this problem.

“This industry-government collaboration is working towards reducing water wastage while ensuring peoples’ lives aren’t put at risk,” said Minister Madden.

“We need to remember the objective of fire protection standards is to maximise the reliability of fire protection systems to preserve life, protect against personal injury, avoid property damage and to ensure the health, safety and amenity of a building’s occupants.

“The issue was also identified by the Plumbing Industry Commission’s *PlumbSmarter* sustainability initiative, which asked Victorian Licensed and Registered Plumbing Practitioners to have their say about water and energy savings. *PlumbSmarter* is encouraging the industry to reduce the water wasted in fire sprinkler testing and is researching other possible ways to reduce water wastage.”

He added that many buildings with compliant equipment constructed before 1994 can reduce testing frequency immediately.

“The Victorian Government encourages property owners to take non-regulatory measures to save water, which are available now. This includes installing a recycled water system, which reduces the amount of water used in fire sprinkler testing,” he said.

“It’s imperative that systems be configured to waste less water. Buildings built after 1994 will need to take one extra step and ensure their Occupancy Permit allows a move away from weekly testing.”

The Building Commission published a Practice Note *Water saving options available when testing fire safety systems* aimed at assisting the building industry to reduce water consumption in testing of fire safety systems. The Practice Note is available from the Building Commission website www.buildingcommission.com.au

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For further information please contact Anne Pavey from the Commission on 9285 6335 or visit www.pic.vic.gov.au.

