

Basement carpark exits

QFES considers fires in basement areas, including basement car parks, to be extremely hazardous to occupants and firefighters due to the availability of access and egress, tenability, possible impact on fire brigade intervention and difficulties with search and rescue operations.

National Construction Code 2019 Guide states;

Any basement in excess of the minimum floor area specified in clause D1.2(c)(i) which has a travel distance to an exit in excess of that specified in clause D1.2(c)(i), must have at least two exits. The reason for this is that basements present difficulties in terms of egress and firefighting. These include:

- The difficulty in naturally venting smoke from a fire because of the lack of windows; and
- The need for occupants to evacuate in the direction of smoke travel. This is the opposite to upper storeys, where people would be evacuating downwards and the smoke travelling upwards.

QFES considers that two exits from a basement means two individual exits (stairway or passageway) from that storey. In QFES opinion one exit served by two doors should not be considered as meeting the requirement of clause D1.2.

These provisions should be considered when addressing any performance solution which intends to rationalise the number of required exits in basement areas.