



Fire Prevention !

Fire prevention is often a very neglected issue in sectional title complexes. Mainly because of the belief "it won't happen to me", or the presumption that insurance is in place and that there are no further responsibilities towards this issue. Unfortunately, the steps taken for fire prevention and the issues surrounding the insurance will often only be tested when such an emergency actually occurs!

According to Prof. Paddocks, there is an obligation on the part of the body corporate to insure the buildings in a scheme and to keep them insured to the replacement value against fire. Trustees should ensure that insurance is up to date and that the replacement value of the complex is updated. Trustees, with the assistance of all owners should take proactive steps to prevent fire damage.

The most important is adequate fire extinguishers and fire hoses, throughout the complex. These extinguishers should be serviced regularly to ensure that they are in good working order. Residents should constantly be encouraged to make sure that the appliances they use are properly insulated and safe, and that the plug points are not overloaded. Residents are prohibited by conduct rules to keep, or do anything that could increase the rate of the premium payable by the body corporate on any insurance policy. (Paddocks) An example is the keeping of piles of cardboard boxes or dry garden refuse anywhere on the premises.

The body corporate should be sure that properties with thatch roofs and lapas take precautionary measures to prevent fires. Fire safety is critical for a thatch structure, because the fire resistance of the thatch is dependent on the quality of the thatch, fire retardants and stability of the structure. If a lapa is situated close to the house, it should have a sprinkler system on the roof or there should be a fire extinguisher installed nearby. Owners should take care that fire extinguishers are clearly indicated and serviced according to the manufacturers' requirements.

Other precautionary steps to consider:

- One of the biggest causes of fire damage at homes are burning cigarettes.
- Burning candles are another big cause of fires, especially in this time of power outages. Burning candles should never be left alone, as they might tip over accidentally.
- Be careful when using heaters in the house, especially when there are children around. Keep portable heaters safely away from anything that can burn and don't leave them on when you go to sleep.
- Make sure that unused chargers are unplugged.
- Inspect all appliances to be in good condition with no open and unsafe wiring.
- Fires often start in the kitchen therefore it is a good idea to keep a fire extinguisher or a fire blanket nearby. It is also important to clean the steam extractor over the stove regularly to avoid an accumulation of oil.

The spreading of fire in a complex can be devastating, and residents should be reminded that they have a collective responsibility to prevent the start and spreading of fires!

Left without Power? May generators be installed?

Power outages - again the reason for huge frustrations in our area! But what if you stay in a sectional title complex, are you allowed to plug in a generator - sometimes at the expense of your neighbours?

Many owners want to invest in a small movable generator. As the generator will stand on common property, permission from the trustees in terms of a special resolution will have to be obtained.

Currently, there are no legislative prohibitions or restrictions on the installation and operation of portable generators in the sections or on the common property. However there may be restrictions imposed in terms of complex management, Conduct Rules and Municipal laws in this regard, i.e. Conduct Rules which prohibit any loud noise causing a nuisance.

Permission by trustees for individual, movable generators are hugely debatable and not advisable, as the generator is placed outside a section, on common property, and would most probably negatively affect the appearance and safety of the common property. It should be considered that the generator must be placed in an area where it is properly ventilated and fumes will not effect other residents. It should also be quiet / soundproof and there is a risk that drip fuel or oil may damage the property. Therefore, any permission should only be granted subject to strict conditions with the option to withdraw permission for such generator if necessary. As residents live close to each other in complexes, it is most certain that above mentioned restrictions will be problematic. Trustees should consider addressing this issue in the complex's Conduct Rules for future enquiries into this matter.

It is advisable that body corporates rather investigate the installation of an immovable and central generator per complex. The size of this generator may cause it to be initially expensive. This may subsequently cause special levies to be imposed due to the purchasing and maintenance thereof. It however might be a worthwhile long term investment for the scheme if managed effectively.

If a permanent and immovable generator is deemed a necessary improvement, authorisation in terms of a special resolution according to the Sectional Title Act, Management Rule 33 (2) is necessary for purchasing and installation.

Other facts that will need to be considered:

- The noise levels of the generator, but options for more quiet generators are available;
- It must be sufficiently ventilated so that the fumes generated from this machine will not cause a health risk;
- the location where it will be stored so that it is safely locked up for limited access only;
- fuel for the generator should be safely stored. According to the Conduct Rules 9, no owner or occupier shall store any material in the building or on the common property which may or will increase the rate of the premium payable by the body corporate on any policy

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