

2012

The Scottish Association of **BUILDING STANDARDS MANAGERS**  
Incorporating the Scottish Association of Chief Building Control  
Officers and representing Local Authority Building Standards in  
Scotland



# **SABSM TECHNICAL POLICY NOTE**

## **T04/2012**

### **TECHNICAL**

### **Fire Detection and Fire Alarm Systems**

### **Principal Habitable Room**

Guidance Note Number:	<b>T04/2012</b>
Issue Date:	01/05/2012
Domestic/Non Domestic:	Domestic
Section:	Part 2. Fire
Clause Number:	2.11.1
Clause Title:	Fire Detection and Fire Alarm Systems

## BACKGROUND

There has been some discussion (across Scotland) regarding clause 2.11.1 Fire detection and fire alarm systems, in relation to housing. This debate centred on whether the intention of the clause is to require multiple smoke alarms where a dwelling has more than one principal room. The issue also raised the question whether dining rooms, studies, garden rooms, conservatories and sun rooms could all be construed as potential principal habitable rooms.

There was a view that the word *principal* means that one single main living area requires an alarm while an alternative view pointed out that the use of the word *every* suggests that there may be more than one principal habitable room.

Fife Council looked into the issue and made contact with BSD<sup>(1)</sup> who confirmed the following:

*The interpretation of the word 'principal' in this context means the room likely to be the most frequently used and have most occupants using it. In other words risk assess the situation by identifying the living area that is most likely to have a fire (by identifying hazards such as sources of ignition that can give rise to fire) and the most severe consequences (re: potential for injuries and deaths) if there was a fire.*

*In addition, where there is more than one living area; for the purpose of choosing which living area to locate the optical smoke alarm consider each living area's relationship to the route of escape from other rooms in the dwelling (e.g. bedrooms). In other words, consider locating the optical detector in the living area most likely to compromise the route of escape (in fire conditions). The object of the Standard being to ensure an early warning to both the occupants of the living area itself and occupants within other areas of the dwelling.*

*In terms of the Technical Handbook guidance, it is a question of identifying the most risky living area (i.e. the 'principal habitable room') in order that it can trigger early warning for the occupants of that room and the rest of the dwelling.*

In essence, it was confirmed that the word – “every” – was unhelpful as the words – “every” – and – “principal” – can be seen as being in conflict. It was suggested that the use of – “the” – in place of – “every” – would be more appropriate. It was also confirmed that the cost benefit analysis which the BSD carried out was related to one additional smoke alarm/detector for the principal habitable room and a heat detector in the kitchen.

## DECISION

In light of the statement from the BSD, SABSM considers that the wording in the Technical Standards under clause 2.11.1 (first bullet point, paragraph 2) should be interpreted as:

- At least 1 *smoke alarm* installed in the principal habitable *room*;

## Acronyms

BSD is The Building Standards Division.

(1) Contact within BSD was John McGregor