

5 STAR STANDARD – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How do I construct a house to comply with the 5 Star standard?

The design software for achieving 5 Star is very flexible, so for each design there are many different techniques for obtaining a house energy rating. An accredited rater will be able to advise the designer on the various options available. To obtain the maximum cost benefit, the rater should be involved in the design from the earliest stages.

The technical detail on rain water tanks, solar hot water system and water saving features can be found in the Plumbing Regulations 1998. Contact the Plumbing Industry Commission on telephone 1800 015 129 or visit www.pic.vic.gov.au

What does a relevant building surveyor do at final inspection stage if no carpet, Holland blinds, draught seals or weather strips are installed?

If these components are part of the means of achieving a house energy rating of 5 Star, then this is no different from any other compliance issue arising at final inspection. The relevant building surveyor must be satisfied that the building is suitable for occupation before issuing an occupancy permit. The relevant building surveyor should consider whether he/she is able to issue an occupancy permit, issue the occupancy permit with conditions, or issue an occupancy permit concurrently with a building notice.

Can a relevant building surveyor refuse to issue an occupancy permit if 5 Star provisions are not in place?

The relevant building surveyor must be satisfied that the building is suitable for occupation before issuing an occupancy permit. It is considered unlikely that non-compliance with 5 Star design elements would lead to the refusal of an occupancy permit.

What do I have to do in the case of a relocated existing house?

There is no change to the requirements for a relocated existing building. It must achieve either a 3 Star rating or comply with Vic Table 1, Victoria additions, Volume 2 of the *Building Code of Australia 2005* (the BCA 2005). Regulation 608 of the Building (Interim) Regulations 2005 provides discretion to the relevant building surveyor not to require full compliance with the regulations in certain circumstances.



What about satellite habitable buildings such as sleep outs or bungalows? Do they have to comply with the 5 Star standard?

A satellite bungalow can be regarded as an alteration. This means that a 3 Star rating or compliance with Vic Table 1, Victoria additions, Volume 2 of the BCA 2005 would be required.

Does the 5 Star standard apply to an extension or alteration to a dwelling?

No. The 5 Star standard only applies to a new building. An alteration must achieve either a 3 Star rating or comply with Vic Table 1, Victoria additions, Volume 2 of the BCA 2005.

How do you use Part 3.12 of Volume Two of the BCA as an alternative solution when it refers to Vic Appendix?

As an alternative to using a software package, in the case of one of the 4 Star options i.e timber sub-floor constructions or mud brick homes, applicants may use the deemed-to-satisfy provisions of Part 3.12 of Volume Two of the BCA. The water saving measures as set out in Practice Note 2005-55 will still be applicable. The use of 3.12 as part of a deemed to satisfy solution will only be available in the transition period from 1 July 2004 until 30 April 2006.

What happens if the FirstRate or NatHers software is upgraded and released with a new version number?

The versions referenced in the BCA 2005 can continue to be used. However, all subsequent versions are an acceptable means of complying with the standard. The new version can be accepted as meeting the Performance Requirements in place of the referenced version.

What do you do when First Rate recommends that window sizes be reduced below the minimum area required by BCA 2005?

Compliance with the BCA lighting provisions is still required. The design software is very flexible so other options provided by the software for achieving a 5 Star rating should be investigated.

When considering Class 2 buildings, how do you get an average of 5 Stars when first rate only goes to 5 Stars?

The building as a whole will need to achieve a 5 Star average rating, with no individual apartment rating less than 3 Stars. When using NatHers, the average 5 Star rating for a Class 2 building is determined by finding the average energy load in MJ/m², or in the



case of FirstRate, the average point score (not the average Star rating). The 5 Star average must fall within the 5 Star levels and the rating for any sole occupancy unit in a Class 2 building must fall within the 3 Star levels, both set out in Table A in the Appendix to Practice Note 2005-55.

What do you do if it is not practical to have a rainwater tank or solar water heater system?

An Alternative Solution can be considered under the performance based BCA or an application can be made to the Building Appeals Board for a modification.

Can an existing rainwater tank and existing roof area be used for compliance with 5 Star?

Yes, so long as the rainwater tank is connected to all of the sanitary flushing systems in the house. Installation, tank volume and roof catchment area must still meet the technical requirements of the Plumbing Regulations 1998.

If the relevant building surveyor is an accredited energy rater, can he or she prepare the 5 Star designs?

The relevant building surveyor cannot undertake the design. However, a relevant building surveyor who is also an accredited rater may check a design as part of the normal approval process, and where a design does not comply, may use their skills to provide advice on options for the designer to consider incorporating to achieve a 5 Star rating.

What documentation should the relevant building surveyor receive at the building and occupancy permits application stages?

At the building permit stage for a Class 2 building, the RBS should receive a copy of an energy rating report showing the Star rating for each dwelling and a copy of the Star rating report should also be provided showing an average 5 Star rating for the whole building. For a single dwelling, a copy of the Star rating report should be provided. Ratings conducted using NatHERS will need to have an additional statement from the energy rater showing the area adjustment for Victoria.

At building permit stage, sufficient design detail is required to convince the relevant building surveyor that the 5 Star standard is met.

At occupancy permit stage, it depends again on which option has been used. Refer to Practice Note 2005-55.

Should the plans be revised as a result of the permit process, the applicant will be required to resubmit the Star rating reports.



Can a relevant building surveyor approve of a design produced from software developed in another country?

The use of other software may be accepted by the RBS as meeting the relevant Performance Requirement. It is recommended that such software should not be accepted unless it meets the requirements of the Australian Building Codes Board's *Protocol for House Energy Rating Software* and training is available for users that meet SEAV accreditation requirements for energy raters.

Have SEAV any guidelines for training and accreditation for other software?

Guidelines will be released by SEAV on training and accreditation in Victoria in the NatHERS program. Information is available on the SEAV web site at www.seav.vic.gov.au or telephone 1300 363 744.

Who is responsible for the maintenance of the 5 Star provisions after the project has been completed?

It is the owner's responsibility (and it is in their own interests) to maintain the 5 Star provisions.

How do mud brick homes and timber sub-floor constructions have to comply with 5 Star?

Until 30 April 2006, houses built with timber sub-floor construction and mud brick houses can meet the requirements of the standard by having:

- 5 Star energy rating for the building fabrics, or
- 4 Star energy rating for the building plus either a rainwater tank for toilet flushing or solar hot water system.