Fact sheet
new centralised Essential Safety Measures program

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| Essential Safety Measures are fundamental to ensuring a safe and securely built environment for all students, staff and visitors at government schools.Commencing in 2024, a new centralised model is being implemented to support schools with testing, inspection and reporting of Essential Safety Measures.  | What are ESSENTIAL SAFETY Measures?Essential Safety Measures (ESM) are the fire, safety and health items installed in a building. ESM items vary from building to building but can include exit lights, fire extinguishers and fire doors. In the event of an emergency, correctly maintained ESM help with safe evacuation. ESM items must be routinely inspected, tested and maintained and schools must record and report ESM activities annually.Schools are currently responsible for the inspection and testing of ESM items and preparation of an Annual Essential Safety Measure Report.What is a centralised ESM model?From 2024, a new centralised ESM model will be established to support schools to meet testing, inspection and reporting requirements. The Victoria School Building Authority (VSBA) will co-ordinate ESM inspection and testing through external providers for all government schools. |

What does This mean for my school?

From 2024, schools will no longer need to arrange the testing or inspection of ESM items.

Schools will remain responsible for maintaining, fixing, and rectifying any defective ESM items.

The VSBA will procure and manage ESM testing and inspections for all schools through a centralised model. This model expands on a pilot study implemented in 2021-2022. The pilot found a centralised model will:

* reduce administrative burden and compliance risks for schools
* improve levels of certainty, transparency and reliability around ESM compliance
* facilitate tracking of rectification requirements.

You will be notified ahead of ESM testing and inspections occurring under this centralised model, and the outcomes of this will be stored in the Asset Information Management System (AIMS) and accessible by your school. This will support schools in undertaking any maintenance or rectification works of ESM items.

Why is this happening?

Feedback received from school principals during the ESM pilot survey conducted in 2021-2022 demonstrated that ESM is a complex and time-consuming task for schools to deliver. The pilot also showed that the centralised model would reduce the administrative burden and time commitment for school principals. As such, the VSBA is implementing this new centralised model to improve outcomes for principal workload and wellbeing whilst still providing assurance that these critical ESM items are being properly inspected and tested.

Who will pay for this?

This centralised model of inspection and testing will be funded from the ESM component of the Student Resource Package, which is currently distributed to individual schools. This will be held centrally by the VSBA from the start of 2024 to fund the program.

Schools will continue to receive funding for rectification work through the Maintenance and Minor Works budget line in the SRP.

When will this occur?

The VSBA started procurement for ESM providers in early 2023. The new centralised model will be in place for all schools at the beginning of 2024.

What will happen with current providers who inspect and check our ESM?

The VSBA is procuring a new panel of qualified ESM service providers to undertake school ESM inspections and testing from Monday 1 January 2024. This panel should be finalised by late 2023.

Schools should ensure that any existing arrangements or contracts with ESM service providers for inspection, testing and rectification (if applicable) related to ESM items are terminated before Monday 1 January 2024.

It is important that schools review any existing contractual arrangements with their existing ESM service providers to activate any relevant termination provisions to ensure that the school is no longer in a contractual relationship with their ESM service provider beyond Sunday 31 December 2023.

Schools should contact the VSBA as soon as possible to discuss any questions they may have regarding termination of existing ESM arrangements, noting there may be notice periods to be complied with when providing a notice of termination to an ESM service provider.

Schools should begin discussions with their current ESM providers as soon as possible to address these upcoming changes. A [template letter](https://eduvic.sharepoint.com/%3Aw%3A/r/sites/SchoolUpdate/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7B456E5659-BD92-42E8-AFE4-853C3C83370E%7D&file=Letter%20for%20ESM%20providers%20about%20the%20new%20centralised%20ESM%20program%20for%202024.docx&action=default&mobileredirect=true) is available to help start the discussion with the school’s ESM service provider. The letter can be personalised to suit each ESM service provider. Schools should issue this letter to their ESM service providers by no later than Friday 1 September 2023. Please note the template letter does not terminate a school’s contractual arrangements with their ESM provider, and we remind the school to review any existing contractual arrangements with their existing ESM service providers.

For help in handling these discussions, or if you are unsure of your school’s current contractual obligations, contact the VSBA project team by email: esm.pilot@education.vic.gov.au

What do SCHOOLS NEED TO DO IN TERMS 3 AND 4?

Until Sunday 31 December 2023, schools will continue to be responsible for ensuring all ESM activities are completed and fixing defective ESM items.

Schools should actively continue completing ESM activities. Having completed their 2023 activities, schools should stop their 2024 orders and let any 2023 annual arrangements lapse. Where a school has questions about their ESM arrangements or their arrangements are of a longer duration, schools can contact the ESM team via email at esm.pilot@education.vic.gov.au or by calling 03 9139 7855.

I am part of the small schools PROGRAM, how will this affect me?

Schools participating in the small schools program will be supported under the ESM centralisation model. This will be organised in consultation with the relevant coordinator for the program.

What the new model will cover

The new centralised model will focus on the ESM components outlined in the ESM Maintenance Schedule and Annual ESM Report. These documents can be found using the Schools Documents link in the Facilities Management module of AIMS.

It is important to note the centralised model specifically excludes non-ESM items, such as electrical appliances and playground facilities.

Defects and Faults found in ESM items

Schools are responsible for rectifying any defective ESM items identified from the inspection and testing reports or from the annual audit report.

Schools can select a service provider to perform any rectification work needed on defects found.

How will I be notified of what ESM items need to be rectified?

Inspection and testing records will be saved in AIMS, and schools will receive defect notifications though AIMS that require their action.

Within the centralised model, service providers will have to submit all records of ESM inspection and testing. This includes identified ESM faults and defects.

Who can i Contact TO DISCUSS THIS CHANGE?

The VSBA’s ESM team is available to answer any questions your school or service provider may have. You can reach us via email at esm.pilot@education.vic.gov.au or by calling 03 9139 7855.