



Termite management

Part 2: In and around existing buildings and structures



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- Australian Building Codes Board
 - Australian Environmental Pest Managers Association
 - Cement Concrete & Aggregates Australia — Cement
 - CHOICE
 - Forest and Wood Products Australia
 - Housing Industry Association
 - Institute of Building Consultants
 - Master Builders Australia
 - Timber Preservers Association of Australia
 - Total Environment Centre
-

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Australian Standard®

Termite management

Part 2: In and around existing buildings and structures

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PREFACE

This Standard was prepared by the Standards Australia Committee BD-074, Termites, to supersede (in part) AS 3660.2—2000, *Termite management Part 2: In and around existing buildings and structures—Guidelines*.

The objective of this Standard is to provide a guide for building owners and others involved in the management of subterranean termites within and around existing buildings and structures.

The revision of this Standard takes into account current practice in the field of termite management for existing buildings and structures.

This Standard is part two in a series of standards on termite management. Other parts in the series are as follows:

AS

3660 Termite management

3660.1 Part 1: New building work

3660.3 Part 3: Assessment criteria for termite management systems

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this Australian Standard may be subject to patent rights. Standards Australia will not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights.

NOTE: This Standard does not include specific details of proprietary or patented systems. While reference may be made to use the existence of such systems, each system manufacturer claiming conformance with this Standard needs to demonstrate conformance with AS 3660.3—2014.

The committee is currently reviewing this Standard to align the list of naturally termite-resistant timbers (see Paragraph B5) to AS 5604.

The terms ‘normative’ and ‘informative’ are used in a Standard to define the application of the appendices or annexes to which they apply. A ‘normative’ appendix or annex is an integral part of a Standard, whereas an ‘informative’ appendix or annex is only for information and guidance.

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FOREWORD

Approximately 350 species of termites occur in Australia, about 30 of which achieve pest status. With the exception of a few dampwood and drywood termite species, all species of economic importance are soil-dwelling (subterranean) and have similar habits. Several have a wide geographic distribution.

Subterranean termites may eat timber and timber products or any material containing their principal food, cellulose, which may include the building contents such as furniture, printed materials, fabrics, clothing, footwear, packing cases and tools. Termites will also damage some non-cellulose materials, for example, plasterboard, inferior mortar, soft metals and plastics such as polyethylene piping, building sealants and rigid foam insulation.

Typically, termites form nests in the soil, near ground level in a tree, stump, or other suitable piece of wood. Sometimes the nest takes the form of a conical or dome-shaped above-ground mound. A colony may persist for many years and, as it matures, have a population running into millions. Attack by subterranean termites originates from the nest. Wood or timber lying on or buried in the ground may be reached by underground foraging galleries but attack may occur well above ground level either inside the wood or by way of mud-walled shelter-tubes 'plastered' on the outside. Timber resting on an impenetrable substructure may be reached by means of these shelter-tubes or through independent, freestanding columns built by the termites. In rare cases, where a source of permanent moisture, for example, leaking plumbing, is available to the termites within the building, subterranean termites can form a nest inside a building, without soil contact. Detection of such colonies may be delayed as these colonies will not necessarily make shelter tubes over inspection zones.

In rare instances timbers delivered to a property may contain small pockets of termites. However, these termites are highly unlikely to pose a hazard to the building, as they are the remnants of feeding parties of the main colony. Once isolated from the nest, the termites are unable to survive as the moisture content of the timber diminishes. The only exception to this is where an infested pole is re-installed into the ground of the new construction.

SECTION 1 SCOPE AND APPLICATION

1.1 SCOPE

This Standard provides guidance for the detection and management of subterranean termite ('termites') activity in and around existing buildings and structures. It provides information about both physical and chemical termite management systems for use in and around, buildings and structures. Termite management systems may be used either singly, or in combination, to provide an integrated system for existing buildings.

The Standard also sets out the steps to be followed to determine the extent of termite infestation in existing buildings, the actions taken to manage termite risk by controlling the termites' colonies, the use of termite-resistant materials, and methods for managing the risk of reinfestation by termites. Details for the certification of a treatment are included.

This Standard is not intended for use when providing a pre-purchase inspection report for any timber pest. Pre-purchase inspection is covered by AS 4349.3.

This Standard does not apply to the management of drywood or dampwood termites.

***CI.1** Drywood termites are economically important only in restricted coastal, tropical, subtropical and adjacent tableland areas of Australia. Unlike subterranean termites they do not construct galleries or tunnels connecting the infested timber with the soil but form their nest inside the wood upon which they feed and so may attack any piece of susceptible timber, regardless of its position in a building. The evidence of infestation by these species is the presence of dry granular faecal pellets, which may be stored in disused galleries or ejected through small openings in the surface of the wood. The termite management systems described in AS 3660.1 cannot deter entry by drywood termites, as these may simply fly to reach susceptible timber and initiate attack. Ants and drywood termites deposit a pile of superficially similar frass in the same place each day (e.g. under a window frame). A simple test to tell the difference between frass from ants and drywood termites is to gather a bit of frass in the palm of a hand, and rub the frass with the fingers of the other hand. Frass from ants will break apart. Frass from drywood termites will remain gritty. If potential drywood termite frass is found, contact your state or territory authorities.*

Dampwood termites are of economic importance along the Eastern Seaboard of Australia in forested or mountainous areas. They occasionally damage buildings. Like drywood termites, dampwood termites do not normally tunnel to reach food. They live confined within or near damp and decaying timber and tend to locate suitable food by flying in and starting a new colony. The termite management systems described in AS 3660.1 are not intended to manage dampwood termite risk. The risk of infestation by dampwood termites is generally avoided by having susceptible timber out of ground contact and managing moisture to low levels so that decay is not a problem. Attacks by dampwood termites are most common in damp, older buildings with poor ventilation and susceptible timbers in or close to the ground.

1.2 APPLICATION

This Standard is intended for use where termites pose an economic risk to buildings and structures and where management of that risk is required. This risk is regarded as significant throughout Australia, except in the state of Tasmania where the risk is negligible.

1.3 NEW SYSTEMS AND MATERIALS

This Standard is not to be interpreted as preventing the use of systems, system components or materials that have been assessed in accordance with AS 3660.3, but are not specifically referred to here.

1.4 REFERENCED DOCUMENTS

The following documents are referred to in this Standard:

AS

1604 Specification for preservative treatment

1604.1 Part 1: Sawn and round timber

1720 Timber structures

1720.2 Part 2: Timber properties

2543 Nomenclature of Australian timbers

2870 Residential slabs and footings—Construction

3959 Construction of buildings in bushfire-prone areas

3600 Concrete structures

3660 Termite management

3660.1 Part 1: New building work

3660.3 Part 3: Assessment criteria for termite management systems

4349 Inspection of buildings

4349.3 Part 3: Timber pest inspections

ABCB Australian Building Codes Board

NCC National Construction Code

1.5 DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this Standard the definitions below apply.

1.5.1 Baiting system

For the purpose of this Standard, this term is used to cover aggregation systems and systems where a termiticide is applied either in a bait matrix or onto termites feeding in baits.

NOTE: Aggregation devices may be supplemented with accessories or may be installed in pattern to form an aggregation system.

1.5.2 Breaching

The passing of termites through a hole or gap in a termite management system.

NOTE: Examples of breaches include the removal of a section of treated soil from a chemical soil termite management system, or a perforation or a disjunction in a physical management system.

1.5.3 Bridging

Termites gaining access to a structure by passing over or around a termite management system or inspection zone.

NOTE: Termites bridging a termite management system will often construct a shelter tube, which reveals their passage.

1.5.4 Chemical

A substance or substances, required to be registered by the pesticides registrar, for use in a termite management system in accordance with the pesticides registrar's approved label.

1.5.5 Colony

A termite colony consists of a group of termites that share a gallery system and work with a degree of cooperation. A colony may contain one or more reproductive groups.

1.5.6 Competent person

A person who has acquired through training, qualification, experience or a combination of these, the knowledge and skill enabling that person to correctly perform the required task.

NOTE: Australian competency standards relevant to termite risk management are currently under the specifications for CPP30115—Certificate III in Urban Pest Management. Achieving competence in the field typically requires a degree of experience and local knowledge.

1.5.7 Dampwood termites

Termites that nest and feed entirely within timber of high moisture content.

NOTES:

- 1 The timber is often degraded by wood-rotting fungi.
- 2 Dampwood termites do not usually travel through tunnels in the ground. Most dampwood termite infestations are *Porotermes*.

1.5.8 Drywood termites

Termites that nest and feed entirely within 'dry' timber (i.e. timber at equilibrium moisture content).

NOTE: Drywood termites do not have contact with the ground. The most common genus of drywood termites is *Kalotermes*.

1.5.9 False floor

The floor built over another floor including a stage, dais or platform.

1.5.10 Impede

To interfere with the progress of termites.

1.5.11 Impervious soil

The condition whereby the application of 5 L/m² or 100 L/m³ of liquid chemical would result in run off, for example, clay soil.

1.5.12 Inspection zone

An unobstructed space over which termites have to cross or pass in order to gain access to a building or structure and, as a consequence, reveal their presence during visual inspection.

1.5.13 Monitoring system

Aggregation system and systems where the provision of a highly palatable food source is used as a bait or lure to aggregate termites and/or allow the exposure of termite activity.

NOTE: This does not exclude a monitoring system that utilizes a food source that contains a termiticide in a bait matrix.

1.5.14 Pesticides registrar

The government body responsible for the registration of pesticides.

NOTE: Currently, the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) coordinates the registration scheme.

1.5.15 Shall

Indicates that a statement is mandatory.

1.5.16 Should

Indicates a recommendation.

1.5.17 Subterranean termites

Termites that, in order to reach sources of food and moisture, move through the soil from their nest, which is commonly located below ground level, at ground level, in trees or on trees.

NOTE: Common genera of subterranean termites include *Coptotermes*, *Mastotermes*, *Schedorhinotermes*, *Nasutitermes* and *Heterotermes*.

1.5.18 Termite management system

A product or a coordinated system designed to mitigate the risk of concealed access by subterranean termites causing significant damage to a structure.

NOTE: Termite management systems are typically comprised of integrated components, inspection zones and inspection regime.

1.5.19 Termite-resistant

The ability of materials or components to withstand the effects of termites to such an extent that the materials and components are not functionally impaired.

1.5.20 Termiticide

A chemical product, approved by the pesticides registrar which is used to kill termites.

SECTION 2 IDENTIFICATION AND MANAGEMENT OF TERMITE RISK

2.1 SCOPE OF SECTION

This section details common termite risk factors and the processes for inspecting for termites.

2.2 GENERAL

The purpose of termite management systems is to impede concealed termite entry into buildings. Termites can build around termite management systems, but visible evidence of termites or their workings can then be more readily detected during regular, competent inspections.

NOTES:

- 1 Australian competency standards relevant to termite risk management are currently under the specifications for CPP30115—Certificate III in Urban Pest Management.
- 2 Information on the inspection and detection of termite infestation and recognition of termites is given in Section 3 and Appendix A.

C2.2 After the discovery of an infestation in an existing building it is important that the termite workings remain undisturbed until the method of management has been determined. Infestations can be controlled by the direct destruction of the nest, or indirectly by the use of a termiticide registered for that purpose. A basic knowledge of the habits of subterranean termites, sound common building practices and attention to detail will assist in keeping termite management systems effective. If a termite management system is installed or repaired, termites trapped within the building can remain active for an extended period, possibly in excess of a year.

2.3 TYPES OF TERMITE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Where a termite management system has an inspection zone as defined in AS 3660.1 or other building approval, this zone shall be maintained.

Termite management system installations may include a variety of approaches such as the following:

- (a) Suspended floor systems.
- (b) Sheet material termite management systems.
- (c) Soil chemical termite management systems.
- (d) Graded particle termite management systems.
- (e) Concrete slabs.

Termite management systems typically involve a combination of components. The age and nature of the building dictates the type of system that may have been installed, if any. Buildings approved since July 1995 with termite management systems in accordance with AS 3660.1 should have a durable notice affixed to the building which indicates the type of termite management systems installed.

Determining the type and location of some of these systems may be difficult, particularly in slab-on-ground construction.

NOTE: See Bibliography for further reading on these topics.

2.4 GROUNDS AND SURROUNDS

Where perimeter termite management systems have been installed with a defined inspection zone, no changes to finished ground level, paving, retaining walls, fixtures, vegetation or other contacting items which provide scope for concealed termite passage shall bridge the inspection zone.

The building of gardens or planting of shrubs close to the perimeter of the building may promote termite activity. Gardens, shrubs and trees shall not block visual inspection of the building perimeter. While obstructions may conceal termite activity at the inspection zone, garden beds, mulch, ponds, raised paving and other impedimenta may provide high humidity or reduced drying airflows which make it easier for termites to construct and maintain their shelter tubes. This is especially important where an exposed slab edge is used as an inspection zone around the building or where a raised ground level allows termites to easily access masonry weepholes.

Where new building or landscaping work to existing buildings is to be contemplated, advice should be sought from a competent person experienced in termite control to ensure that any termite management systems are not bridged or breached, and to ensure that appropriate termite management procedures are implemented.

2.5 ITEMS ADJACENT TO BUILDINGS

2.5.1 Attachments to buildings

Where any part of an attachment provided to a building is not isolated as part of a termite management system or is not provided with an effective inspection zone, the attachment shall be placed so as to be separated by a clear gap of not less than 25 mm from the building in accordance with AS 3660.1. Where it is not possible to separate existing attachments from the building, frequent inspections of these areas shall be undertaken to provide early detection of infestation. The frequency of inspection shall be advised by a competent person and the interval between inspections shall not exceed one calendar year.

Structures such as steps, verandahs, decks or attachments such as downpipes, fences, service conduits (e.g. telephone cables) often present opportunities for concealed entry by subterranean termites. Therefore, these items need to be frequently inspected for termite activity.

Bridging occurs when items such as stored materials, firewood, landscaping and gardens, attachments to buildings, such as hot water heaters, verandahs, steps, pergolas, cladding, carports, and the like, provide access for termites to enter the building over or around a termite management system component.

2.5.2 Timber fences and landscape timbers

Timber fences and landscaping timbers, where they contact a building, shall be installed and/or inspected in accordance with Clause 2.5.1. Any part of a timber fence or landscaping timber that is in contact with the ground increases the risk of termite infestation.

NOTES:

- 1 All timber in contact with the ground should be termite-resistant and decay-resistant.
- 2 See Appendix B for the list of naturally termite-resistant timbers.

See Appendix C for preservative treatment for timbers intended for exposure situations where the risk of fungal decay and termite attack is anticipated.

Chemical treatment to the soil around and beneath fence posts or behind and beneath a timber retaining wall does not necessarily provide a barrier to termites.

A 50 mm gap between fence palings and the soil will reduce the risk of termite attack or fungal decay.

The type of building construction may determine the degree of susceptibility of the building to termite infestation. The ability of building materials to be attacked by termites will influence the extent of the damage from infestation. The options for management of termite infestations may also be limited by building type and access.

An understanding of termite management systems and conditions conducive to termite attack will enable the building owner to carry out their maintenance obligations after the completion of any new building work or re-establishment of chemical systems.

Reliable termite management is more easily achieved where there are no inaccessible areas under the structure. Areas that cannot be reached for inspections do not allow access to implement management procedures.

2.6 CONSTRUCTION TYPES

2.6.1 General

The susceptibility of a building to termite infestation varies according to location, design, construction and the quality of maintenance. The ability of building materials to resist attack by termites will influence the extent of the damage from infestation. The options for the inspection and management of termite infestations may also be limited by building type and access. A termite management plan for a building shall take account of the management limitations imposed by the types of construction. Where a structure may contain elements not in accordance with AS 3660.1, the limitations of that non-conformance shall be explained in any management plan.

An understanding of termite management systems and conditions conducive to termite attack will enable the building owner to carry out their maintenance obligations after the completion of any new building work or re-establishment of termite management systems.

Reliable termite management is more easily achieved where there are no inaccessible areas under the structure. Areas that cannot be reached for inspections do not allow access to implement management procedures.

2.6.2 Areas under floors

Where suspended floors are provided with clearance for inspection in accordance with Clause 3.3.2 of AS 3660.1, the under-floor space shall be kept free of debris, stored items and any added fixtures such as ducting which would reduce the required inspection clearances. The space beneath suspended constructions at the building perimeter such as steps, patios, verandahs and landings shall be kept free from debris that reduces access for inspection.

Debris that encourages termite activity includes timber offcuts, formwork, firewood and items stored on or close to the ground.

Storage of materials in sub-floor areas is not recommended as it reduces ventilation space and makes inspection difficult. Installations such as air conditioning ducts and service pipes shall allow for adequate access and ventilation.

Measures taken to manage the risks of termite attack shall not, in areas of bushfire risk, compromise measures of design and construction in accordance with AS 3959.

In some bushfire-prone areas, the requirement for protection from sparks and embers may conflict with some options for termite management. Before implementing any bushfire protection measures, the building owner should discuss details with a builder, designer, or a competent person experienced in termite management to ensure that adequate ventilation openings are maintained and inspection zones are not bridged.

2.6.3 Drainage

Where practicable, the soil under a suspended floor and the ground surrounding a building shall be graded in accordance with the deemed-to-satisfy provisions of the NCC. Water, other than waters running off walls or perimeter paving, shall be collected in drains to discharge not less than 2 m from the building perimeter, away from the building.

Soil moisture is a major predictor of termite attack. Excessive levels of soil moisture or areas of soil that do not dry quickly will encourage termites to feed nearby. The soil under the floor should remain as dry as possible. Free moisture (condensation) and high humidity also encourages fungal decay of timber and termites may be attracted to some levels or forms of timber decay. The efficiency of the drainage provided shall be evaluated and, where necessary, improvements made to reduce the dampness of the under-floor soil.

C2.6.3 *The competent person performing an inspection may assess sub-floor drainage by looking for:*

- (a) *Signs of water accumulation against any perimeter wall footings, where the soil has not been properly backfilled leaving a trough inside the perimeter wall.*
- (b) *Signs of water accumulation around the base of stumps, e.g. in any depression around the stumps which may have been formed following the activities of a pest manager providing a chemical application.*
- (c) *Signs that any scrap timbers on the soil in the sub-floor are wetter and/or heavier than average.*
- (d) *Signs that excessive moisture has been moving up through perimeter brickwork, e.g. presence of thick layer of 'salt damp' on the internal faces of perimeter brickwork.*
- (e) *Mud, dampness or wetting of the clothing during the inspection of the sub-floor, perhaps together with the appearance of any wet soil on the soles of the boots worn in the sub-floor by the inspecting competent person.*

Water pipes, roof water disposal and stormwater drains shall be kept free of leaks and blockages and should discharge as far as practicable from the building.

Ground surfaces, paving, gardens and any added soil or mulch shall be kept graded to ensure that moisture does not pond or accumulate in any area.

2.6.4 Clearances

The clearance of the floor structure from the ground is an important element in termite management. Where practicable, access for inspection shall be provided in accordance with Table 3.1 and the deemed-to-satisfy provisions of the NCC, and maintained between the finished ground and any sub-floor components (e.g. bearers, joists, ducts or services).

2.6.5 Ventilation

The ventilation of sub-floor areas is important to reduce moisture under the floor areas and to retard fungal growth in timbers. Where practicable, sub-floor ventilation shall be provided in conformance with the deemed-to-satisfy provisions of the NCC, and be maintained.

SECTION 3 INSPECTION AND DETECTION

3.1 SCOPE OF SECTION

This section sets out the procedure for the inspection and detection of termite activity and termite-conducive conditions with a view to determining appropriate termite management options for the property.

3.2 GENERAL

A visual inspection may be undertaken by the building owner, occupier or a competent person. Appropriate inspection of buildings for the actions of subterranean termites is necessary across mainland Australia, including all inhabited islands North of Bass Strait.

An inspection shall take account of the potential impacts of local building practice, the biology and ecology of termites, indications of infestation or conditions conducive to infestation. In general the inspection shall rely upon the competent person's knowledge of termites including the manner in which they work, the places where they are likely to be found and the signs that indicate their presence.

This Standard recognizes that inspections are provided for different purposes and that the nature and extent of appropriate inspection varies with the task at hand. For inspection of a property prior to purchase the additional provisions of AS 4349.3 apply. For an initial inspection of a property the appropriate inspection is the regular inspection. For inspections carried out as part of a process of actions to control or limit termite activity arising from infestation, suspected infestation, as an extension to an earlier regular inspection, or works involving termite management system components, and where such inspections occur not more than six months apart, the appropriate inspection level is the special inspection.

C3.2 After the discovery of an active infestation, it is important that the termite workings are not further disturbed until the proposed method of management has been determined. Premature attempts to treat, repair or replace infested timber may cause the termites to withdraw from the area temporarily, thereby hindering effective management (see Clause 3.4.5). Any repair or replacement of timber should preferably be carried out after an appropriate action referred to in Section 5 has been completed.

3.3 INSPECTION

3.3.1 Types of inspection

Inspection falls into two categories, the regular inspection to be undertaken at least annually and the special purpose inspection which is either carried out as part of ongoing works or as part of termite risk management system maintenance.

3.3.2 Inspection

3.3.2.1 Application

The requirements for a regular inspection shall be followed where:

- (a) A new infestation of termites has been reported or is suspected.
- (b) Where a building has been supplied with a termite management system in accordance with AS 3660.1.
- (c) Where a building does not have a termite management system in accordance with AS 3660.1.
- (d) Where a building has undergone extension, ground level renovations involving floors, changes to attachments, finished ground levels such that the existing termite management system may have been compromised and all such works have effectively reached the stage of completion.