

# Minimum standards for maintenance and repair of heritage places

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## Introduction

This document sets out Heritage Victoria's expectations in relation to minimum standards of maintenance and repair of places included in the Victorian Heritage Register in accordance with the *Heritage Act 2017 (the Act)*. This information is provided in accordance with s.19(2) of the Act.

These standards relate to:

- weather protection
- fire protection
- security
- essential maintenance, and
- insurance.

Guidance is also provided for maintaining unoccupied places, and for places which have been affected by an emergency or disaster.

## What are my legal obligations as the owner of a State listed heritage place?

State significant heritage places are included in the Victorian Heritage Register, established under the *Heritage Act 2017 (the Act)*. This legislation is administered by Heritage Victoria in the Department of Transport and Planning and the Heritage Council of Victoria, an independent statutory authority.

A place listed in the Victorian Heritage Register is legally protected. As the owner of a listed heritage asset you have obligations under the Act to maintain it to the extent that its conservation is not threatened (s.153), and to ensure that it does not fall into a state of disrepair (s.152).

Owners are also obliged to seek permits or permit exemptions in accordance with Part 5 of the Act before undertaking any change to their registered place or object, unless the works and activities are covered by existing exemptions specific to their registered place ('specific exemptions'), or [general permit exemptions](#) established under s.92(1) of the Act. Significant penalties may apply if works are undertaken without approval.

If you allow your registered place to fall into disrepair, or if you fail to maintain the place to the extent its conservation is threatened, Heritage Victoria may issue a repair order for the carrying out of works. Failure to comply with a repair order may result in a significant financial penalty and/or imprisonment.

## How can I be compliant?

The regular expenditure of a small amount of funds for maintenance is much better for a building, and more cost effective, than large injections of capital every 20 years or so. People often think that once a building has been 'restored' it doesn't need to be looked at again for many years. But many major repairs to heritage places could have been prevented if simple things like leaking downpipes and gutters had been cleaned out or repaired quickly. Generally, maintenance costs for heritage places are no greater than what would be required for an unlisted property.

It is necessary to inspect a place at least every 12 months to identify maintenance and repair requirements. This inspection should be carried out by a person with expertise and experience appropriate to the nature of the place.

### General exemptions

In December 2022, [general permit exemptions](#) were introduced under s.92(1) of the Act, which allow certain categories of works and activities to be undertaken at registered places without a permit or permit exemption. A broad range of maintenance and repair works are permitted under general exemptions, if all requirements and conditions can be met. You may need to apply for a permit or permit exemption under Part 5 of the Act if your works and activities are not covered by general exemptions or specific exemptions.



## Record keeping

Records should be kept of any inspection or works undertaken at your place. It may be helpful to keep a logbook of observations, a description of the work required, and dates of completion. An inspection schedule template is available at Appendix A of this document.

Additionally, if you are undertaking maintenance and repair works in accordance with general exemptions, you may wish to lodge a *General Exemptions Record Form* in [Heritage DESK](#). This form will save a digital record of works and activities undertaken at your place and can be accessed any time via your Heritage DESK dashboard. This information is confidential, and will be visible only to you and Heritage Victoria.

## The standards

### Weather protection

Maintain and repair the following systems or components:

- surface and sub-surface drainage systems, including clearing of blockages
- rainwater goods (gutters, rainwater heads, downpipes and stormwater drainage systems) including clearing of blockages and debris
- water storages, dams, ponds, retention basins, watercourses, batters, levee banks, sea walls, and other flood or erosion mitigation measures
- roofs, walls, doors and windows (including glazing) and other components intended to exclude sun, rain, wind, hail, snow or other weather elements, including their security against the effects of high winds
- damp proof courses, flashings, ventilation systems and other measures intended to prevent the ingress of water or dampness or to reduce its effects
- lightning conductors.

Doors and windows may, as a temporary alternative to being repaired, be boarded up only if a place is unoccupied.

Weather protection should also consider risks associated with damage by falling trees and branches, tidal inundation or wave action.

Weather protection systems or components should be to the standard necessary to achieve a reasonable level of weather protection.

During construction periods, temporary measures must be taken to safeguard buildings against water ingress, wind, trespass or any other incident that may cause damage as a result of works being underway.

### Fire protection

Remove vegetation, rubbish and other material that could create a fire hazard. This material should not be allowed to accumulate. It should be noted that vegetation and other items can be of heritage significance or be the subject other legislative protections and their removal may require the approval of Heritage Victoria, the local council, or another government department.

Maintain and repair the following standards or components:

- landscaping and surrounds
- fire detection and control systems, including smoke and heat detectors and fire sprinkler systems and including associated alarm and communication systems
- chimneys and flues should be fit for purpose, in good condition, and cleaned
- building services such as electricity, gas and heating systems, and their conduits
- access to water for firefighting
- lightning conductors.

Also, remove stores of flammable materials or rubbish.

These standards and components should be to the standard necessary to ensure a reasonable level of protection for the place against damage or destruction by fire.

### Security

Maintain and repair the following systems or components:

- 
- boundary and internal fences and gates, including associated locking mechanisms
  - in the case of a building; the walls, roof and other building elements, doors, windows and other closures, including glazing and associated locking and latching mechanisms
  - any electronic surveillance or alarm system installed on the site
  - any other system or component designed to ensure the security of the place or object.

Security systems or components should be to the standard necessary to ensure a reasonable level of security for the place.

## Essential maintenance and repair

Essential maintenance and repair is the maintenance and repair necessary to prevent serious or irreparable damage or deterioration. This must be carried out whenever necessary.

The requirement for essential maintenance and repair extends to (but is not limited to):

- foundations, footings and supporting structure
- structural elements such as walls, columns, beams, floors, roof and roof structures, and verandah or balcony structures
- exterior and interior finishes and details
- systems and components (such as ventilators or ventilation systems) intended to reduce or prevent damage due to dampness
- fixtures, fittings and moveable objects attached to the place or to its curtilage or site
- pest control (termites, rodents, birds and other vermin)
- the taking of measures to maintain a stable environment for in-situ archaeological sites or artefacts
- landscape elements on the site of and associated with the place, including vegetation, garden walls, paths, fences, statuary, ornaments and the like.

## Insurance

There are no special requirements regarding the type of cover you need for a place included in the Victorian Heritage Register, unless your property has special considerations (for example if the place is vacant, needs rewiring, or has a commercial use). However, the true value of the place must be carefully considered. There are circumstances in which Heritage Victoria may require reconstruction using the same materials and replicating original features.

It is the condition of a place that is the most critical factor for an insurer in deciding whether to underwrite a heritage listed property. Insurers will examine how well a property has been maintained with particular attention to areas such as the state of electrical wiring and plumbing.



## Additional protection for unoccupied places

Unoccupied places are vulnerable to damage and neglect. This threatens not only their conservation and heritage values but can also jeopardise public safety.

Additional fire protection and security measures should be undertaken for the protection of a place that is to be unoccupied for a continuous period of 60 days or more.

The use of a building for storage of goods or materials does not constitute occupation of the building for the purposes of these standards, if the place ordinarily has another use or is a building of a kind not ordinarily used for storage.

It should be noted that any works to an unoccupied place must be in accordance with a permit or permit exemption from Heritage Victoria as relevant for the works.

### Additional fire protection

Additional fire protection measures:

- heating or gas services should be shut down, gas or oil supply to those services must be turned off at the mains or other points of connection to supply, and portable gas or oil storages must be removed
- permanent or temporary smoke detection systems with a permanent power supply should be installed with associated communication systems connected to the fire brigade and, if the building will be unoccupied for a period of six months or more.

### Additional security

Additional security measures:

- if an electronic surveillance or alarm system is installed, the system should be connected to a commercial security provider with 24/7 response capability
- if no electronic surveillance or alarm system is installed, arrangements must be in place for regular surveillance of the building, as appropriate to its nature and location
- temporary boarding of doors and windows in a manner that allows for continued ventilation while preventing unauthorised access
- regular removal of mail, advertising, or any other material that may suggest that the building is not being actively monitored, is required.

### Insurance

There are particular risks associated with unoccupied buildings. Your insurer should be notified as soon as the place becomes vacant to ensure that the required level of insurance cover is maintained.



## Responding to an emergency or disaster

Following an emergency or a disaster, urgent action may need to be undertaken to secure or stabilise the place.

### Safety first

During an emergency or disaster situation, the officer in charge of the emergency services will decide which areas are safe to enter.

### Input from professionals

Emergencies such as fires and floods present particular challenges that will need to be addressed with input from professionals.

Be aware that some post-incident responses promoted by loss adjusters and insurance contractors may be highly damaging to historic fabric and in breach of the Act. It is strongly recommended you engage with Heritage Victoria before commencing any works.

### Stabilise the place

Structural propping or other stabilisation may be required to halt any subsequent deterioration. Work with a structural engineer or other specialist to determine the best approach to this.

### Weather protection

It is crucial to reinstate weather protection as soon as possible after the incident. Temporary measures may include:

- reinstatement or clearing of surface and sub-surface drainage to ensure water flow away from the place
- reinstatement of roofs, walls, doors, windows and components intended to exclude weather
- reinstatement or clearing of roof drainage systems
- reinstatement or repair of flood or erosion mitigation measures
- reinstatement or repair of flashings and other measures to prevent water ingress.

This should be followed by more permanent reinstatement measures in consultation with Heritage Victoria.

### Preventing rot or other deterioration

Trapped moisture can result in mould growth and decay, and measures to promote the progressive drying of the building will be required to reduce the risk of deterioration. Specialist cleaning and decontamination is likely to be required. However, stripping out wet elements may cause more damage than the event itself. It is strongly recommended you engage with Heritage Victoria before commencing any works.

### Security of building

It is important to secure the site as soon as possible after any incident. This may include:

- reinstatement or repair of building elements and closures
- reinstatement or repair of boundary and internal security
- reinstatement of electronic surveillance or any other system or component designed to ensure the security of the place.

All access to the place during repair or reinstatement works should be carefully controlled and monitored.

In addition, safeguard any elements that might be at risk. This may involve the establishment of extra protection to avoid inadvertent damage during stabilisation and repair works.



## Security of objects

If there are objects integral to the place, these should be secured and stored in a safe place in consultation with Heritage Victoria. Depending on the scale of the incident, this may require temporary off-site storage.

## Appendix A: Inspection schedule template





## Weather protection

Building element	Inspect for	When
<b>Drainage systems</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Blocked or broken stormwater and sewer lines that require clearing or repair.	As they occur
	<input type="checkbox"/> Clearing of blocked gutters and downpipes.	As they occur
	<input type="checkbox"/> Broken water service or leaking faucets and toilet cisterns.	As they occur
	<input type="checkbox"/> Inspect stormwater dish drains and sumps for blocks caused by rubbish, leaves or silt. Check if water lies in sumps as this can indicate a total or partial blockage or inadequate fall in line. Ensure hose taps discharge into gullies and ensure gullies and sump gratings are operable and not damaged, and sit square. Check whether stormwater drains into sewer system.	Every 4-12 months
	<input type="checkbox"/> Inspect sewerage sumps for damaged grates and ensure these are not draining surface water.	Every 2 years
	<input type="checkbox"/> Inspect taps for drips and ease of operation. Are taps and surface-run pipes secured to walls or supports? Look for wet areas within the property grounds and gardens during dry periods – this can indicate a broken pipe.	Every 2 years
<b>Rainwater goods</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Inspect stainless steel and copper goods for gutters deformed, bent or squashed by ladders and for gutters that are over strapped.	Every 7 years
	<input type="checkbox"/> Inspect cast iron goods for cracked or broken pipes and defective joints. Retain broken sections for repair.	Every 7 years
	<input type="checkbox"/> Inspect steel goods for rust stains around downpipe outlets, internal/external corners, beneath tree overhangs and downpipe offsets and shoes. Ensure gutter does not collect water run-off from copper flashings or from	Every 2 years



	<p>roof above that will corrode gutter.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Inspect gutter and downpipe joints for cracks. Are there drips to the underside? Are there loose or missing brackets to gutters and downpipes?</p> <p>q Clear gutters including guards if installed, sumps and rainwater heads of leaves and rubbish each autumn, trim overhanging trees. Check if gutters are sagging and water falls to outlets. Ensure leaf guards to outlets, rainwater heads and sumps sit correctly and are clear of debris.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Growth, moss or stains surrounding downpipes can indicate blockages. Look for downpipes that are squashed or damaged and restrict water flow. Check if downpipes are connected to the stormwater system and, if so, whether joints are sound. Check that stormwater drains are not blocked.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Check whether birds are nesting on downpipe offsets and polluting the building, or whether bird proofing, if installed, is adequate and sound.</p>	<p>Every 2 years</p> <p>Every 4-12 months</p> <p>Every 2 years</p> <p>Every 4-12 months</p>
<b>Water storage and protection measures</b>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Check water storages, dams, ponds, retention basins, batters, levee banks, sea walls and other flood and erosion mitigation measures.</p>	<p>Every 5-10 years or during flood events</p>
<b>Roofs</b>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Inspect slate/terracotta roofs for those that have slipped, cracked or broken or for tiles that have become porous</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Inspect copper/zinc roofs for loose or raised fixings and sheet edges, soldered joints that have cracked or areas that have dented. Copper should not have through fixings.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Inspect steel roofs for loose or raised fixings, sheet edges and surfaces that are deformed from</p>	<p>Every 7 years</p> <p>Every 7 years</p> <p>Every 7 years</p>



	<p>being walked on. Look for rust stains around fixings, where sheets are lapped and around flashings. Check for dissimilar metals at flashings. Loose fixings can indicate batten failure.</p>	Every 2 years
	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Inspect membrane for lifting joints, surface blisters or physical damage and cracks. Check on hot days and after rain as surface dries. Cracks can then be seen wet as the heat draws up moisture.</p>	Every 7 years
	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Inspect timber shingles for those that have slipped, are cracked, decayed or badly deformed.</p>	Every 2 years
	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Inspect flashings for loose or raised fixings to metal cappings, cappings that have lifted, slipped or are deformed from wind damage. Check whether capping tiles have cracked or broken mortar bedding, have slipped or are missing.</p>	Every 4-12 months
	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Remove rubbish and leaves and check vent pipes for missing or damaged roof cowls or wire basket cowls.</p>	Annually
	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Inspect eaves for holes from old service pipes where birds can nest, and for surface stains to fascia and soffit that can indicate roof or valley and gutter failure. Check ventilation holes</p>	Every 7 years
	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Inspect eaves for paint failure and/or decay to linings. This can indicate roof covering failure.</p>	Annually
	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Identify cobwebs and wasp or hornet nests for removal.</p>	
<b>Walls</b>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Inspect stonework for for loose, fretted, broken or missing mortar joints to stones around windows, doors, along flashings and on cornices and other projections. Check stonework for crumbling or surface salts; this can indicate a moisture problem.</p>	Every 5 years
	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Inspect stonework for signs of delamination that can affect the</p>	Every 5 years



soundness of stone. Is there rising or falling damp? Has an appropriate mortar been used to joints? Inspect for incompatible mortars where lime was originally used.

Every 5 years

Inspect brickwork for loose, fretted, broken or missing mortar joints and bricks. Check if the brickwork is crumbling or has surface salts; this can indicate a moisture problem.

Every 5 years

Are ventilators blocked or covered over with soil? If rendered, is the render cracked or drummy? Has an appropriate mortar been used in joints? Have the original ventilators been replaced with an appropriate type, for example, terracotta instead of cast iron?

Every 5 years

If inappropriate ventilators have been used to increase sub-floor ventilation, replace with an appropriate type and add additional ventilators.

Every 7 years

Inspect for loose or missing weatherboards, corner stops and mouldings.

Every 7 years

Check around window sills where weatherboards are in contact with the ground for weathering and potential decay.

Every 2 years

Inspect fibre cement elements for broken or damaged sheets, loose or missing trim and cover strips.

Every 4-12 months

Inspect areas for grime, growth from joints, bird excretion and graffiti. Is there any sign of pest, rodent, termite or vermin infestation?

**Doors and windows**

Inspect windows for loose or damaged mouldings, architraves, decayed stiles at sill level, weathered sills, sashes that bind, noisy pulley wheels that need to be oiled, and sash cords that are decayed or broken. Check strength by raising weight by

Every 2 years



	<p>hand and dropping – if cord is sound it will carry weight at bottom of drop. Inspect for loose or decayed sash joints and broken or cracked glass or putty. Check internal faces around windows for stains that can indicate failed flashing.</p>	Every 2 years
	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Inspect doors for loose jambs, decay at the threshold or damage from locks being forced. Is the threshold secure, decayed, excessively worn or broken? Are mouldings or stops secure and does the door operate satisfactorily? Are door joints firm, mouldings missing or damaged? Has the glass broken or cracked? Is the furniture secure or missing and defective? Check if the door requires a stop to prevent damage to the door or walls when opened.</p>	Every 2 years
	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Generally, check whether hardware operates properly, or is loose, inadequate or damaged.</p>	Every 2 years
	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Do doors and windows operate satisfactorily?</p>	Every 3 years
	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Inspect window sills for paint deterioration and weathering.</p>	Every 3 years
	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Inspect doors and frames for paint deterioration, failure or damage and grime.</p>	Every 7 years
	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Inspect timber cladding for joints cracking, putty coming away from fixings, cracking paint, blisters or fading of colours. Stains can indicate a moisture problem.</p>	
<b>Lightning conductors</b>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Check for damage or loose connections.</p>	Every 12 months
<b>Storm damage</b>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Check for storm damage to grounds or building fabric.</p>	As they occur



## Fire protection

Building element	Inspect for	When
<b>Generally</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Identify trees and shrubs requiring pruning. Note pruning large trees, especially those of heritage significance, should only be undertaken by an arborist. Pruning should be undertaken in accordance with Australian Standards.	Annually
	<input type="checkbox"/> Check for vegetation, rubbish, stores of inflammable material and any other material that could create a fire hazard.	Every 4-12 months
	<input type="checkbox"/> Check electricity, gas and heating systems for fire risk.	Every 4-12 months
	<input type="checkbox"/> Sweep chimney	Every 1-2 years
<b>Fire detection and control systems</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Check fire safety systems	As they occur

## Security

Building element	Inspect for	When
<b>Generally</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Vandalism or break and enter damage to windows and doors.	As they occur
	<input type="checkbox"/> Check security and fencing.	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Inspect for damaged or defective light fittings and switches.	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Inspect for failed incandescent light bulbs or fluorescent tubes.	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Inspect for broken or defective locks and latches, replacement of keys or lock cylinders.	



## Essential maintenance and repair



<b>Structure</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Are timber members secure and true?	Every 7 years
	<input type="checkbox"/> Are there any cracks in the masonry?	Every 5 years
	<input type="checkbox"/> Is there any sign of rust in steel structural elements? Are fixings secure?	Every 7 years
	<input type="checkbox"/> Are verandah posts stable and sound? Are there any signs of structural distress (movement, cracking) which a structural engineer should inspect?	Every 7 years

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