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Compliance is more than a clean panel

Fire compliance strategies for higher education facilities

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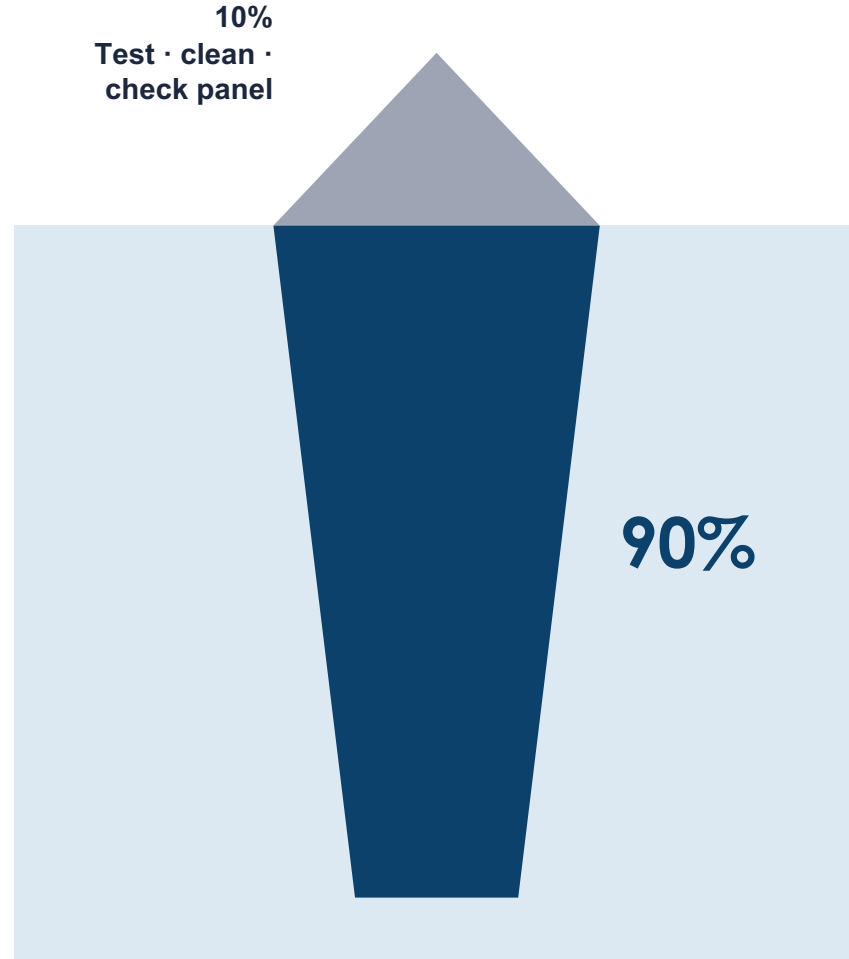
10%

**of what fire compliance requires is
what most maintenance contracts
deliver.**

Testing detectors and wiping them down is necessary. It is not enough — and the other 90% is where institutions get caught out.

The other 90%

What a routine maintenance visit usually doesn't cover



1

Documentation

Block plan, logbook, O&M manual and valid SANS 10139 certificates — the first thing anyone asks for after an incident.

2

Design fit

Renovations, new partitions and changes of use can leave detectors in the wrong place, or leave areas uncovered.

3

Performance

Cause-and-effect testing: does an alarm shut down the HVAC, release the doors and recall the lifts?

4

Lifecycle

Device age, OEM support status and a funded replacement plan.

5

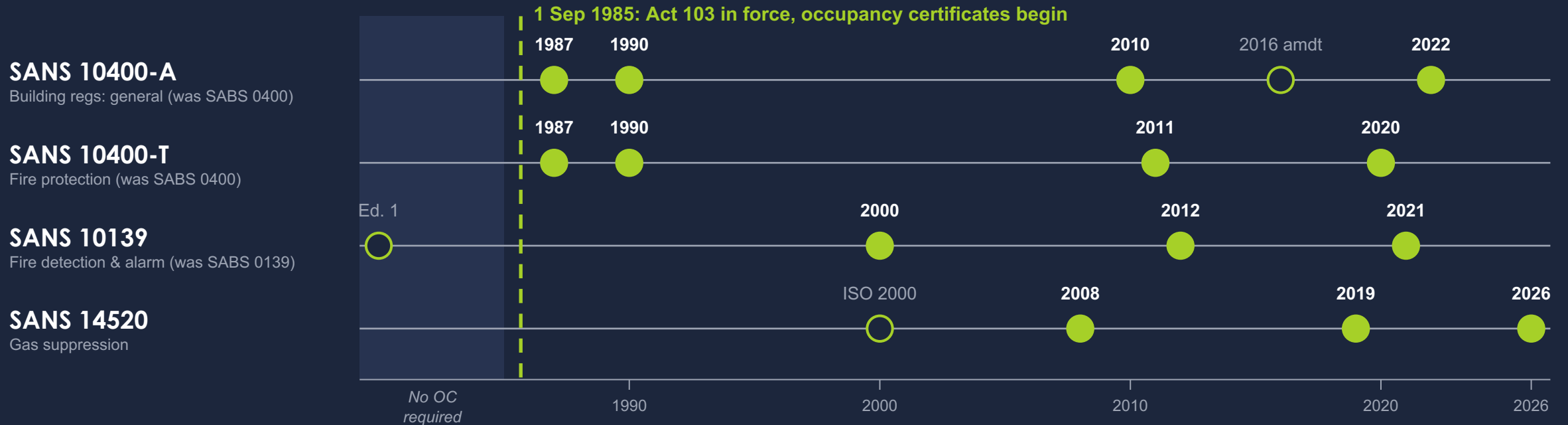
Competence

SAQCC-registered people doing the work, and someone qualified signing it off.

Compliance has a date stamp



A campus building could have been approved under any of these versions. Which one applies to yours?



Design compliance

Measured against the code in force when the building was approved.

Ongoing compliance

Measured against today's standards, OEM requirements and maintenance duties, whatever the building's age.

Responsibility can be delegated. **Accountability cannot.**

Some duties can't be outsourced

SANS 10139:2021 places these on the institution, not the contractor

What the standard asks of you

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| Clause 13 | Appoint a single, named Responsible Person for each system |
| Clause 13 | Check the control panel at least every 24 hours |
| Clause 12 | Test manual call points weekly |
| Clause 12 | Keep the logbook up to date |

What you must demand from your provider

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| Expertise | Current knowledge of every edition that applies to your estate |
| Servicing | Inspection and servicing at intervals of no more than six months |
| Honesty | Gaps reported plainly, never assumed compliant |
| Evidence | Records that will stand up after an incident |

Responsibility can be delegated. **Accountability cannot.**

Case study

One of the biggest universities in South Africa · estate-wide inspection, February 2026

The same gaps, building after building



No named Responsible Person

No evidence one had been appointed



No daily panel checks

Nothing documented for the 24-hour check



No weekly call point tests

No records of weekly testing



Logbooks missing

Absent, or present but not kept



System category undefined

The design intent of the system unknown



Panels not monitored

Alarms and faults not reaching a staffed control room

Four of these six are the institution's own duties.

The healthy panel that scored 60

Building A: four-storey office and restaurant block, 94 addressable devices

60

out of 100

A technician would have signed this panel off as healthy.

What routine maintenance checks

55 / 55

● Power on panel	10/10
● No faults on panel	15/15
● No fire conditions	10/10
● No disabled devices	10/10
● Cable type	10/10

What nobody wipes down

5 / 45

● User instructions	5/5
● Block plan	0/5
● Logbook & holder	0/5
● O&M manual	0/10
● System category	0/5
● Battery calculation	0/5
● Battery marking	0/5
● Dedicated breaker	0/5

Age is a separate risk



Passing an inspection today isn't protection from tomorrow

12.6 years

Average field device age in Building A

10 years

Manufacturer's recommended working life for detectors

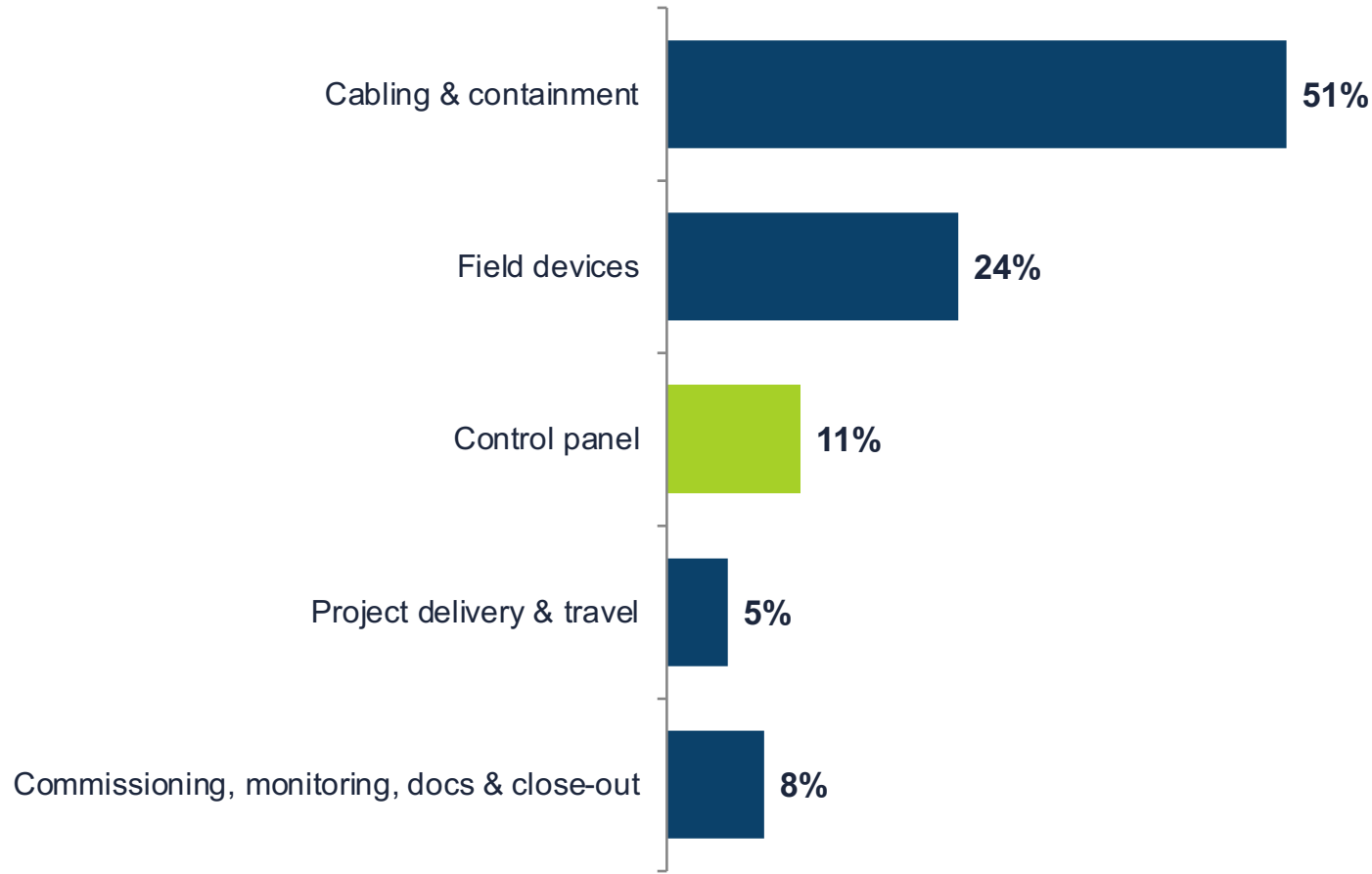
2028

Legacy platform moves to spares-only support

After ten years, expect sensitivity drift, more false alarms and harder questions from insurers. Plan the replacement, or it will be planned for you.

The panel is the cheap part

Building A replacement budget: about R310,000 excl. VAT



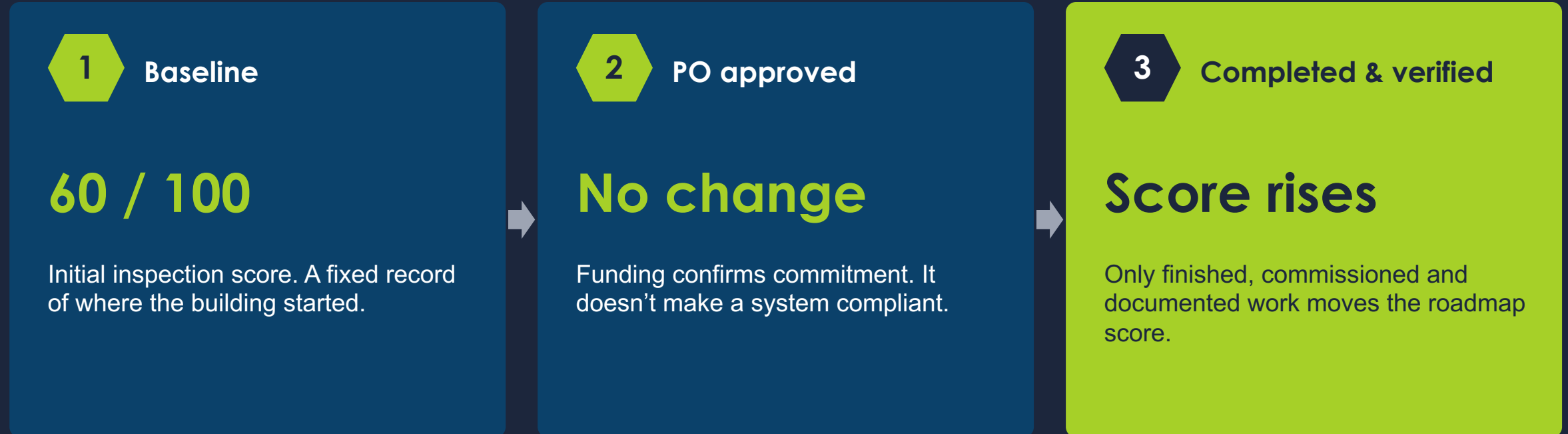
51%

of the budget is cabling and containment.

The panel is about 11%. Budget for the whole system, not the box on the wall.

Funding isn't compliance

Verified evidence is. Two scores, tracked separately for every building.



Every work package closes with evidence: test results, certificates, as-built drawings, logbook, handover sign-off.

Where is your campus on the ladder?



Maturity of facilities management, applied to fire compliance

Level 1

Reactive

Fix it when it faults. No baseline, no plan.

Level 2

Maintained

A service contract is in place, but nobody checks it against the standard.

Level 3

Governed

Every building baselined, scored, funded and tracked to verified close-out.

What to demand from your provider



Six things to take back to the office

- 1** A baseline inspection of every building, scored against the current standard
- 2** A clear record of which standard each system was designed to
- 3** A register of device age and manufacturer support status
- 4** Cause-and-effect testing, not just detector testing
- 5** A costed, phased replacement roadmap aligned to your capital cycle
- 6** Evidence-based close-out: logbooks, certificates, as-built drawings

If your provider can't produce these, you are carrying risk you can't see.



See what compliance actually entails

Scan to download our pre-inspection checklist and walk one of your own buildings this month.



forms.gle/3vZHTW2n5JQBQjBf7

Responsibility can be delegated. Accountability cannot.