

How ADCDA Technical Circular Can Change Your Fire Strategy Overnight

A single [ADCDA Technical Circular](#) can send a finished fire strategy report back to the drawing board days before a design freeze. For anyone working on a tower, hospital, or transit project in Abu Dhabi, tracking every one of these updates isn't a nice-to-have. It's the difference between a smooth authority approval and a resubmission that costs weeks.

What an ADCDA Technical Circular Actually Does

The Abu Dhabi Civil Defence Authority doesn't rewrite its entire code every time a gap shows up in the field. Instead, it issues a technical circular that clarifies or tightens a specific requirement, usually after a technical review of how a rule is performing on real projects. These circulars sit underneath the UAE Fire and Life Safety Code of Practice, and they carry the same weight during plan review. Ignore one and a reviewer will send the drawings back, regardless of how much design work already went into them.

A Recent Example Worth Understanding

In early 2026, ADCDA issued an ADCDA Technical Circular refining fire performance requirements for smoke management ducts. It set out three categories. Category A calls for full fire resistance (120 minutes stability, integrity, and insulation) and applies to kitchen exhaust ducts, exit enclosures, refuge areas, and pressurisation shafts. Category B allows reduced insulation, 60 minutes instead of 120, but only in fully sprinklered buildings where duct surface temperature isn't a tenability concern. Category C drops insulation altogether, but only for ducts running through unoccupied spaces like car parks and plant rooms. Stability and integrity are never reduced under any of the three categories, and where more than one condition applies, the strictest one wins.

Why These Updates Land in the Middle of a Project

Circulars tend to appear for a few practical reasons: a pattern of non-conformities showing up at inspection, closer alignment with NFPA or British standards, or feedback from contractors about a detail that was technically compliant but nearly impossible to build. Because Abu Dhabi and Dubai run parallel but coordinated systems, a change on one side sometimes signals what's coming on the other. Teams that only check the code once, at the start of design, are the ones caught off guard.

How Fire Safety Consultants in UAE Keep Projects on Track

This is where fire safety consultants in UAE earn their fee. A consultant who works with ADCDA regularly isn't reading circulars for the first time when a client calls in a panic. They already know which duct categories apply to a given occupancy and can flag the impact before it reaches the reviewer's desk.

- Monitor authority notices and circular releases as part of ongoing project management, not as a one-off task
- Keep a project-specific circular log tied to design revision dates
- Cross-check mechanical and fire strategy drawings against the current category requirements before submission
- Liaise directly with the reviewing authority when a circular's scope is ambiguous

Practical Steps for Design and Construction Teams

Circulars aren't going away, so the smarter approach is building tracking into the process from day one.

- Involve the fire consultant and MEP engineer together at concept design, not after schematics are locked
- Document the rationale for the chosen duct category directly in the fire strategy report
- Confirm which circular version was in force at each submission stage, and keep that record for handover
- Re-check active designs whenever a new circular is published, even mid-construction

Staying Ahead of Regulatory Change

Abu Dhabi will keep refining its fire code as buildings get taller and systems get more complex, and each ADCDA Technical Circular is part of that ongoing correction. Projects that treat compliance as a continuous conversation with the authority avoid the costly rework that catches everyone else off guard. Bringing in experienced [fire safety consultants in UAE](#) early gives a design team a direct line to how a circular applies to their actual drawings, not just a policy notice sitting in an inbox. If you're not sure which duct category or system your current design falls under, it's worth having a consultant review the fire strategy before it becomes a site problem.

FAQs

1. How often does ADCDA issue new technical circulars?

There's no fixed schedule. ADCDA releases circulars as needed, often after a technical review or when a gap is identified in the field, so project teams should check for updates at every design stage rather than assume the code they used at kickoff still applies at handover.

2. Do projects already approved need to comply with a new circular?

Generally, each circular provides for its scope. Designs that are in the process of approval are supposed to conform to such circular, while those that are under construction and which have been approved are normally dealt with on a case-by-case basis by the approving authority.

3. Who is responsible for tracking circular changes on a project?

In fact, this duty is vested in the fire safety consultant designated for that purpose because of their continuing contact with the authority and the implications of the circular to the particular design.

4. Can a circular affect active fire systems, not just ductwork?

Yes. Although the duct illustration was concerned with passive fire resistance requirements, there were other circulars concerning detection and firestop certification.