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Building control documents

The building control system has many documents so it can be hard to know where to find information. This new series starts by explaining the hierarchy of the key documents and the importance of keeping them updated.

THE HIERARCHY OF DOCUMENTS for New Zealand building controls is:

- Building Act 2004 with subsequent amendments, the latest being 2013
- New Zealand Building Code (produced under the Building Regulations)
- Acceptable Solutions and Verification Methods, which may cite appropriate New Zealand and other standards as a means of compliance.

A good resource that explains the New Zealand Building Control system is BRANZ Building Basics *Building Controls*.

The Building Act

The Building Act provides the framework for New Zealand's building control system. For details, see www.dbh.govt.nz/ba-about-the-building-act.

Building Regulations

Regulations contain the rules for building consent authorities, LBPs, prescribed forms and applicable penalties and they list specified systems, define 'change the use' and 'moderate earthquake' and set out the rate of any levies and fees for determinations.

The Building Regulations related to the Building Code clauses were initiated by the Building Regulations 1992. This has been revoked except for Regulation 3 and Schedule 1. These set out the Building Code requirements:

- Regulation 3 covers the performance criteria specified in the Building Code for the classified use of that building.
- Schedule 1 of the Building Regulations 1992 covers building uses, interpretation and importance levels and then covers the objectives, functional and performance requirements.

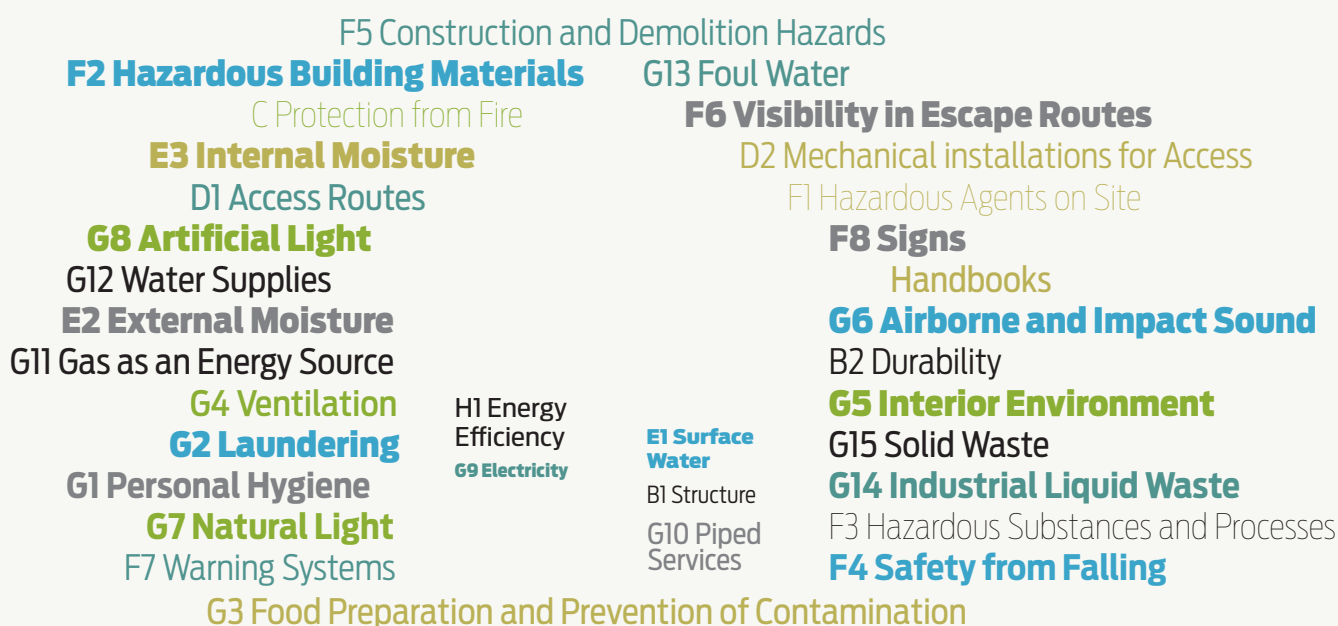


Figure 1

Acceptable Solutions and Verification Methods available from www.dbh.govt.nz/compliance-documents.

For more on the Building Regulations, see page 6 of the New Zealand Building Code Handbook at www.dbh.govt.nz/compliance-documents#handbooks.

New Zealand Building Code

The performance-based New Zealand Building Code has 37 clauses and three preliminary clauses. These set out the functional requirements and performance criteria that the Building Act requires all buildings to meet. They do not prescribe how the work should be done.

To comply with the Building Code, building work has to satisfy the requirements set out in each of the Building Code clauses. Building Code clauses offer a Verification Method and/or an Acceptable Solution. Most have both.

Pathways to compliance that are deemed to comply with the Building Code clauses are:

- Verification Methods
- Acceptable Solutions
- determinations
- product certification (where the product use is within the scope of the product certification).

The current scheme is known as CodeMark.

Alternative Solutions

Sometimes a different building solution is needed. Proposed construction methods that are outside of, or a variation from the deemed-to-comply compliance paths of Acceptable Solutions and Verification Methods, need to be consented as an Alternative Solution.

Sufficient supporting evidence is needed for the building consent authority to determine on reasonable grounds that the proposed work will be Code compliant. Once consented, it becomes an Alternative Solution. Supporting evidence may be:

- a satisfactory history of use in a comparable situation
- a comparison to an Acceptable Solution
- a previously accepted comparable Alternative Solution
- independently assessed performance, such as a BRANZ Appraisal

- the subject of an expert opinion
- favourable test results that are relevant to the proposed use.

A good resource that explains Alternative Solutions, Verification Methods and compliance paths for Alternative Methods is BRANZ Building Basics *Building Code Compliance*.

Always use the latest version

All 37 Building Code clauses are available free from www.dbh.govt.nz/compliance-documents. Clauses are updated frequently, so always check you are using the latest version.

Standard format for clauses

Each Building Code clause has a similar structure. As an example, let's look at Building Code clause B1 *Structure* that covers Acceptable Solutions and Verification Methods for B1 *Structure*. In order, it contains:

- document status with the history of all document alterations
- relevant extract from the First Schedule of the Building Regulations 1992 with:
 - objectives
 - functional requirements
 - performance requirements
- contents
- references indicating the versions of standards and other documents that apply to the Acceptable Solutions and Verification Methods and where in the Building Code clause they are quoted
- definitions
- Verification Methods that provide a means for the design of structures to meet the performance requirements of the Building Code – for example, B1/VM1 covers Verification Methods for general construction, referencing relevant standards
- Acceptable Solutions that provide either a specific deemed-to-comply solution or references standards that, if used as required, will meet the performance requirements of the Building Code – for example, B1/AS3 includes specific solutions for small chimneys.

Code may change standards

Cited standards can be modified by clauses within Acceptable Solutions and Verification Methods.

It's always a good idea to check the relevant Code clauses to see if they are modifying the referenced standard or have referenced a later version of the standard.

For example, B1/AS1 references NZS 3604:2011 as an Acceptable Solution for timber-framed buildings, but B1/AS1 page 23A clause 3.1 says 'NZS 3604 subject to the following modifications'. The listed modifications need to be made to use the standard.

Standards modified by B1 Amendment 12 in February 2014 were AS/NZS 1170, NZS 4211, NZS 4223, NZS 4229 and AS/NZS 4600.

Standards modified by B1 Amendment 11 in August 2011 were AS/NZS 1170, AS/NZS 1664.1, NZS 4211, NZS 4219, NZS 4229, NZS 3603, NZS 3604, NZS 4229, NZS 4223, NZS 4297 and AS/NZS 4600.

When a standard is updated by its publishers, the new version is not automatically a means of compliance. It must be referenced anew by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment in the Building Code clause.

Keep your standards current

A good method to keep your standards up to date is to look at the relevant Acceptable Solutions and Verification Method clauses, for example, B1/AS1 *Structure* when using NZS 3604:2011.

Check if amendments have been made to the standard or if a later version is referenced. Print any amendments to the standard and cut and paste over the original clauses in the standard to avoid confusion about what is current.

The side columns in the Building Code clauses always have the amendment number and date modified so the most recent changes can be tracked.

If a later version of the standard has been referenced without amendment, use the later version of the standard. 📄