



AVOIDING 10 BUILDING INSPECTION PITFALLS

The key to a smooth building inspection and consent process is preparation and documentation – being ready first time.

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Inspections of building and plumbing work are an integral part of the building consent process. The required inspections are usually identified by council when the consent is granted, so make sure you're aware of what's needed. The Code Compliance Certificate won't be issued unless all the inspections and paperwork have been completed.

This article looks at 10 common pitfalls with building inspections and how to satisfy the Building Consent Authority (BCA) that the building is built as shown in the consented documents so they can issue a Code Compliance Certificate at the end of the job.

1 Keep approved plans on site

Stamped approved plans need to be kept on site at all times. BCA officials may have their own copy of plans, but they want to make sure everyone on site is following the approved set. Having them at hand is an obvious way of assuring inspectors this is happening.

2 Follow the manufacturer's instructions

Many designers and architects specify in plans that items of building work will be 'as per manufacturer's instructions'. This usually refers to the installation of building elements. The technical details used must be current, and if they are not followed or not even known, it leaves doubt over compliance and can cause costly re-inspections and time delays.

3 Ensure foundation inspection occurs before pouring

All foundations and concrete slabs require an inspection before pouring any concrete. Building and plumbing inspections are required at the slab prepour stage and siting is also often checked, so ensure survey pegs are obvious.

Planning and coordination is important. Sometimes, concreting is already underway when the building inspector arrives, before inspections of the damp-proof membrane and steel placement have been completed. Remedying this can be an expensive and embarrassing exercise for all concerned.

4 Take care with finished floor heights

Take care with finished floor heights in relation to ground levels, clearances to the bottom of cladding and gully trap heights. It is common for building inspectors to take photographs of all four elevations as proof there was enough clearance when the final inspection took place. Post-construction landscaping and planting can affect the weathertightness of the building.

5 Install insulation before preline inspection

All insulation must be in place for an insulation inspection so compliance with H1 can be checked. This can be carried out at the preline building stage. Commonly, inspectors find that the insulation work is half done or

that there are rolls waiting to be installed up in the ceiling when they were told that the insulation was all in situ.

6 Producer statements useful for plumbing and drainage checks

The producer statement system is a useful tool. Some BCAs allow registered drainlayers and craftsmen plumbers to issue PS3s on drainage and water pressure tests. This allows some flexibility and provides the BCA with a statement of compliance with work done by that person in lieu of an inspection. Contractors need to remember to complete the paperwork and get it back to the BCA (not just do the test). See examples of producer statement forms at www.aucklandcity.govt.nz/council/services/guides/.

7 Install smoke detectors

The Building Act requires smoke detectors to be fitted to new work and retrofitted during home alterations or DIY additions. An easy solution is provided in Building Code Clause F7/AS1. Make sure there is access to the house to check smoke detectors. If the building work is a garage or deck, the owner may not realise the final inspection includes checking smoke detectors.

8 If failed, arrange for a re-inspection

If at any stage an inspection has been failed, the building inspector will note why it failed. It is the contractor's responsibility to arrange for a re-inspection once the problem is rectified. This recheck will be an additional cost.

9 Do a precheck before final inspections

Building inspectors get annoyed at having to do three or four 'final' inspections. This suggests the builder or contractor is using the BCA for a final quality check rather than a final compliance check as per the Building Act. It would be useful if contractors and subcontractors had a copy of the BCA's final checklist, so they could do a precheck before officials arrive.

10 Apply for a Code Compliance Certificate

The final step is applying for a Code Compliance Certificate. This may be issued once all inspections are cleared, the final inspection completed and all paperwork collected (as-builts, producer statements, energy work certificates and so on). Often, there is a misunderstanding between the homeowner and contractor as to who is completing this last step.

Most BCAs have a Code Compliance Certificate application form on their websites. Building inspectors may even have spare forms in their cars. The paperwork required with this is usually listed in the issued consent.

It is preferable to sort out the Code Compliance Certificate promptly rather than leaving the owner to chase it up later. ♦