

Securing unreinforced masonry building parapets and facades

Last updated: 11 April 2018

On 28 February 2017 the government introduced a requirement to secure unreinforced masonry (URM) parapets and facades on buildings in certain areas of Wellington City, Hutt City, Marlborough District and Hurunui District Councils.

Following the Hurunui/Kaikōura earthquakes in November 2016, GNS Science advised that there was an increased risk of further earthquakes occurring in the next 12 months in areas that include Wellington, Lower Hutt City, Marlborough and Hurunui. In November 2017, updated forecasting by GNS showed the heightened risk period was expected to extend for at least another six months beyond the period initially identified.

Owners of URM buildings in the areas mentioned above have been notified by their council and are required to secure the street-facing parapets and/or facades on their buildings within 12 months of the date of the notice. The parapets and/or facades must be secured to reduce the risk of falling masonry.

Buildings with street-facing URM parapets and/or facades on busy thoroughfares present significant risks to life safety due to their vulnerability in an earthquake event. Securing URM parapets and/or facades is a cost-effective way to reduce risks to life safety and increase public confidence in the event of further aftershocks or earthquakes.

Questions and answers, including which streets in the above areas are affected (<https://www.mbie.govt.nz/building-and-energy/building/investigations-and-reviews-for-safer-buildings/securing-unreinforced-masonry-building-parapets-and-facades/>), are available on the MBIE Corporate website.

Order in Council

In February 2017, the government made an Order in Council, amending the Building Act 2004, to address the risk to public safety from URM buildings in these areas.

In March 2018 the Order in Council was amended in response to practical constraints and the continued heightened seismic risk. The original 12-month deadline for securing work remains in place for all building owners, but those who have taken reasonable steps within that period, and complete the work within a further six months, have a defence against prosecution.

A building owner is considered to have taken reasonable steps when:

- the design of the building work required under the notice has been, or is being, carried out or reviewed by a chartered professional engineer; and
- a programme of work is available to the territorial authority for inspection, within the original 12-month period, showing how the building work required under the section 124 notice will be completed within 18 months of the date on which the notice was issued.

The programme of work could be a document that provides an indication of when the building owner intends to contract a builder to do the work, and when they expect the work to be done.

Information for URM building owners

This information is for building owners who have received a notice from their council, under section 124 of the Building Act 2004 (as modified by the Order in Council) for 'street-facing URM buildings'. The notice will instruct building owners to secure the parapet and/or facade of their URM building.

You will have received a notice from your council because it considers that your building's parapet and/or facade is not secured or strengthened

to an acceptable standard that will reduce or remove the danger of it falling in an earthquake.

If you believe your parapet and/or facade has been secured or strengthened to an acceptable standard, please provide evidence to your council as soon as possible. This may include:

- copies of permits/consents and compliance documents for work done to secure or strengthen the parapet and/or facade
- engineering reports (if the reports were done some years ago they may need updating)
- site reports and/or producer statements
- photographs of work done to secure or strengthen the parapet and/or facade.

Note: If you have engaged a Chartered Professional Engineer to prove your building is secure you can apply for financial support.

[Funding support \(https://www.building.govt.nz/managing-buildings/unreinforced-masonry/options-secure-urm-parapets-and-facades/#jumpto-funding-support\)](https://www.building.govt.nz/managing-buildings/unreinforced-masonry/options-secure-urm-parapets-and-facades/#jumpto-funding-support) has further information.

Under certain conditions, work to secure parapets and/or facades can be done without a building consent. You may also be able to receive funding support. It is important you know and comply with the conditions when securing your parapet and/or facade.

[Get advice from a building professional \(https://www.building.govt.nz/managing-buildings/unreinforced-masonry/get-advice-building-professional/\)](https://www.building.govt.nz/managing-buildings/unreinforced-masonry/get-advice-building-professional/) has further information.

Technical guidance

MBIE has prepared technical guidance that provides support to building owners, engineers, and councils to assist them with complying with their obligations under the Order in Council and the Building Act 2004.

[Securing parapets and facades on unreinforced masonry buildings \(https://www.building.govt.nz/building-code-compliance/b-stability/b1-structure/securing-parapets-facades-unreinforced-masonry-buildings/\)](https://www.building.govt.nz/building-code-compliance/b-stability/b1-structure/securing-parapets-facades-unreinforced-masonry-buildings/)

Unreinforced Masonry Buildings Securing Fund

In recognition of the public and private benefits from securing URM parapets and facades, the government and affected councils have established the Unreinforced Masonry Buildings Securing Fund (approximately \$4.5 million) to support building owners in areas of increased risk of further earthquakes in the next 12 months to meet the securing requirements.

The fund will contribute up to half of the costs of the actual work involved in securing the parapet and/or facade, up to a maximum of \$25,000 for buildings two storeys and below, and up to \$65,000 for buildings three storeys or over. The fund is only available for building work to satisfy the requirement to secure URM parapets and/or facades where a building owner has been issued with a notice under section 124 of the Building Act (as modified by the Order in Council) for 'street-facing URM buildings'.

Extension of time to apply for funding

As of March 2018, building owners who qualify under the amendment for the extension of six months to complete required securing work will also be given additional time to submit applications for reimbursement under the Unreinforced Masonry Buildings Securing Fund.

To access funding, securing work must have been completed within the stated time period:

- Building owners who meet the requirements for the 'reasonable steps' extension must complete securing work within 18 months of the date on which the section 124 notice was issued.
- Building owners who do not meet the requirements for the 'reasonable steps' extension must complete securing work within 12 months of the date on which the section 124 notice was issued.

Note: Applications for costs associated with securing work completed past the specified 12- or 18-month timeframe will be ineligible to receive support.

Engineering assessment costs

In December 2017 changes to the Unreinforced Masonry Buildings Securing Fund were made to allow applications for support towards the cost of the engineering assessment. Building owners will be able to seek reimbursement towards these costs as soon as the assessment has been

completed.

- If a building is proven secure, and the section 124 notice has been lifted with no remediation work required, building owners can apply for 50 per cent of the engineering assessment costs up to a maximum of \$1,500.
- If a building is shown to require remediation work, building owners can apply for 50 per cent of the engineering assessment costs before the securing work is complete, and this will be deducted from the maximum funding cap for their building.

Note: This will impact the funds available for reimbursement at completion of remediation work.

Adjustment to funding caps

In February 2018 the funding caps were adjusted to recognise the additional complexity of securing large and/or complex buildings. The adjustment increases the cap for buildings three storeys and larger from the original cap of \$25,000 up to a maximum of \$65,000. For buildings two storeys and under the cap will remain at \$25,000.

Removal of URM elements for non-heritage buildings included in definition of qualifying work

In February 2018 the definition of work that qualifies under the fund was updated to include the removal of URM elements from non-heritage buildings. Funding would only be provided to remove URM elements from non-heritage buildings, and does not include the demolition of the entire building.

Application form

You can apply to MBIE for support from the Unreinforced Masonry Buildings Securing Fund using the application form on this page. You will need to provide evidence to support your claim, including:

- a written copy of advice from the council to show that the building is proven secure and the section 124 notice has been complied with.
- itemised invoices that:
 - relate to the recoverable costs, eg explicit stating of 'costs associated with protecting those doing securing remediation'
 - state both labour hourly rate and hours claimed, supported with contractual documents. If fixed costs, evidence that costs were agreed in advance and any agreed escalation payments will be required
 - clearly separate qualifying work and non-qualifying work where building work is done for work outside of the section 124 obligations
 - explicitly state the costs associated with:
 - engineering assessment and design solution; and
 - costs associated with actual work completed on facades and/or parapets.

Unreinforced Masonry Buildings Securing Fund application form

[PDF 360 KB]

<https://www.building.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/managing-buildings/urm-buildings-securing-fund-application-form.pdf>

The application form includes a declaration that all information provided with claims is true and correct.

MBIE may contact you in relation to your application, especially in situations where not all required information is provided.



New Zealand Government

This information is published by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment's Chief Executive. It is a general guide only and, if used, does not relieve any person of the obligation to consider any matter to which the information relates according to the circumstances of the particular case. Expert advice may be required in specific circumstances. Where this information relates to assisting people:

- with compliance with the Building Act, it is published under section 175 of the Building Act
- with a Weathertight Services claim, it is published under section 12 of the Weathertight Homes Resolution Services Act 2006.