

Navigating career breaks as an LBP

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Life is unpredictable, and sometimes a serious life event can turn your world upside down and affect your ability to work.



Article is relevant to LBP licence classes: All

A break from work can happen due to circumstances outside your control, and you may not always know how long you will be off work for. An accident or serious medical condition can keep you off the tools for months or even years. Family commitments might take you overseas, or out of the building industry for a time.

Managing your Licensed Building Practitioner (LBP) licence may be the last thing on your mind, but the process is simpler than you think. If you intend to return to working as an LBP, or want to keep your options open, you may want to voluntarily suspend your licence to make it easier to return to carrying out restricted building work (RBW) at a later date. This will also reduce costs compared to maintaining a licence during the time you're not using it.

Putting your licence on voluntary suspension

You may request for your licence (or classes of licence) to be suspended for up to two years. While your licence is suspended, you cannot carry out or supervise RBW, however you are relieved from paying relicensing fees to maintain your licence. The public register will list your licence as suspended 'at the request of the practitioner', so while others know you are not licensed to work, clients will also know the suspension was not imposed by the Building Practitioners Board (the Board) or Registrar for disciplinary reasons.

To request voluntary suspension, go to the LBP website and fill in the '[Voluntary suspension of licence' form](https://www.lbp.govt.nz/assets/documents/voluntary-suspension.pdf) (<https://www.lbp.govt.nz/assets/documents/voluntary-suspension.pdf>).

You will need to:

- submit the completed form at least 10 working days before your elected suspension start date; and
- pay the required fee of \$50.00.

Why not just let your licence lapse?

If you do not renew your licence it will automatically become suspended for a year before it is cancelled (unless you relicense within that year). This may suit some people who will be returning to work in a month or two. There are a few downsides though to letting your licence suspend automatically rather than voluntarily, including:

- When you relicense, your relicensing date doesn't change, so you will effectively still be paying to be licensed while suspended.
- The suspension on the public register will be listed as 'Failure to comply with the conditions of licensing' and indicate you have fees owing.
- If it turns out you need more time off work, you may have to relicense before you want to return to work or risk having your licence cancelled and having to reapply.

Maintaining your skills maintenance

You will need to continue to maintain your skills while your licence is suspended by completing your required skills maintenance. Keeping up with your skills maintenance is a licensing requirement, but is also a good way to keep your knowledge up to date for when you do return to work.

While on voluntary suspension, you will still have access to the LBP online portal to add your skills maintenance activities. It is best to try and do some activities before you intend to return to work, so you don't have too much catching up to do when you apply to end your voluntary suspension. Reading Codewords and doing some elective activities may be achievable while recuperating or being away from the construction site. On-the-job learning may be more challenging to complete, and could require a bit of planning.

If it is less than two years since your last skills maintenance round, you may not need to have completed all your skills maintenance before getting your licence back. The licensing team will be able to assist you if you are unsure of your requirements.

Returning to work

You can revive your voluntarily suspended licence at any time by visiting the LBP website and completing the 'End of voluntary suspension of licence' form. (<https://www.lbp.govt.nz/assets/documents/end-voluntary-suspension.pdf>)

Once your request is received, you will be contacted to advise you of your requirements for uplifting your suspension. Requirements might include:

- paying all or some of a relicensing fee, and
- providing evidence of your skills maintenance activities while you have been on voluntary suspension.

Common mistakes

Sometimes LBPs contact the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) after their licence has been suspended or cancelled and ask to put their licence on hold. They may have been off work for months, but just haven't thought about their licence until they received the letter notifying them that it is no longer active. However, to put a licence on voluntary suspension, it needs to be active. Therefore if your licence has been suspended because you did not renew on time, you may have to relicense before you can start a voluntary suspension, which can be a hassle.

It is much easier for you and the licensing team if you get in touch while your licence is still active. A voluntary suspension is cost effective, and can be lifted whenever you want within the two-year period. This gives you flexibility if you are not sure when you will be coming back.

Quiz

1. Why should you contact the licensing team sooner rather than later for a voluntary suspension?
 - a. To ensure your licence doesn't expire.
 - b. To save money on licensing, as you will not be paying for your licence while you aren't using it.
 - c. To reduce stress.
 - d. All of the above.
2. After a voluntary suspension, what do you need to do to get your licence back?
 - a. Complete and submit the 'End of voluntary suspension of licence' form and the licensing team will let you know what fees and skills maintenance are due.
 - b. Pay the fees for a new licence application.
 - c. Wait two years.
3. Why is it better to have a voluntary suspension rather than let your licence lapse and have it automatically suspended?
 - a. It saves money.
 - b. The reason for suspension is shown on the public register.
 - c. It reduces the risk of losing your licence and having to apply for a new one.
 - d. All of the above.

[Check answers \(https://www.building.govt.nz/about-building-performance/news-and-updates/codewords/codewords-issue-90/navigating-career-breaks-as-an-lbp/quiz-answers-navigating-career-breaks-as-an-lbp/\)](https://www.building.govt.nz/about-building-performance/news-and-updates/codewords/codewords-issue-90/navigating-career-breaks-as-an-lbp/quiz-answers-navigating-career-breaks-as-an-lbp/)

