

## How the building system protects you

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All building work in New Zealand must meet certain requirements, even if it doesn't need a building consent. This ensures our buildings are safe, healthy and durable which means we all can have confidence in their performance.

The laws for building set out how work can be done and who can do it. It also ensures the system has checks and consumer protection in place.

If you are a homeowner it is useful to have a broad understanding of how the building system works. If you use qualified professionals you are unlikely to need to know too much detail about the Building Act, the Building Code and other rules that govern the building sector. The system ensures people involved in critical building work have knowledge of the rules. For example, only Licensed Building Practitioners can undertake residential work relating to structure or the building's external envelope.

The Building Act and its regulations set out the rules for building work. Other laws may affect your project, including:

- council bylaws
- Resource Management Act (for resource consents)
- laws specifying that certain plumbing, gas and electrical work must be done by qualified professionals.

## The importance of your building consent

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Most building work must have a building consent. The building consent is confirmation from the council that your proposed work will meet the requirements of the Building Code. Your plans and specifications form part of the consent. Your building consent (with the attached plans and specifications) is your link to the rules.

You are likely to need someone who understands the Building Code and the Building Act to help draw up your plans and specifications and complete the building consent application to council.

It is important that you, your builder and tradespeople build to the approved consent. At the end of your project, the council will sign-off the work if it has been done according to the approved consent. This provides you, and any future owners, with a level of assurance that the work meets New Zealand standards. Councils have powers to require property owners to fix work that doesn't comply with the rules.

## Building Code

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All building work, even if it doesn't need a building consent, must meet the requirements of the Building Code. It sets out the minimum performance standards building work must meet. You can exceed the standards, but you cannot do less.

The Building Code covers things such as structural stability, how strong an earthquake a building should be able to withstand, fire safety, moisture control and durability.

As a property owner, you can choose your designs, products or building methods as long as you demonstrate how the work will meet the Building Code. For example, the Building Code specifies how much natural light there should be in a bedroom but not how you must achieve that natural light.

## Building laws provide protection

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Our goal is for safer, healthier and more affordable homes and buildings to grow New Zealand for all. The laws aim to improve the way buildings

are designed and built, to provide more certainty that capable people are doing the work and ensure there is scrutiny in how the sector is managed.

Some of the protections include:

- consumer protection measures within the Building Act and Construction Contracts Act, such as rules for contracts and implied warranties
- builders, designers and trades are governed by the Licensing of Building Practitioners scheme
- councils and others must be accredited to administer the rules around building
- a performance based Building Code allows for innovation while setting safety, health and durability standards
- a product assurance framework provides guidance for suppliers on New Zealand's climate and conditions.

## If something goes wrong

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We provide more information and links to help you work out what to do if there is a problem related to your building work.

It can be useful to work out when your building work started and ended. The rules for building can be amended and updated, and it may be necessary to work out what rules were in place at the time the building work was done.

## Related content

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### [Resolving problems \(https://www.building.govt.nz/resolving-problems/\)](https://www.building.govt.nz/resolving-problems/)

Building projects often involve a number of people working together for the first time, in an environment that is vulnerable to nature, unforeseen events and potential delays. Make sure you understand your rights and obligations. Some issues that can arise during a project include:

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