

# A general guide to the **building consents process**



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WELLINGTON CITY COUNCIL

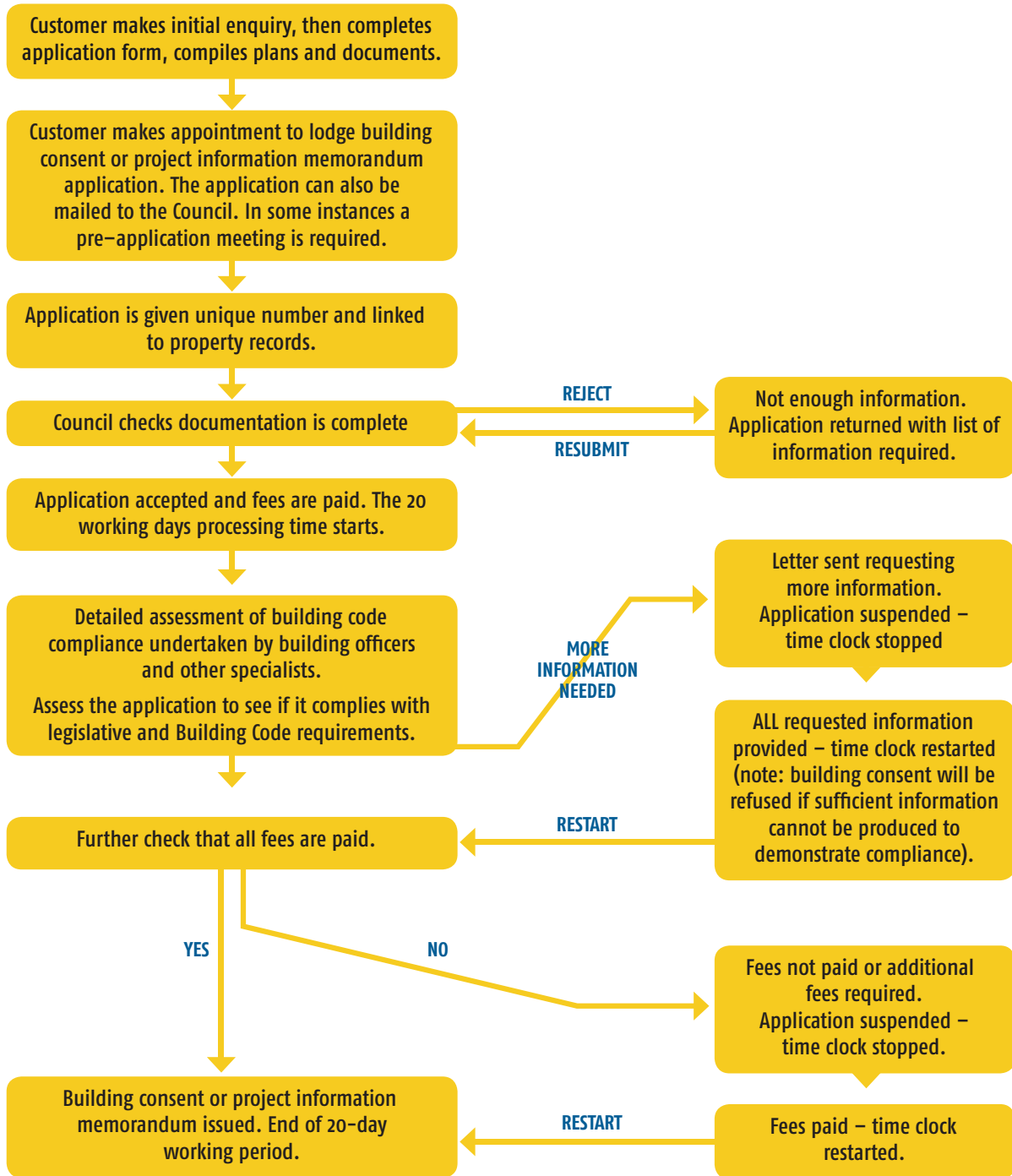
**Wellington**

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# Flowchart showing the building consent process





# Building Consents and Licensing Services

**Building Consents and Licensing Services (BCLS) is a business unit within Wellington City Council. We carry out the Council's statutory responsibilities under the Building Act.**

Our staff are trained professionals with backgrounds covering a range of building disciplines, including architecture, engineering, plumbing and construction. Using the information that you provide in your application, our staff will be able to issue you with a building consent, or advise you of any additional information they need in order to approve the application.

We are committed to providing top-quality customer service and aim to help you obtain your consent as fast as possible, while also ensuring that your building project meets all legislative and Building Code requirements.



## What is a building consent? Why do you need it?

A building consent is confirmation that proposed building work will comply with the Building Code.

It is issued under the Building Act 2004 (BA04). The purpose of these legislative requirements is to ensure that New Zealand buildings are soundly built and meet an acceptable safety standard, the needs of the building users and environmental sustainability.

When considering a building consent we consider aspects of the property that could have some effect on the way the work is carried out and ensure the design has taken into account features and conditions of a specific site (eg steepness or exposure to wind).

**The building consent must be obtained before the work starts.**

Some work may be done without a building consent, however the work must still comply with the Building Code. Schedule 1 of the BA04 describes work that is exempt: e.g

- Patio or deck at ground level
- Garden trellis less than two metres high
- Kitchen cupboards
- Garden pond less than 400mm in depth (this must still comply with the fencing of swimming pools act 1987)
- Home maintenance, eg replacing spouting or piece of weatherboard.

For further information on Schedule 1 go to [dbh.govt.nz](http://dbh.govt.nz) or [consumerbuild.org.nz](http://consumerbuild.org.nz)

## What is a project information memorandum? Why do you need it?

A project information memorandum (PIM) details information the Council has that may affect your proposed project. This information may be useful when designing the structure as it gives information such as compliance with District Plan requirements, land structure and current drainage positions.

A PIM is optional and you can choose to apply for a PIM before or when lodging a building consent application.



# The building

## 1. Enquiring about making an application

The Council's website [Wellington.govt.nz](http://Wellington.govt.nz) has information about applying for building consents and other approvals. From the Building Services page you can access application forms that detail the plans and documentation that you need to supply.

Application packs can also be collected from the Building Consents and Licensing Services reception area on Level 1, 101 Wakefield Street, Wellington, or requested by phone on 801 4311 or email [bus.bcls@wcc.govt.nz](mailto:bus.bcls@wcc.govt.nz)

You can also find useful information about applying for building consents and download publications from the Department of Building and Housing website [dbh.govt.nz/building-index](http://dbh.govt.nz/building-index). Building and Housing has a number of useful publications for homeowners including 'Guide to applying for a building consent (simple residential buildings)' and the 'Building Act and You'.

The Consumerbuild website [consumerbuild.org.nz](http://consumerbuild.org.nz) also has lots of helpful information – especially for home-owners or people who are new to the building industry.

If you are not familiar with building plans and establishing compliance with the Building Code you may need to engage a design professional (eg an architect) to supply the required drawings and information, and to apply for a building consent on your behalf. For complex projects we recommend that you seek professional advice.

## 2. Restricted building work and licensed building practitioners.

Building consent applications received from 1 March 2012 that contain restricted building work must be carried out or supervised by licensed building practitioners who are licensed to carry out or supervise that kind of building work.

Restricted building work includes;

- Design work relating to;

- primary structure of external moisture management systems or residential buildings
- Fire-safety systems for small-to-medium apartment buildings

Building work involving the construction or alteration of the primary structure or moisture management system in houses or small to medium apartment buildings. For example

- Bricklaying or blocklaying
- Carpentry
- External plastering
- Foundations
- Roofing

For design work that is restricted building work the licensed building practitioner must supply a 'Memorandum from licensed building practitioner: Certificate of design work' covering the design work that is restricted building work to the owner who must submit it to the Council with their application for building consent.

This form and further information can be downloaded from the Department of Building and Housing website [www.dbh.govt.nz/ibp](http://www.dbh.govt.nz/ibp).

You will find more detail later in this booklet about additional information that is needed when a project involves restricted building work.

## 3. Application form

The application form has a number of parts and it is important that all the sections are completed and the information given on how the work will comply with the Building Code. A guide to completing an application is available to assist you.

There are two types of application form depending on the project:

- Standard Residential
- Commercial and Complex Residential

If you are applying for a single residential consent

# consent process

and the project meets the criteria you may be able to ask for a 'quick consent' (refer to criteria on page 7). The same information and costs apply, however we aim to issue the consent within five working days.

Mandatory pre-application meetings will now be required for all residential applications for projects valued at over \$1 million and all commercial applications for projects valued at over \$2 million. (further information on page 7)

## 4. Lodging the application

Once you have completed the application form and checked that you have provided all the information required you may lodge your application by one of the following methods.

- Mail the application with cheque to Building Consents and Licensing Services, Wellington City Council, P O Box 2199, Wellington. We aim to check mail applications within two days of receiving them. (This does not apply when a pre-application meeting is required and has not taken place.)
- Drop the application at our reception desk on level 1, 101 Wakefield Street, Wellington. These applications will be handled in the same way as mail applications.
- Phone us on 801 4311 to make an appointment with an officer to lodge your application.

On receiving your application it will be given a unique service request (SR) number. You should quote this number whenever you write to or contact the Council about your building consent application. Your application will be linked to the records for the property.

Your application will be checked by an officer before being accepted to ensure all the required information is supplied. Applications will not be accepted if any of the information is missing. Mail applications will be returned by mail if not accepted. This initial check relates to content of the application only. A more detailed check of the information supplied is done during processing.

Fees will be assessed when you lodge the

consent and will include payment for the estimated number of inspections required for your project. The fee booklet available on our website will give an indication of the amount payable or you can contact us on 801 4311 for a fee estimate as an application will not be accepted without this payment.

If the value of your application is over \$20,000 your fees will include levies that we are required to collect on behalf of the Department of Building and Housing (DHB) and the Building Research Association of New Zealand (BRANZ).

It takes up to 20 working days to process an application. The 'clock' starts when the consent has been checked and your application is accepted.

## 5. Processing the application for compliance with the Building Act, Building Code, District Plan and/or other permissions

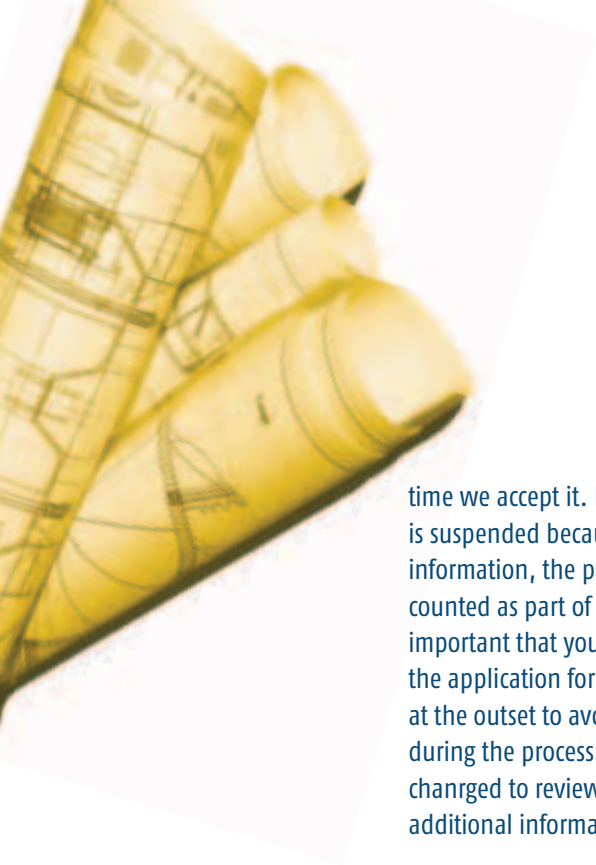
We will evaluate the various aspects of your building consent application to ensure it meets the requirements of the Building Act and the Building Code.

Your application may be assessed by a number of officers with specific skills and knowledge. These may include building, plumbing and drainage, structural, resource management and others.

There is a requirement for some applications to be sent to the Design Review Unit of the NZ Fire Services Commission (DRU). There will be additional fees to pay if your application needs to be sent to the DRU.

Once all the officers have assessed the application a request for information (RFI) letter will be sent. The application will at this point be suspended, this means that the 'time clock' stops and will not restart until all the information requested is received and accepted.

The Building Act requires us to process your application within 20 working days from the



time we accept it. However, if your application is suspended because of lack of supporting information, the period of suspension is not counted as part of the 20 days. Therefore it is important that you fully and accurately complete the application form and attach all information at the outset to avoid the possibility of delays during the process. An additional fee may be charged to review and/or re-assess additional information.

In some instances you may not be able to supply sufficient information to show that your proposed building work will meet the requirements of the Building Act 2004 and the Building Code. If so you may have to amend your proposal or the Council may be unable to issue your building consent.

## 6. Checking resource consent requirements and other permissions

We check your proposed project to see if it requires other permissions, eg Resource Management Act or District Plan requirements.

A land use consent is required where all or part of the proposed building activity does not fully comply with the relevant rules in the District Plan. A subdivision consent is required to legally divide land or buildings for separate ownership, such as new lots or sections.

In either of these cases, if you have not already applied for and been granted a resource consent, we will advise that you do so. Resource consent must be obtained before the building work can start.

The District Plan rules are available on the Council website [Wellington.govt.nz](http://Wellington.govt.nz), or from Building Consents and Licensing Services, Council service centres or city libraries.

We also check for compliance with the Council's bylaws and other legislation for things such as vehicle access, water reticulation, public drainage and, in the case of commercial premises, matters such as health, trade waste, building warrant of fitness and backflow prevention.

## 7. Additional fees

Occasionally, as we work on your application and seek further information, we may find that there are additional areas to investigate (eg the need for vehicle access assessment, a compliance schedule or an assessment by an environmental health officer) requiring additional fees. If this is the case, we will invoice you for payment before the building consent is issued. This may include additional charges if the consent was sent to the Design Review Unit. Additional charges may be made when an application is suspended (refer to the fees booklet).

## 8. Reasons for delays or refusal of your application

There are a number of reasons why your application may be delayed or refused:

- non-payment of application fees
- an incomplete application form
- shortage of initial information
- the need to supply amended information for your application.

We can't guarantee that there will be no delays, but the chance of this occurring is significantly lessened if you thoroughly check your application before it is submitted. If there are any areas that you are unsure about, we recommend that you seek input from a professional.

# Quick Consents- Scope and limitations

The aim of the 'quick consents' process is to allow minor building work that is low risk to be processed in a timely and efficient manner.

'Quick consents' include work for 'Standard residential' buildings and only use acceptable solutions under the Building Code. The work must not trigger consideration of District Plan rules, Resource Management Act compliance, public health issues or specific design engineering. A high standard of documentation must be provided. The Council will confirm if a building consent application is accepted as a 'quick consent'. If an application received by mail does not meet these criteria, it will be treated as a standard building consent and a letter will be sent to explain this decision.

**The following work will be considered for a 'quick consent':**

- any exempt building work from Schedule 1 of the Building Act including: infilling a window or replacing a window with a door of the same width; replacing an existing deck, balustrade or stairs that are <1.5m high, >2m from any boundary
- inbuilt and freestanding wood and pellet burners including those with wetbacks
- partial/total timber re-piling
- water heating systems including solar water heaters (if a structural check is not required)
- internal stairs (non-engineered)
- one or two new NZS3604 beams supporting a maximum of one storey
- replacement of roof cladding with similar or lighter weight (including membranes of Butynol or EDPM up to 40m<sup>2</sup>)
- demolition or removal of dwelling
- new bathroom or laundry within the existing building footprint
- plumbing up to a value of \$20,000 including internal wet area membranes
- stand alone fencing (ie does not incorporate the house or other existing barriers) for existing spa or pool.

## Pre-application meetings Scope and limitations

**Pre-application meetings are required for the following:**

- applications for building consent for commercial, communal residential or short-term sleeping accommodation with an estimated value of work over \$2 million
- applications for residential building consents with an estimate value of work over \$1 million or where there are three or more adjoined units
- any application for a building consent for remedial weathertightness recladding
- any application for a building consent where the site is located within a specific design wind speed or where the risk score under E2/AS1 is over 20
- any application for work which is to be staged over more than one building consent
- any application for building consent which will result in a change of use or the creation of additional household units.

Applications for work of this type which have not undertaken a pre-application meeting are more likely to be rejected.

# Process for inspection and completion of project



**Note:** even if a consent has moved into the status of 'unable to issue CCC' an application for CCC can still be made. However, depending on the length of time since the final inspection, there may be difficulties for officers assessing compliance due to the age of the work. Additional inspections or evidence of compliance may be required. For consents more than five years old, please refer to the booklet 'Process for completing building consents more than five years old'.



## 9. Approving the application

Once your application has been assessed as conforming to all the required criteria, and all necessary fees have been paid, it will be granted and a building consent and/or project information memorandum issued.

## 10. What happens then?

Once your building consent is issued and you have obtained any other approvals required, such as a resource consent, then you may start work on your building project. Please notify us on 801 4311 when you are ready to start work.

It is very important that you (and your contractors) read the building consent documentation and are clear about the requirements. It contains a list of inspections that need to be made by Council officers during the building process, and a list of producer statements required from specialists (typically engineering services). The specialists must provide documentation of the inspections they undertake in support of their producer statement.

For applications received from 1 March 2012 onwards that contain restricted building work, you must advise us in writing prior to work commencing who the licensed Building Practitioner who is Completing or supervising the work. They must be licensed to carry out the work or supervise the type of work proposed and you also need to specify their registration number. More information about licensed building practitioners is available at [dbh.govt.nz/bp](http://dbh.govt.nz/bp).

Your building consent will include an information sheet titled 'On the Building Site', which contains useful information about matters you need to comply with during your building project.

Work must start on your project within 12 months after the date the consent was issued. If we haven't heard from you before then we will send

you a letter reminding you that work must be started and asking if you intend to proceed with the work. You may decide that you will not do the work, in which case the consent will lapse, or you may apply for an extension of time to start the work. An extension of time to start work may be granted in some circumstances after an officer has reviewed the building consent file.

If we do not hear from you within the stated time, or we refuse you an extension of time, the consent will lapse. This means a new consent would have to be applied for and issued before any work could be carried out.

## 11. Inspections

At various stages during construction you will need to arrange for building officers to inspect what has been done to check that your building work complies with the conditions of the building consent. The inspection requirements will be listed in your building consent.

You can book your inspection anytime by calling 801 3813. You should plan ahead work and book well in advance to ensure that you can get an inspection when you need it to avoid delays on site. Inspections cannot be guaranteed for last-minute bookings. You will be given a morning or afternoon appointment. You will need to supply the following information when booking an inspection:

- Address for inspection
- Type of inspection required
- SR number (this is the unique number given to each building consent)
- Name of person who will be on site
- Contact number for this person.

Re-inspections may be required if the officer is not satisfied that the work meets the requirement of the building consent and the Building Code. These may incur additional charges if inspections exceed those estimated when you lodged your building consent application.

In addition to the inspections by Council officers, inspections may be required by specialists, including structural, geotechnical and fire engineers. This would have been agreed at the consent processing stage. You will need to liaise directly with your specialist about the inspections he/she will need to make. Your specialist may not be able to give you the required producer statement if you have failed to arrange for inspections at the appropriate times.

If inspections have been missed, contact us to discuss possible alternative evidence you can provide to show that the work is code compliant. A subsequent inspection may not be able to be done until it has been verified that the work already in place complies with the building consent.

The work must be carried out in accordance with your approved building consent. If you wish to change some aspect of the project you must obtain an amendment to the building consent before the work is carried out.

The process for obtaining an amendment is the same as obtaining the original consent. It is very important that at the time of the inspection the building consent documents accurately reflect what has actually been built.

If the work has not been done in accordance with the building consent the inspector may issue a notice to fix or a site instruction stating what is required to be done.

## 12. Types of inspection

The following are the types of inspections that may be required depending on the type of building work:

### Building inspections

- **Site** – location of the building on site (a surveyor's report or visible boundary markers)
- **Foundation** – before placing any concrete for foundation walls or footings
- **Piles** – before placing any concrete for pile foundations (timber or concrete)
- **Pre-slab** – before placing any concrete for concrete floor slabs and any integral footings
- **Retaining wall** – before back-filling against any wall or covering any tanking
- **Sub-floor** – before covering any sub-floor framing
- **Pre-wrap** – before fitting building wrap to framing
- **Pre-clad** – on completing of the building wrap with flashings/tapes installed and before fitting any external cladding
- **Brick** – brick work at half height
- **Post-Clad & Weathertightness before application of any coating to the external cladding system**
- **Pre-line** – before fitting internal linings or installing wet-area membranes, airseals fitted internally around joinery, bracing connections complete
- **Pre-line (acoustic)** – before fitting internal linings where specialist vibrationally isolated connections or in-frame insulation is specified
- **Post-line (bracing)** – post line bracing while fixings are still visible

- **Post-line (fire)** – where fire-rated walls are included, certification from the fire design engineer (PS4) or sufficient inspections to verify correct installation of specified linings and protection of penetrations
- **Post-line (wet-area membranes)** – inspection of installed wet-area membranes before installation of finish surfaces such as tiles
- **Post-line (acoustic)** – where sound-rated walls are included, certification from the acoustic design engineer (PS4) or sufficient inspections to verify correct installation of specified linings and attenuation of penetrations
- **Final** – final inspection on completion of all building work following a formal application for a code compliance certificate (form supplied with approved consent documentation).

### Roofing inspections

- **Membrane** – membrane upstand prior to concealing behind any wall linings or under flashings,
- **Postwrap** – purlins and wrap in place

### Plumbing inspections

- **Drainage** – testing any drainage work before back filling and before covering any field drains
- **Pre-slab** – plumbing in/under the floor slab
- **Pre-line** – plumbing systems before fitting any linings
- **Final** – final inspection on completion of work.

## 13. Sign off

When the work is complete you will need to formally apply for a code compliance certificate on the form enclosed with your building consent. A code compliance certificate means that the building work complies with the Building Code and with the building consent.

You may also need to arrange a time for a final inspection, if one has not already been carried out.

When you apply for a code compliance certificate you will need to give names and contact details for all the people involved in your project eg builders, plumbers, engineers, etc. If the project involved construction work that is restricted building work the Licensed building practitioner must supply a 'Memorandum from licensed building practitioner: Record of building work' on

completion of the restricted building work to both the owner and the Council. This form can be downloaded from the Department of Building and Housing website [www.dbh.govt.nz/lbp](http://www.dbh.govt.nz/lbp).

You may also be required to supply supporting documentation such as energy work certificates or a PS4 (engineer's producer statement) before a code compliance certificate can be issued. Your building consent lists the documentation required before a code compliance certificate can be issued and additional documentation may also be requested during inspections.

We may be unable to issue the code compliance certificate if any of the required inspections have been missed or the required producer statements cannot be provided. Without a code compliance certificate you may experience difficulties insuring your property or selling it in the future.

A review of the fees paid for inspections will be made when the code compliance certificate has been approved for issue. Additional inspection fees will be charged if the inspection fee paid when the application was lodged is not enough to cover the inspection time actually used.

The code compliance certificate will not be issued if there are any unpaid fees, including unpaid Development Contributions required.

If an application for a code compliance certificate has not been received before two years after the building consent was granted, the Council is obliged to undertake an inspection and decide whether or not to issue a code compliance certificate.

If you apply for an extension of time to complete your building project an officer may grant an extension after reviewing the file.

In some circumstances we may refuse to issue a code compliance certificate, eg if an extension of

time to complete is not granted or if the work is not complete or does not comply or if you fail to supply the required documentation.

A compliance schedule will be issued with the code compliance certificate where the building has specified systems that have been added, removed or altered (including residential properties that are serviced by a cable car). Where the compliance schedule is new, a compliance schedule statement will also be issued.

You must display this statement in the building.

The Building Act requires us to process your application for code compliance certificate within 20 working days. The 'clock' starts when we receive your application. As with building consent applications, the 'clock' will stop if your application is suspended awaiting additional inspections, documentation or fees and will restart when the issue has been resolved.





## Other information and applications

### Determinations

If you are not happy with or disagree with a decision we make either during the processing or inspecting of your building work you can request a determination from the Department of Building and Housing. You can find out more about applying for a determination on the department's website [dbh.govt.nz/determinations-about-determinations](http://dbh.govt.nz/determinations-about-determinations).

### Certificates of acceptance

A certificate of acceptance provides some verification for a building owner or future building owners that part or all of certain building work carried out complies with the Building Code.

A certificate of acceptance can be issued where:

- Work that required building consent was carried out without first obtaining building consent.
- A private building consent authority (approved under the Building Act 2004) or a private building certifier (approved under the Building Act 1991) is unable to issue a code compliance certificate for work carried out under a building consent.
- A code compliance certificate cannot be issued for work carried out to a building that is open to members of the public and the building consent was issued before 31 March 2005.

A certificate of acceptance can only be issued if the work complies with the Building Code at the time the application is made. (This differs from a code compliance certificate which is issued if the work complies with the Building Code at the time the building consent was issued.)

When a certificate of acceptance is issued it will list the work the Council inspected.

You can find out more about applying for certificate of acceptance on our website [Wellington.govt.nz](http://Wellington.govt.nz). Your application will need to provide evidence of how the work complies with the Building Code, including those parts of the work that the Council cannot inspect.

### Certificates for public use

A certificate for public use is used to certify that premises or parts of premises affected by building work are safe to be used by members of the public. A certificate for public use can only be issued where a consent has been granted for building work but no code compliance certificate has been issued yet. Certificates for public use do not relieve the owner of a building from the obligation to apply for a code compliance certificate after all the building work has been carried out. Certificates for public use are not required for private homes.

### Additional sources of information

Further information can be obtained from the following websites:

- Department of Building and Housing [dbh.govt.nz](http://dbh.govt.nz)
- ConsumerBuild [consumerbuild.org.nz](http://consumerbuild.org.nz)
- Wellington City Council [Wellington.govt.nz](http://Wellington.govt.nz)
- Department of Internal Affairs [legislation.govt.nz](http://legislation.govt.nz)