

Valuing Lives & Earthquake Prone Buildings

It's an acknowledged fact that New Zealand is prone to seismic activity. Ultimately ensuring the safety of people is our priority and our buildings need to be safe for occupants and users alike. As from July 1, 2017 the Building (Earthquake-prone Buildings) Amendment Act 2016 came into effect and the legislation affects owners of earthquake-prone buildings, territorial authorities (TAs), engineers, other building professionals and building users.

The legislation comes as a response to the Canterbury Earthquakes Royal Commission and a comprehensive review undertaken by the Government, where problems were identified with the systems for managing earthquake-prone buildings (EPB) under the Building Act 2004, such as too much variability in local practice, poor information about the number and specific location of earthquake-prone buildings across the country, and a lack of central government guidance.

Identification of an EPB and what it means

The system avoids a "one-size-fits-all" approach by clarifying the definition of an earthquake-prone building by prioritising geographical areas, buildings and parts of buildings which have the greatest risk. As a result, New Zealand will be categorised into three areas of low, medium, and high seismic hazard areas – with Hawke's Bay being categorised as 'high'. National timeframes for territorial authorities to identify earthquake-prone buildings and deadlines for building owners to remediate earthquake-prone buildings will be set relative to their location and level of seismic risk. The seismic risk for an area will affect the deadline for

Seismic Hazard Zone	TAs to identify potentially EPB within:		Owners to strengthen/demolish EPB within:	
	Priority	Other	Priority	Other
High	2½ Years	5 Years	7½ Years	15 Years
Medium	5 Years	10 Years	12½ Years	25 Years
Low	N/A	15 Years	N/A	35 Years



Seismic Hazard Areas relative to remediation timelines

identifying, reporting progress, and remediating. Of note, the threshold for defining an EPB remains largely unchanged at less than 34% of the new building standard

Many structures, such as standard dwellings, farm buildings, wharves and bridges, are excluded because it would be impractical and costly to apply an EPB assessment to all buildings. Furthermore, hostels, boarding houses, specialised accommodation of two storeys or more, and residential buildings of two storeys or more that contain three or more household units, are subject to the EPB legislation. If an owner does not complete the seismic work within the deadline, or is not proceeding with reasonable speed considering the deadline, the territorial authority can apply for a court order to carry out the seismic work on the building. The costs will be

recoverable from the owner of the building.

What is a priority building?

A specific definition of what a priority building is has been included. These will be buildings in areas of medium or high seismic risk such as hospitals and educational facilities (such as schools occupied by more than 20 people), or buildings where unreinforced masonry could fall on to busy thoroughfares in an earthquake, e.g. parapets. Priority buildings have shorter deadlines for completing seismic work.

For the purposes of identifying priority buildings where masonry may fall on to busy thoroughfares, territorial authorities will be required to consult with their local communities and go through the special consultative procedure.



Experience has shown that the failure of earthquake-prone buildings, or parts endangers lives. Thirty-nine people lost their lives when unreinforced masonry buildings failed during

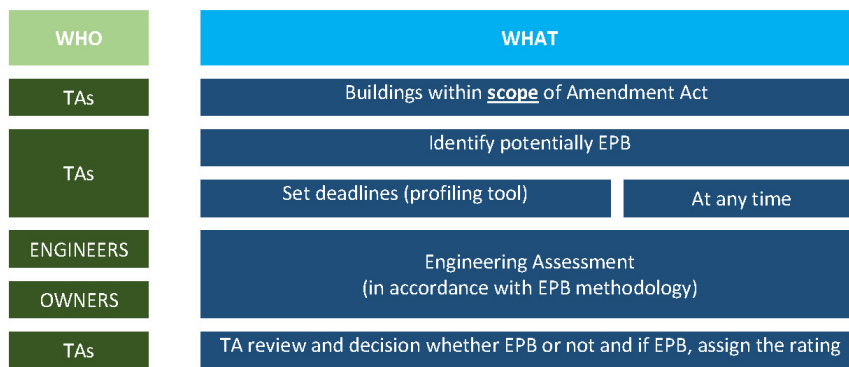
the Christchurch earthquake in 2011. Earthquake risk reduction is a priority in New Zealand and this legislation reflects the progressive approach to improving standards for new buildings and earthquake-

resistant design since design standards for buildings were first introduced into New Zealand in 1935, following the Napier earthquake.

In Summary:

- The system is consistent across the country and focuses on the most vulnerable buildings in terms of peoples' safety.
- It categorises New Zealand into three seismic risk areas and sets timeframes for identifying and acting to strengthen or remove earthquake-prone buildings.
- It provides more information for people using buildings such as nationally consistent EPB notices with ratings for earthquake-prone buildings and a public earthquake-prone buildings register (the EPB register).

Owners and TA's - who is responsible for what?



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