

Building Code Review

Requirement to review

The Department of Building and Housing is currently managing a review of the New Zealand Building Code. This is the first review of the Code since 1991 and must take place by 30 November 2007.

Amongst other things the review must consider–

“the extent to which the building code is stated in sufficient detail to provide clear guidance on performance standards that buildings must meet to ensure compliance with the building code.”

Effectively, this means the Building Code will be reviewed to make it better meet users' needs, and to ensure performance standards for buildings are clear and meet community expectations. Any changes to the Code will take into account **the Act's requirements for sustainable development, and for buildings to help people stay healthy and comfortable.**

The Building Code consists of 35 clauses. Each clause sets out performance standards that buildings must meet. These cover aspects such as durability, fire safety, energy efficiency and access. Compliance Documents (previously known as Approved Documents) provide a prescriptive means of complying with the clauses of the Building Code, that is, buildings built to the method described in a Compliance Document are automatically deemed to comply with the Code.

Solar water heating is covered by two documents relating to clauses:

- G12 – Water Supplies
- H1 – Energy Efficiency

Each Compliance Document contains step-by-step building methods called 'Acceptable Solutions' (for example, what insulation is needed to comply with energy efficiency requirements of the Building Code), and 'Verification Methods' (calculations, tests) that can be used to demonstrate compliance with the Building Code.

Compliance Documents may reference in whole or in part other publications such as New Zealand Standards. The documents are not mandatory, but nevertheless are important because they are endorsed by the Department, and designs based on them must be accepted by Building Consent Authorities (includes councils).

You can use other alternative ways of building provided these also come up to the required performance standards stipulated in the Building Code. These other methods are known as 'alternative solutions'.

If you use an alternative solution when you apply for a building consent, your Building Consent Authority will look at the alternative solution and decide whether it will meet the requirements of the Building Code. You will need to provide sufficient information to show how your alternative solution will meet the requirements.

SIA Position on the Review

The Solar Industries Association (SIA) will assist with the review to ensure that solar water heating;

- is included as an acceptable solution to meeting the sustainability requirement;
- there is a form of Home Energy Rating developed as a means of measuring compliance with the Building Act 2004.

SIA will work with other industry bodies such as those interested in other energy efficiency products (insulation, double glazing, space heating etc) to ensure that the results of the review are obtained quickly and efficiently. SIA believes that by cooperative action with other industry bodies and government agencies that the energy efficiency parts of the Code will be able to be concluded earlier than 2007.