

Earthquake strengthening seminar: outlining regulatory and technical process

22 March 2016, James Cook Hotel

Questions asked and notes of answers

1. What would you be doing to upgrade the NBS?

Neil Cooper: In terms of my own body corporate (BC) (the Dominion Building) the WCC did an Initial Evaluation Process (IEP) report before 2009 and this gave us an evaluation of 19% NBS. We subsequently commissioned a Detailed Seismic Assessment (DSA) which gave us a 42% NBS rating. At the time we had very little historical documentation to work with.

The BC's commercial owners drove the recent decision to commission a further DSA due to their difficulty in attracting tenants at the 42% NBS level. The BC searched the WCC Archives and were initially advised that the original plans could not be found. An owner did more research at the WCC Archives and found the original building plans and specifications under another address (around the corner from the current legal address). We also did ferro-scanning of key elements (columns and beams) in the building. As a result of the better information, the new DSA gave us a rating of over 70% NBS.

The main point here is BCs need to locate as much historical information on the building as possible before starting the DSA. Start with the WCC Archives and talk to any engineering firm that may have done upgrades in the past.

2. Who amongst professionals is the best person to identify strengthening options? All professionals seem to 'own' it?

Attendee (Commercial developer): It is best to get a project manager to liaise with all the professionals. I've found that clients (ie owners) found it a scary/high risk process and a project manager will establish a work programme to manage the risk.

Neil Cooper: He was aware that some body corporate chairs or their management company had tried to do the work rather than get a project manager in, but found that a project manager helped smooth the path.

3. Steve Cody, in his presentation mentioned "freezing" the structural standard in the Building Code. What is the period for 'freezing' the Building Code?

Stephen Cody: This is unknown as the current wording in the draft **Building (Earthquake-prone buildings) Amendment Bill** http://www.parliament.nz/en-nz/pb/legislation/bills/00DBHOH_BILL12960_1/building-earthquake-prone-buildings-amendment-bill doesn't provide a review date or sunset clause. It's possible this issue will be clarified once MBIE develops the regulations and guidance that will support the Bill.

The concern about incremental changes drove the decision by parliament to link the /seismic rating of a building obtained as part of the proposed legislation to the structural standard that

will be in place at the time the legislation is implemented. The Bill does not include any information on timeframes but it may be included in the legislation.

4. What are the key changes in the Building (Earthquake-prone buildings) Amendment Bill?

Stephen Cody: For Wellington, we've issued the majority of earthquake-prone building (s124) notices (7,000 buildings evaluated and currently approx. 700 notices issued). However, the rest of the country is not as advanced as Wellington due to many councils waiting to see the outcome of the draft legislation.

Timeframes may change for some earthquake-prone buildings, eg to seven years from the date of legislation for buildings on strategic or high volume routes. These are yet to be defined. This definition is expected to be provided when developing the regulations.

The new legislation will require all councils to begin assessing buildings, with councils having between 5 and 15 years to assess buildings in their communities. It could be harder to engage an engineer due to the likely increase in demand for their services once the legislation is passed.

5. John Ross of Professionals: asked about a court case against the Wellington City Council.

Stephen Cody: The threshold isn't changing. Owners went to MBIE for a determination to challenge WCC's issuing of an earthquake-prone notice on a particular building. The determination by MBIE upheld WCC's process and outcome. The owners have now gone to the District Court to seek to overthrow the determination.

6. Question about resource consent criteria being subjective about what things look like.

Stephen Cody (and other WCC staff): It will depend if the building is heritage-listed or in a heritage area. The District Plan Chapters 20 and 21 contain criteria on how to assess any resource consent application relating to heritage.

Councillor Iona Pannett added to the response, saying that the Central Area Rules in the District Plan also apply. Councillor Pannett encouraged owners to talk with WCC planners to get guidance as it is very complex issue and there will always be circumstances that are specific to an individual building.

7. Question about GNS remapping Wellington soil conditions.

Dr Peter Johnstone: Briefly spoke about the work done by GNS to classify the ground conditions for the city. The classification now has five soil types and not three as previously defined. Sites near the transition between zones can be quite variable .

The zones (soil types) are:

- Class A – strong rock
- Class B – rock

- Class C – shallow soil
- Class D – deep or very soft soil
- Class E – very soft soil

Peter noted that geotechnical companies can be engaged to classify the specific soil conditions for a site.