

Latest building consent news from Selwyn

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Update on our workload

Our building consent timeframes have been improving over the last few months with a slowdown in the number of applications coming in and our team working hard to catch up on the backlog.

At the end of February the average number of working days to process an application was 22 days.

March is traditionally a month for a high number of applications. This year we're not expecting this to be any different. We're already seeing this trend happening, so we'd like to remind applicants:

- Expect to see and plan for delays – we are likely to see timeframes extend out again to longer timeframes
- Make sure your application meets our criteria
- Remember to use the professional partnership programme (PPP) partner if you're an approved partner.

The increase in applications will put our team under further pressure, so we need your help to manage the workload.

Contact us if you have major concerns with your projects or want to discuss ways that we can work together better. Our aim is to achieve good outcomes for everyone and minimise impact on your business.

Meeting our criteria

We'll also be taking a firmer approach with applications coming in. Applications need to

- be complete with all information provided when submitted,
- meet the [criteria on our website](#) for supplying your supporting documents and the order you supply them in, and
- be for a subdivision with a minimum of a s223.

Professional partnership programme

Our professional partnership programme has had a slow uptake since we launched in May 2021.

We don't really understand why not more designers and companies are not embracing this fast-track option for their consent applications.

You can find out more about [becoming a partner](#) on our website.

Discretionary exemptions

We're not receiving all the information we need with applications for discretionary exemption.

This makes it difficult for us to make a decision on whether to grant the exemption or not.

Remember - when applying for a discretionary exemption you need to

- include the same quality and level of information as you would supply for a building consent, and
- show a good understanding of a Building Act in your application.

There's no request for further information process – so if it's not supplied it can't be considered! If plans and specifications do not provide sufficient detail your application may be refused.

If you're unsure check our information on our [website](#), or you can [email us](#) or give us a call on 0800 SELWYN (735 996).

Clarifications for applications

F5 site fencing

Does your site need to be fenced?

This decision depends on the site location. There will be a higher need in areas with high levels of pedestrian traffic (eg townships, near busy areas like schools) than for example industrial or rural areas.

Part of the objective of site fencing requirements under the Building Code is to safeguard people from injury from construction or demolition site hazards. There is a specific requirements to prevent unauthorised access by children.

A very effective way of separating people from hazards and excluding potentially vulnerable children from the site is a fence barrier as noted in F5/AS1.

We realise that a barrier may seem overkill for subdivisions with lifestyle size allotments in 'Living' or 'Residential' zones, but these are residential areas where there tends to be more foot traffic, be near a school, or more likely next to another worksite.

Consideration for fencing may be different on industrial or rural areas where there are other site health and safety conventions that restrict access to the site, or there are large physical distances that restrict access to the site.

You may just need specific hazards fenced when workers aren't onsite if the site is not completed enclosed so that children can't access the site unauthorised. A barrier complying with Table 1 of F5/AS1 is an acceptable solution. This may be as simple as having compliant fencing around the immediate building and work area.

So in our role we will be looking at:

- specifically in your application how you will meet F5 site fencing requirements, and
- whether you are meeting these requirements as part of our inspections.

Wet area flooring

Two types of floor lining materials are covered by the acceptable solution under amendment 7 to building code E3/AS1 section 3.1.1(a,b). These are:

- continuous vinyl, or
- tiles over an impervious substrate.

To comply, both floor coverings need to extend beyond sanitary fixtures and appliances in kitchens, bathrooms, laundries, and W/Cs.

If carpet is within 1.5m of sanitary fixtures or appliances the LBP designer will need a waiver to E3.3.3, and supply written confirmation from the homeowner that they are aware and understand the waiver.

What about vinyl planking?

We will apply a consistent approach with accepting vinyl planking as an E3 alternative solution if you provide adequate supporting documentation from the manufacturer with your application.

Issues with residential hold-down systems

Designers should be aware of some potential issues raised by Engineering NZ when using hold-down bolts on internal bracing lines with concrete slabs and detailing for timber floors. In particular:

- the need to follow a reliable load path, and
- consider the requirements of the system specified, regardless of the manufacturer.

Frequently designers use the braces internally, without considering a reliable load path or whether the slab thickness is sufficient for the screw length.

For further details look at their [guidance document](#) on their website. The document covers considerations for

- concrete floors, and
- timber floors.