



Sustainable Management of Historic Heritage Guidance Series

Earthquake-prone heritage buildings – Information for building owners

What are earthquake-prone heritage buildings?

Earthquake-prone buildings are determined by territorial authorities (councils) under the Building Act 2004. A building may be considered earthquake-prone if it is assessed to be less than one-third of the current New Building Standard (NBS) for new buildings. This provision relates to all types of buildings with the exception of residential buildings, unless the residential building comprises 2 or more storeys and contains 3 or more household units.

Although residential buildings are not required to be assessed under the Building Act, owners may choose to have an assessment done and rectify any structural issues or at-risk elements, such as chimneys and foundations.

Recent changes to the Building Act due to take effect mid 2017 will exclude farm buildings, monuments, bridges and dams and other types of structure from requirements for seismic assessment.

How do councils identify earthquake-prone heritage buildings?

Earthquake-prone heritage buildings are assessed in the same way as any other type of building. The process is provided for in the Building Act 2004 and outlined in the territorial authority's earthquake-prone policy. If the initial assessment identifies the building as likely to be earthquake-prone, Heritage New Zealand recommends that owners obtain a detailed seismic assessment (DSA). The DSA will estimate the % of NBS.

If the building is assessed as being below 34% of the NBS it is potentially earthquake-prone. The territorial authority may issue a section 124 notice under the Building Act 2004 requiring that the earthquake-prone building be strengthened or demolished. Heritage New Zealand receives copies of these notices for heritage buildings. Guidance about this process is available from:

<http://www.mbie.govt.nz/info-services/building-construction/safety-quality/earthquake-prone-buildings>

This information sheet provides a summary of key information as provided in the Heritage New Zealand draft guide, *Earthquake Strengthening: Improving the Structural Performance of Heritage Buildings*

The revised guide will be published in 2016. If you would like a copy of the draft guide, please email SnrHerPolAdvisor@heritage.org.nz

The Building (Earthquake-prone Buildings) Amendment Act 2016 introduces a new regime for the assessment of potentially earthquake-prone buildings from mid-2017. The Amendment Act establishes timeframes, based on regional seismic risk, for the assessment and if necessary strengthening of earthquake prone buildings. Priority buildings include unreinforced masonry buildings (or parts of the building, such as parapets) in areas of medium or high seismic risk that could endanger public safety. Timeframes are shorter for “priority buildings” but owners of non-priority heritage buildings may be able to apply for an extension of time. Further information is available on the Ministry of Business and Innovation website at <http://www.mbie.govt.nz/info-services/building-construction/safety-quality/earthquake-prone-buildings>

If my heritage building is earthquake-prone, what can I do?

The first step is to consult with the territorial authority and Heritage New Zealand to develop a strategy for your building. You will need to consider engaging professional services for a seismic assessment of the building, document and design a scheme(s) for seismic strengthening if necessary. It is important to cost these schemes and consider a programme of works which is affordable, provides for public safety, and retention of important heritage values. Earthquake strengthening normally involves major work so a staged approach will often be necessary.

Short term actions to ensure public safety may include:

- Ensuring chimneys and parapets are checked by an engineer and secured if required.
- Informing tenants and users of the building of any earthquake-prone status of the building.
- Informing the public with signs warning of any earthquake-prone status of the building.
- Erecting fences and signage around the perimeter to close the property to the public.

Before carrying out these actions, owners will need to discuss the options with the territorial authority.

What can I do to assist with the preparation of a detailed seismic assessment?

Documentation such as original building plans (including plans of alterations) and historic photographs will assist with the preparation of the detailed seismic assessment. Having such documentation may also avoid invasive and expensive testing. Other relevant documents will include conservation plans, condition reports, works specifications and heritage assessments.

I want to strengthen or possibly demolish my earthquake-prone heritage building, what are the rules?

The Resource Management Act 1991 regulates all work involving heritage buildings scheduled on district plans. While, generally, the rules of the plan vary between districts, nearly all plans regulate activities such as alterations



Old Government Buildings (Heritage Hotel), Christchurch. Photo, Heritage New Zealand.

The Heritage Hotel was strengthened in 1995. The work involved partial demolition of non-significant interior fabric, new stiff elements, new concrete shear walls anchored to the building and new skin wall elements. Further restoration work was undertaken in 2005. As a consequence of the strengthening works, the building survived the Canterbury earthquakes with minimal damage.

and demolition. Earthquake strengthening is often treated as an alteration. As a consequence, earthquake strengthening or demolition will likely require resource consent from the territorial authority. These consents are additional to any requirements of the Building Act 2004. So, in the first instance, contact your territorial authority.

While Heritage New Zealand advocates for minimal consent hurdles for earthquake strengthening, the type and cost of resource consent is a matter for territorial authorities to decide. If a heritage building is also entered on the New Zealand Heritage List/Rārangī Kōrero under the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014, territorial authorities normally require consent applicants to consult with Heritage New Zealand as an affected party.

But doesn't Heritage New Zealand protect heritage buildings?

The short answer is no. The building is only protected under the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014 if the owner has agreed to a heritage covenant or the place is an archaeological site as defined by the Act (i.e. it was constructed prior to 1900 and can be investigated by archaeological methods to provide information about the history of New Zealand).

Entering a building onto the New Zealand Heritage List/Rārangī Kōrero recognises the heritage value of the building. Territorial authorities regulate changes to heritage buildings by identifying in a heritage schedule of the district plan and imposing rules to control activities.

But why is archaeology relevant to earthquake-prone building?

Archaeological sites are not just pa sites and middens. Archaeological sites may also include buildings and sub-surface remains. The modification, or destruction of pre-1900 archaeological sites requires an archaeological authority from Heritage New Zealand under the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014.

Heritage New Zealand does not normally require an archaeological authority for earthquake strengthening of pre-1900 buildings unless the work involves sub-floor excavations. Full demolition of pre-1900 buildings is likely to require an archaeological authority. For further information, see the website: <http://www.heritage.org.nz/protecting-heritage/archaeology/archaeological-authorities>

Is there funding available to strengthen heritage buildings?

Building owners should explore all potential funding options. Access to funding sources, however, is often dependent on the nature of ownership of the building or its heritage status. Further information is available at: <http://www.heritage.org.nz/protecting-heritage/funding-for-heritage-protection>

The National Heritage Preservation Incentive Fund provides funding assistance for privately-owned Category 1 historic places, wāhi tapu, wāhi tapu areas and wāhi tūpuna entered on the New Zealand Heritage List /

Rārangi Kōrero under the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014. Click the link for more information on the [Fund](#).

If your property is in the Christchurch, Selwyn or Waimakariri Councils area, you may be eligible to apply for funding from the Canterbury Earthquake Heritage Building Trust. Information about this funding campaign is available from Heritage New Zealand's website - a new round closing 16th of December: <http://www.heritage.org.nz/protecting-heritage/funding-for-heritage-protection>

Other possible sources are the NZ Lotteries Board, local authorities and community trusts. Guidance is available from the Cultural Funding Guide: <http://www.mch.govt.nz/funding-nz-culture/search-funding?fcats=Heritage> and the Funding Information Service: <http://www.fis.org.nz/>. You can access the Funding Information Service website for free at any public library.

Changes to the law since the Canterbury earthquakes?

The Canterbury Earthquakes Royal Commission investigated the loss of both human life and buildings. The Royal Commission issued its final report to the Government in November 2012. The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment has also conducted a review of earthquake-prone buildings policy under the Building Act 2004.

Subsequently, amendments to the Building Act to change the system for managing earthquake-prone buildings have been approved and take effect mid 2017. The key changes that affect owners of heritage places are outlined above. Further information on the policy review and the new requirements can be found at <http://www.mbie.govt.nz/info-services/building-construction/safety-quality/earthquake-prone-buildings>.

Heritage New Zealand welcomes any feedback and comments on this information sheet.

Comments can be provided to information@heritage.org.nz.

Copyright ©Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga, November 2016