

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER NEWSLETTER BY PLANS.CO.NZ

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our November/December newsletter.



SEASON'S GREETINGS

Plans.co.nz would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and happy holidays. Our office is shutting down on 23 December for a well-deserved break and will re-open on 16 January 2012.



INSURANCE

An insurance company that covers over 20,000 New Zealand properties has announced it is cancelling policies from the end of this year. Ansvar Insurance, which announced in September that it was no longer offering earthquake cover in New Zealand, said it was pulling out completely because of the prohibitive cost of reinsurance following the Canterbury earthquakes.

Customers will be notified that existing policies from Ansvar Insurance (New Zealand) will be cancelled on 31 December 2011 unless other options are confirmed. The company was in discussions with other insurers to transfer the policies of most of its domestic customers although this might not be available to customers in Christchurch's red zone. Ansvar said it did not know the total cost of its Canterbury quake claims, but in September it reported they were over \$700 million.

The company specialises in insuring churches, education and heritage buildings. It announced in September it would no longer provide earthquake cover for over 600 churches from December 1. It has 2800 commercial policies and 17,700 domestic policies in New Zealand.



MANAWATU DISTRICT POPULATION GROWTH

Population estimates released by Statistics New Zealand show Palmerston North and Manawatu continue to experience strong population growth for the third consecutive year.

Palmerston North's population is estimated to have reached 82,100 people, an increase of 870 people from the previous year

The city's young population and strong employment growth are both supporting the strong population growth in the city. The city's population was increasing by over 900 people a year, an important factor in supporting further business growth and employment in sectors like education and health, both major employers in the city. The city's population expanded by 3,600 people over the last five years, well ahead of comparable cities – New Plymouth increased by 2,700 while the combined increase in Hastings and Napier was 3,300.

The population of Manawatu District is now estimated to have reached the 30,000 mark, increasing by 280 people in the last year. There has been strong growth in incomes in the region in recent years. Salaries and wages in the District increased by 7% in the year to June last year, well ahead of national data which showed no growth in national incomes. The region has been benefitting from an increase in the number of jobs and higher average incomes for salary and wage earners.

Growth for the wider Manawatu region, which includes the city and Manawatu District, also compares well with surrounding regions. The Manawatu region reached a population of 112,100 in June 2011, increasing by 4,600 people over the five years from 2006, an increase of 4.3%.



CHANGES TO THE DOCUMENTS SUPPORTING B1 & E2

If you use Acceptable Solution B1/AS1 and NZS 3604 to construct houses and small buildings you should use the 2011 version of NZS 3604; that's the version B1/AS1 references now.

But there are important modifications to NZS 3604:2011 in B1/AS1:

You can't use unreinforced concrete slabs-on-ground anywhere. All concrete slabs-on-ground must be reinforced with Grade 500E steel mesh which is tied to perimeter foundation reinforcement. This was introduced for the Canterbury earthquake region in May 2011 and has been extended nationwide.

If you use Verification Method B1/VM1 there are two new referenced documents:
A Standard for restraining equipment in earthquakes – NZS 4219:2009.

A Standard for the design of light-steel framed houses, published by the National Association of Steel-framed Housing (NASH).

Acceptable Solution E2/AS1, which deals with the weathertightness of cladding, has been updated to work better with the 2011 version of NZS 3604. The extended wind range of 55m/s allows more buildings to be designed to E2/AS1.

Verification Method E2/VM1, is a way to test how claddings with drainage cavities perform on timber-framed buildings to show that they comply with the Building Code clause E2. E2/VM1 has been updated to work with the revised E2/AS1.

There is a new Acceptable Solution for weathertightness of concrete and concrete masonry construction. This is E2/AS3 which references the Code of Practice for Weathertight Concrete and Concrete Masonry Construction published by the Cement and Concrete Association of New Zealand (CCANZ).

When do B1 and E2 changes take effect?

They are already in effect.

There is a transition period until the end of January 2012 when you can use either the previous documents or the new ones. From **1 February 2012** onwards you must follow the revised documents to be sure your buildings will comply with the Building Code.



LIFETIME DESIGN

A growing number of builders are now being asked to construct homes which meet the Lifetime Design standards. Lifetime Design, www.lifemark.co.nz, is an independent, not-for-profit social enterprise which has developed a design framework for ensuring a house is accessible, adaptable and inclusive.

Lifetime Design standards cover five key principles: usability, adaptability, accessibility, inclusion and lifetime value.

In New Zealand, a home which has been independently certified as meeting the Lifetime Design principles can apply for the Lifemark seal of approval.

Any home accredited with the Lifemark has 33 design features covering six key areas: entrance, kitchen, living area, bedroom, bathroom and multi-storey. These are all aimed at making the house easier to live in, accessible for everyone, and easy to adapt as residents' needs change over time.

- Entranceways should allow for seamless and trouble-free access and should have good lighting and generously-sized doorways to cater for parents carrying children or shopping or for older people using a walking aid;
- In the kitchen, the focus is on safety as well as convenience ensuring there is enough space around appliances and cupboards to move around easily while supervising small children. The layout, fixtures and fittings must also enable cooking and cleaning in comfort, even when using a mobility device or wheelchair;
- Bathrooms, a commonly-modified risk area for children, elderly and disabled people, can be 'future-proofed' through simple features such as strengthened walls to accommodate future handrails and a shower seat. Using a wet area shower rather than a traditional shower box is convenient for assisting young children and the elderly, and provides room to manoeuvre a mobility aid;
- Ideally, bathrooms and bedrooms in particular should be built on the entry level, with wide easy access between the two. In multi-storey homes, provision can be made to allow for later installing a lift, and stairways should be wide with weight-bearing handrails on both sides; and
- In the living room, switches, power sockets and other controls are at a handy height in order to avoid unnecessary bending or reaching.

This means building a home intended to be convenient and safe for everyone and to cater for a variety of needs, such as multi-generational households, permanently or temporarily-disabled inhabitants such as people with a broken leg or recuperating from surgery, the elderly and those who simply plan to live in their own home into their old age.

LICENSING UPDATE

Over 13,000 licenses have now been issued. It is currently taking between 4-6 weeks for a completed application to be processed and assessed – this timeframe may change depending on application volumes. Time is quickly running out for those who have not yet applied – the deadline to be licensed is 1 March 2012.



Building practitioners are being asked to check the licensing status of their specialised subcontractors such as brick and block layers; external plasterers and specialised roofers.

Restricted Building Work (RBW) is coming, making it even more essential to be a Licensed Building Practitioner and to keep up to date with information relevant to your sector.

From 1 March 2012, any structural and/or weathertight renovations to residential houses or new builds can only be carried out or supervised by a Licensed Building Practitioner.

RBW only relates to residential construction, alterations and design of houses and small-to-medium sized apartment buildings. It doesn't apply to any ancillary buildings such as garages or garden sheds or to commercial property.

The type of work which will be restricted includes the design and construction of: Foundation and sub-floor framing, floors, walls, roof, columns and beams, bracing, damp-proofing, roof and wall cladding, water proofing as well as the design of fire safety systems for small to medium apartments.

The Department is currently developing information detailing how RBW will affect each licence class, and we will let you know through further licensing updates when this is available.

RBW is part of a number of changes to the Building Act 2004 following a review of the legislation which governs the building and construction sector in New Zealand. The changes aimed at lifting productivity, improving quality standards and offering better protection to both consumers and tradespeople.

HAVE YOUR SAY

At Plans.co.nz we are committed to producing quality plans at affordable prices, and we would really appreciate any feedback we can have from you concerning anything that would improve the way you understand or read our plans. Please e-mail Rebecca on admin@plans.co.nz so we can bring any suggestions up at our regular staff meetings and improve our service to you.

Tell us your thoughts – contact us to share your ideas, opinions etc for our newsletter so we can provide you with relevant content in the future.

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