

What is & Why have an Appraisal?

- for a building product to be used in New Zealand



NZ Building law

In New Zealand, all building work must comply with the law - known as the **Building Act 2004**.

The Building Act 2004 states that all building work, including products, assemblies and methods, need to meet the “performances” described in another document, called the “**Building Code**”.

The Building Code does not state how a building product is to be designed or constructed. Instead, it states that the product must comply with a “performance requirement”.

For example, if a product provides a structural function, such as framing system or, is a load bearing wall panel, then the Building Code states: “Buildings, building elements and sitework shall have a low probability of rupturing, becoming unstable, losing equilibrium, or collapsing during construction or alteration and throughout their lives”

How this is verified depends on who is best qualified to assess its compliance. In the case of structural products, it is a qualified engineer. If the performance clause relates to fire performance, it will be a fire engineer... and so on. Each performance will require an appropriately qualified person or body to confirm its compliance.

Councils are the ‘compliance gatekeepers’ in New Zealand.

Whenever an application is made to commence building work in New Zealand, an application must be submitted to the local Council for approval. Building work on anything less than 30 sq.m floor area is exempted.

Councils are responsible for checking that the proposed building work, incorporating various building products, or systems, or methods, will comply with the applicable performance requirements.

Where the building work is relatively simple, such as laying a concrete driveway or constructing a retaining wall, then Councils simply require a document from an engineer (called an Engineer’s Producer Statement).

Where the building work involves several performance requirements to be met, then Councils expect multiple documents, typically including evidence in the form of test reports together with any in-service history, to verify that the finished building work, will comply and continue to comply.

A solution for product manufacturers and importer/distributors

Where a building product manufacturer or importer / distributor wishes to sell products that have associated known risks, without the need for submitting all of the documents that a Council may require each time, then an **Appraisal certificate** is the solution.

An Appraisal certificate is a document summarising all of the assessment work carried out by a reputable, impartial assessment body, that the Councils have confidence with. Use of an Appraisal saves time and effort with each succeeding building consent application. That is why an Appraisal is so useful.

For products with very low risks, other forms for demonstrating compliance may be suitable. Advice as to which is best suited for a new product, should be sought from an assessment body, such as BEAL. www.beal.co.nz

Content and Format of an Appraisal certificate

At present there isn’t a Standard for the publishing of an Appraisal certificate. However, the following provides a generic list of what Councils and Appraisal certificate-holders should expect:

1. Product name(s)
2. Building Regulation - relevant ‘Performance Clauses’
3. Technical specification
4. Scope and limitations - covering ‘building importance levels’ (where applicable), seismic zones, wind zones, salt environments, together with all other relevant effects of the environment
5. Technical literature - usually in the form of a Technical & Installation Manual*
6. *Design information / drawings for use by designers
7. *Installation information / drawings
8. Basis for issuing the Appraisal certificate
 - a. Assessment methodology
 - b. List of all relevant Test Reports

- c. Buildability Assessment
 - d. Expert Reviews, where relevant
 - e. Quality Plan(s) - covering training requirements and manufacturing and or site checklists
 - f. Sources of information relied upon
9. Concluding statement
 10. Name and contact details of the Appraisal certificate-holder
 11. Name and contact details of the Appraisal Assessment body
 12. Appraisal certificate number with expiry date
 13. Ideally, have a photo of the product
 14. Conditions covering the publishing the Appraisal certificate, if any.

Finally, every Appraisal should be set out in a format that is easy to read and quick to find essential information.

Is an Appraisal Necessary?

Since the use of an Appraisal certificate is very useful but not a requirement, the short answer is no. On the other hand, the risk of having a building consent held up for want of additional information by the Council, which is commonplace, together with the attendant costs of having to get and then submit the additional information, either through the owner or their designer, makes it abundantly obvious of the benefits of having an Appraisal certificate.
