



1 May 2026

Ivan del Rosario

s7(2)(a)

Tēnā koe Ivan,

**Request for Information – Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act (LGOIMA) 1987**

We refer to your official information request dated 8 April 2026, seeking information about Hutt City Council's response to the Christchurch (2011) and Kaikōura (2016) earthquakes, and historical average rates information for the Petone and Eastbourne areas. Specifically, you requested:

- 1. A list of council projects or policies undertaken in response to the Christchurch (2011) and Kaikōura (2016) earthquakes, including initiatives such as building strengthening, rezoning, amendments to building standards, relocation from high-risk areas, and any related projects.*
- 2. The costs associated with implementing those projects or policies, whether arising from legislative change or Council policy decisions.*
- 3. Average residential rates information for Petone and Eastbourne from approximately 2005 through to the most recent available year.*

**Answer:**

Following the Christchurch earthquakes, Council reviewed its earthquake-prone building approach under the Building Act. This work resulted in the adoption of a revised Earthquake-prone Building Policy in November 2011, which is enclosed with this response. At the time, local authorities were required to maintain their own earthquake-prone building policies, and this policy set out how Council

would identify and manage earthquake-prone buildings within the legislative framework then in force.

After the Kaikōura earthquake, Council did not adopt a new or separate local earthquake policy. Subsequent changes to the management of earthquake-prone buildings arose through amendments to the Building Act, including the Building (Earthquake-prone Buildings) Amendment Act 2016, which came into effect in July 2017. These legislative changes introduced a nationally consistent earthquake-prone building system, including assessment methodologies, timeframes, and compliance requirements, which Council is required to administer.

Council also undertook work associated with the administration of unreinforced masonry building requirements following the Kaikōura earthquake, including participation in processes relating to the Hurunui-Kaikōura Earthquakes Recovery (Unreinforced Masonry Buildings) Order 2017.

Council continues to carry out work relating to earthquake-prone buildings as part of its ongoing statutory functions. This includes identifying and assessing earthquake-prone buildings, maintaining statutory registers, issuing and managing notices, and administering compliance obligations in accordance with national requirements.

Council has also undertaken individual seismic strengthening or structural works to Council owned assets following engineering assessments. Examples identified include seismic strengthening work associated with the War Memorial Library project (which is currently in the planning phase) and structural decision making relating to the Cuba Street overbridge following inspections that identified earthquake vulnerability. These activities were progressed through Council's standard asset management and capital works processes.

From a planning perspective, Council has updated natural hazard information within the District Plan, including fault location areas. However, this work was undertaken through the broader District Plan review process and was not initiated as a direct response to the Christchurch or Kaikōura earthquakes.

In relation to costs, Council holds cost information for specific projects, such as individual seismic strengthening works, through project budgets and associated reporting. Council does not hold a single consolidated record identifying total costs attributable specifically to earthquake response projects or policies, nor does it separately record costs flowing from legislative change beyond incorporation into ongoing operational and capital programmes.

In response to your request for historical average residential rates information for Petone and Eastbourne, Council publishes average residential rates information in its Annual Plans and Long-Term Plans. These documents include tables titled "*Examples of rates on a range of typical properties*" and "*Residential suburbs: average rateable value*", which show the average rateable value and total residential rates for individual suburbs, including Eastbourne and other residential suburbs within the Petone area.

This information is publicly available and can be accessed through Council's Annual Plans and Long-Term Plans for the relevant years. Historic and current planning documents are available on Council's website at: [Annual Plans and Long Term Plans | Hutt City Council](#).

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this response. Information about how to make a complaint is available at: [Office of the Ombudsman - Complaints](#), or freephone 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response to your information request may be published on Hutt City Council's website: [Proactive releases - Hutt City Council](#).

Ngā mihi nui



Rebekah van der Splinter

**Senior Advisor, Official Information and Privacy**

2 NOVEMBER 2011

(subsequent amendment approved by Council 17  
September 2013)

# EARTHQUAKE-PRONE BUILDING POLICY 2011

RELEASED UNDER THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL INFORMATION AND MEETINGS ACT 1987

# HUTT CITY COUNCIL

## EARTHQUAKE-PRONE BUILDING POLICY 2011

Adopted by Council: 2 November 2011

Subsequent amendment approved by Council 17 September 2013

### INTRODUCTION

Hutt City Council (the Council) was required under section 131 of the Building Act 2004 to adopt a policy on earthquake-prone buildings by 31 May 2006. Section 132 of the Act requires the Council to review this policy every five years and this must be carried out in accordance with the Local Government Act 2004 Special Consultative Procedure.

This document sets out the draft policy adopted by the Council in accordance with the requirements of the Act.

The policy is required to state:

1. The approach that the Council will take in performing its functions under the Act.
2. The Council's priorities in performing those functions.
3. How the policy will apply to heritage buildings.

The proposed policy does not apply to residential buildings.

### BACKGROUND

The definition of an earthquake-prone building is set out in section 122 of the Building Act as:

4. "A building is earthquake-prone for the purposes of this Act if, having regard to its condition and to the ground on which it is built, and because of its construction, the building—
  - a. will have its ultimate capacity exceeded in a moderate earthquake (as defined in the regulations); and
  - b. would be likely to collapse causing—
    - i. injury or death to persons in the building or to persons on any other property; or
    - ii. damage to any other property.

2. Subsection (1) does not apply to a building that is used wholly or mainly for residential purposes unless the building—
  - a. comprises 2 or more storeys; and
  - b. contains 3 or more household units.”

The government has defined a moderate earthquake in regulations as *“in relation to a building, an earthquake that would generate shaking at the site of the building that is of the same duration as, but that is one-third as strong as, the earthquake shaking (determined by normal measures of acceleration, velocity and displacement) that would be used to design a new building at the site”*.

These definitions cover more buildings and require a higher level of structural performance of buildings than required by the Building Act 1991.

### **Progress over the last five years**

The Council has assessed building stock within the city and has identified earthquake-prone buildings. The process Council has followed has been as follows:

- a. Advised and liaised with owners of buildings identified as earthquake- prone.
- b. Encouraged owners to carry out an independent assessment of the structural performance of those buildings identified as earthquake- prone and given them six months to carry out such investigations. This timeframe was then extended to 12 months for the work to be undertaken.
- c. Reviewed the assessments carried out by the owners and revised the list of earthquake-prone buildings as necessary.
- d. Served a formal notice on owners of earthquake-prone buildings in accordance with section 124 of the Building Act 2004 to remove the danger. A timeframe was set for the owner to complete the work required, to make the building compliant.
- e. Allowed owners to make submissions against the classification within six months of receiving the notice.
- f. Considered the submissions raised by owners and then issued decisions.
- g. Fixed a notice to the buildings identified as earthquake-prone and placed buildings on earthquake-prone register.

Owners may still engage their own structural engineer to carry out an assessment to submit for review. Council peer reviews these assessments to ensure they meet the requirements of the Earthquake-Prone Policy.

As at 25 May 2011, compared to five years ago:

- Under the previous 1984 earthquake risk register there were 139 buildings in 2007 assessed as an earthquake risk, this has been reduced to 20.
- Under earthquake-prone building policy requirements adopted by Council in May 2006, there were 138 buildings identified in 2007 as earthquake-prone, this has been reduced to 77.

## 1.1 POLICY APPROACH

### 1.1.1 Policy principles

The Council has noted that provisions of the Building Act in regard to earthquake-prone buildings reflect the government's broader concern with public safety in buildings and, more particularly, the need to address public safety in an earthquake.

The Council has also noted that the development of an earthquake-prone building policy is up to each territorial authority and has responded accordingly.

Section 132 of the Act requires the Council to review this policy every 5 years and this must be in accordance with the Local Government Act 2002, Special Consultative Procedure.

### 1.1.2 Building Act assessment and strengthening criteria

The Council will use the New Zealand Society of Earthquake Engineers (NZSEE) recommendations as its preferred basis for defining technical requirements and criteria. These recommendations are designed to be used in conjunction with AS/NZS 1170 Loadings Standard, NZS 3101 Concrete Structures Standard, NZS 3404 Steel Structures Standard and other materials Standards.

The Council will require assessment reviews of earthquake restrengthening proposals or submissions for removal from the earthquake-prone register by an appropriately qualified person e.g. a Chartered Professional Engineer with expertise in Earthquake Engineering.

### 1.1.3 Council Policy 2011

Council strongly recommends that all buildings be strengthened to a minimum of 67% New Building Standard (NBS). Council will require all buildings to be strengthened to 34% of NBS by 2018, with the exception of:

- a. building that has been strengthened under policy set by Council in 2006 that allows heritage and historic buildings to be strengthened to a level just above 33% NBS and all other earthquake-prone buildings required to restrengthen to 50% NBS; or
- b. where a building consent has been issued and strengthening work has commenced."

#### **There are six major reasons why Council adopted this policy at its meeting on 2 November 2011:**

- The recent Christchurch earthquakes have shown what can happen in a major earthquake to buildings and the issues around public safety this has generated.
- The New Zealand Society of Earthquake Engineers (NZSEE) recommend that every effort be made to achieve a structural performance improvement to at least 67% NBS, to promote public safety and minimise potential damage to heritage structures.
- The Royal Commission of Enquiry into the Christchurch Earthquake will report back to Government early 2012. There is a need to tighten our policy now, pending the outcome of the Commissions report.
- Council is of the view that building owners with buildings classified as earthquake risk have had significant time already to get their buildings strengthened and must take action as public safety was paramount.
- This policy should only impact those who have taken no action to strengthen their buildings after having been required to do so, and not impact those who have already done so to, or in excess of, the levels recommended.

- It is noted that the levels proposed were so that occupants and the public were more likely to safely escape a earthquake hit building notwithstanding the building may become uninhabitable and have to be demolished.

#### 1.1.4 Overall Approach

Seismic Hazards – Appendix 1 provides an outline of the earthquake hazards for the Hutt Valley.

Prior to the 1980's the Council did not actively pursue a policy of identifying and strengthening earthquake-prone buildings. During the 1980s the Council undertook surveys of buildings in the central business district. This identified those buildings that fell within the earthquake-prone classification applicable at that time.

Strengthening work undertaken to date has either been as a result of:

- Property owners acting on their own accord; or
- Major upgrades of heritage classified buildings; or
- Where property owners have applied for a building consent for a change of use of their buildings or part of their building and strengthening has been required (see section 46, Building Act 1991) and now section 115, Building Act 2004.
- Where Council had served a notice and required owners to strengthen their building pursuant to the Building Act 2004.

This policy reflects the Council's role to reduce earthquake risk over time in a way that is acceptable in social and economic terms to its ratepayers.

In developing its approach to this policy the Council has considered the key issues of:

- The level of risk to human life and safety which can be tolerated over both the short and long term if building strengthening is delayed.
- The economic impacts of progressively strengthening building stock in anticipation of an earthquake that could damage that stock.
- The economic impacts of not strengthening building stock and incurring the cost of repair/replacement at the same time that infrastructure may be damaged and require repair as the result of an earthquake.

In considering the key issues, the Council needs to achieve a balance between a number of conflicting issues and concerns:

- The safety of the public when an earthquake event occurs.
- The likelihood, severity and potential timing of a major earthquake and effects on different locations within the district.
- The economic impact on the district of a major earthquake.
- The relative age and condition of non-residential buildings within the district.
- The costs of undertaking a comprehensive review of potentially earthquake-prone buildings and the availability of funding for this work.
- The costs of planned and progressive strengthening of buildings versus the economic impact of catastrophic failures caused by an earthquake.
- The costs to building owners of undertaking various levels of strengthening work and the potential economic impact (including loss of businesses) to the district.
- The risk that buildings which are uneconomic to strengthen will be removed and that the character of the built environment in Hutt City will alter as a result.
- The potential loss of heritage buildings as the result of this process.
- The need for statutory compliance by building owners and the Council.

Hutt City Council's Earthquake-prone Building Policy reflects Council's approach to reduce the risk of serious damage to property, injury and potentially loss of life as a result of an earthquake. This will be done over a set period of time and in a way that is acceptable to its ratepayers in terms of the Long Term Plan for Hutt City.

#### 1.1.5 Identifying earthquake-prone buildings

The Council has over the past five years assessed building stock within the city and has identified earthquake-prone buildings. This process is outlined above – refer to page two.

The Council will use the following criteria to determine when the Council will now become involved:\

1. When an application for building consent is received; and/or
2. When a change of building use occurs; and/or
3. When an application for Certificate of Acceptance is received (subject to the building work having been carried out after the introduction of this policy); and/or
4. When complaints are received about the state of a building and the Council considers there are grounds for further investigation and assessment.

#### 1.1.6 Building consent and Certificate of Acceptance applications

On receipt of an application for building consent or certificate of acceptance related to an earthquake prone/risk building the Council requires:

1. An assessment of structural strength of the entire building. Such an assessment will address whether or not the building meets the requirement of the earthquake-prone building policy.
2. Strengthening will be required if the total estimated value of building work for applications approved for and over the next four year period (2011-2014) exceeds 25% (or 30% for heritage/historic buildings) of the value of improvements.
3. There is an expectation that owners of identified earthquake-prone buildings should have completed assessments of the earthquake prone risk for their building by the end of 2014. The building owners consulting structural engineer must assess whether the building may be removed by a calculation method or require restrengthening to the Earthquake-Prone Policy requirements.
4. If the building requires earthquake strengthening, building consent for the required work must be in place by the end of 2016 thereby allowing a two year period for the earthquake strengthening to be undertaken and completed by the end of 2018.
5. If the building does not comply with the Building Act and the provisions of this policy within the timeframes set, Council will consider the legal remedies available to it.

**Notes:**

- Where the subject building is one of a number of buildings on the site, the valuation service provider for the Council will be consulted to ascertain the individual building value of improvement breakdown from the property database.
- Notwithstanding 2 above, building work that relates to specified systems<sup>1</sup> and access and facilities for people with disabilities<sup>2</sup> shall not be considered when assessing the estimated value of building work as a percentage of the value of improvements.
- With respect to the process outlined above Council will:
  - Advise and liaise with owners of buildings identified as earthquake-prone.
  - Discuss options for action with owners within a defined time frame with a view to obtaining from the owner a mutually acceptable approach for dealing with the risk, leading to receipt of a formal proposal from owners for the strengthening or removal of the risk.
    - the event the discussions do not yield a mutually acceptable approach and proposal, the Council will serve a formal notice on the owner to either strengthen the building or remove the earthquake-prone risk of the building.
- Whenever an application for building consent is received for an alteration to an existing building, then the identification of earthquake-prone buildings assessment criteria and strengthening criteria procedures will be activated.
- Whenever a building consent application is received for change of use for a building that is or could be earthquake-prone, then, irrespective of the general priorities set by the Council for dealing with earthquake-prone buildings, it will be a requirement of the building consent that the owner make a detailed assessment of the earthquake performance of the building to determine whether or not it is

<sup>1</sup> See definitions, Section 7, Building Act 2004 and Building (specified systems, change the use, and earthquake-prone buildings) Regulations 2005

<sup>2</sup> See Section 118, Building Act 2004

an earthquake-prone building in its existing condition. If the building is shown to be earthquake-prone then the Council will require that the building be strengthened to comply as nearly as is reasonably practicable with every provision of the Building Code that relates to structural performance as is required by section 115(b)(i)(A) of the Building Act 2004. In this instance the requirement for earthquake-prone buildings would be the same as that for non-earthquake-prone buildings.

- Once a final Code Compliance Certificate (CCC) is issued the building owner can ask that the building be removed from the Earthquake-Prone Register. Council will advise the owner once this process is completed.

**Refer to Appendix 2 attached for a flowchart of the process as outline above.**

#### 1.1.7 Recording a building's earthquake-prone building status

The Council will keep a register of all earthquake-prone buildings. This register will note whether or not the required improvements have been carried out, the status of those improvements or the results of improvements as applicable.

In addition, the following information will be placed on the LIM for each earthquake-prone building:

- Address and legal description of land and building;
- Statement that the building is on the Council's register of earthquake-prone buildings;
- Date by which strengthening and/or removing the risk is required (if known);

A statement that gives further details is available from the Council to those who can demonstrate a genuine interest in the property.

#### 1.1.8 1.7 Economic impact of policy

This policy has the economic impacts of:

- A cost met by the building consent owner for verifying or contesting Council's evaluation.
- Costs met by the building owner for strengthening work.
- Benefits to occupiers and users of buildings where risk of property damage, injury or death from earthquakes are reduced.

These costs and benefits are difficult to quantify. Each building is unique, with its own standard of design and construction. Therefore the economic impact of the policy on each building needs to be assessed on a case by case basis. The costs to meet the requirements of the proposed Earthquake-prone Building Policy will therefore range from small to large depending on the building concerned.

While these costs are high in some cases the primary concern that the policy is designed to address is the safety of the public in buildings and more particularly, the need to protect lives in the event of an earthquake. By implementing this legislation Parliament implicitly decided that the imposition of these costs is justified by the benefits.

### 1.1.9 Access to earthquake-prone information

Information concerning the earthquake status of a building will be contained on the relevant LIM.

In addition, the Council will keep a record of the NZSEE grade of all buildings assessed, and will encourage all owners of significant buildings to have them assessed and graded. The Council recognises the long term benefits of increased public awareness.

The Council will not require earthquake-prone buildings to have an identifying plaque. Once Council is satisfied a building is earthquake-prone a Notice in Respect of Earthquake-Prone Building is issued pursuant to section 124 (1) (c) of the Building Act and attached to the building. As required under the Act a copy of the notice is sent to owners, occupiers and parties with a registered interest in the building e.g. banks.

In granting access to information concerning earthquake-prone buildings, the Council will conform with the requirements of the relevant legislation.

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## 2. HERITAGE BUILDINGS

Council adopted a new Heritage Policy in May 2008. This policy provides a range of incentives, available to all owners, for the conservation of heritage buildings. The Heritage Policy is available from the Council website [www.huttcity.govt.nz](http://www.huttcity.govt.nz)

The Council will take into account any special traditional and cultural aspects of the intended use of a building and the need to facilitate the preservation of buildings of significant cultural, historical, or heritage value when implementing the procedures under the Building Act 2004 with regard to earthquake-prone buildings. This will be achieved by:

- Recognising the range of heritage buildings that may exist in the district, including the New Zealand Historic Places Trust Register, and any statutory protection, including any listing in the District Plan.
- Ensuring consultation with owners of heritage buildings.
- Informing and involving relevant statutory organisations, including the New Zealand Historic Places Trust with regard to any heritage buildings identified as being at risk.
- Considering heritage values when managing any building identified as being at risk.
- Considering heritage values when developing upgrading proposals.
- Considering the heritage significance, integrity and condition of the historic heritage including any significant components or fabric and features of heritage values.

After undertaking the actions outlined above, notices will be served requiring improvement or removal of earthquake-prone heritage buildings within a stated time-frame.

## 3. COUNCIL RESPONSE IN A MAJOR EARTHQUAKE

For the information of people reading this policy, the sections above outline the process Council is pursuing to ensure all buildings meet current minimum earthquake standards. When a major earthquake occurs Civil Defence Emergency Management will be activated. The immediate response will be focussed on rescuing those whose lives are in danger and making sure people are safe. During this response and recovery phase Council will assess buildings to determine if they are safe or not.

**Appendix 1: Outline of the earthquake hazards for the Hutt Valley.****a Earthquake Hazard**

The Wellington Fault runs along the western side of the Hutt Valley from Petone to the Taita Gorge. In this area it is expected that there would be permanent ground deformation following the next Wellington Fault rupture event. During such an event, accompanied by a very large earthquake, the ground on the west side of the Wellington Fault is predicted to move horizontally up to 4m relative to the east side, and there will be up to 0.5m vertical movement. This movement would be concentrated at discrete breaks at the ground surface, such as along the mapped fault traces, but will also be distributed across the immediate vicinity. Further fault rupture has a moderate to high probability of taking place within the next 100 years.

The area at risk from a fault rupture is identified by the Wellington Fault Special Study Area. This Special Study Area extends from Petone to Silverstream. Where there is no evidence of the Wellington Fault scarp, the position of the Wellington Fault is inferred. The Wellington Fault Special Study Area is 150 metres wide to accommodate this inferred position and is shown on the District Plan maps.

**b Liquefaction Hazard**

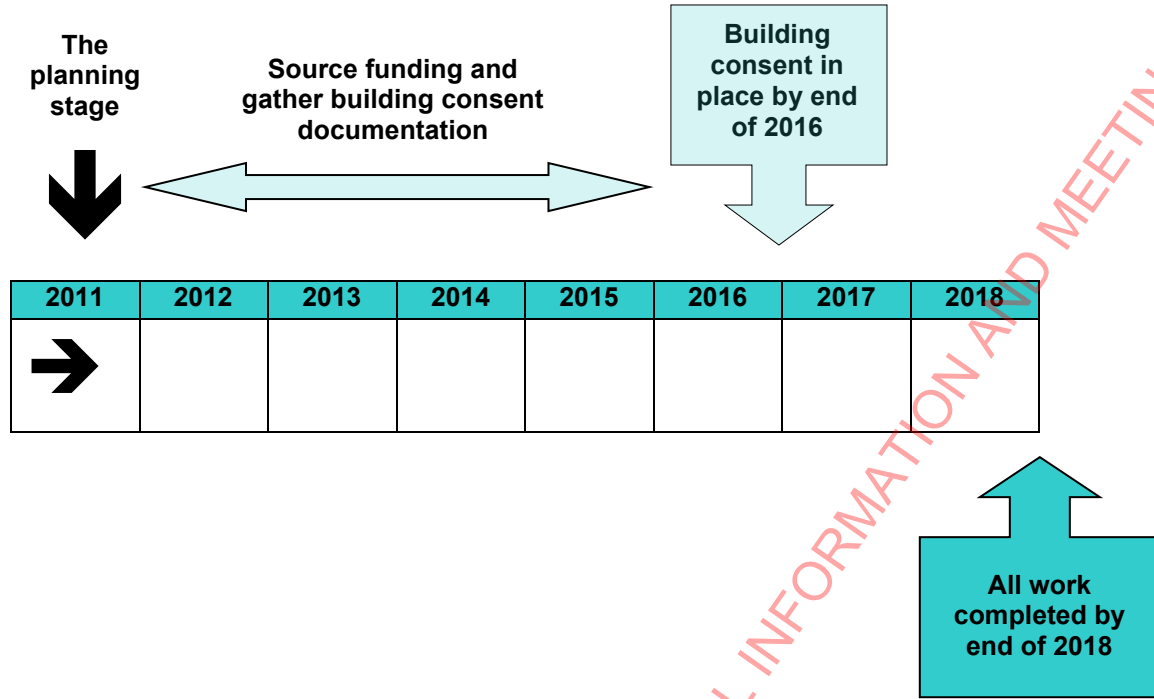
Research shows that some subsurface soils have a high probability of liquefaction occurring during strong earthquake shaking. Liquefaction is the situation where the soils become like liquid due to seismic action. During liquefaction, the soil loses its ability to support buildings, causing damage to the buildings. The types of soil most susceptible to liquefaction are low to medium density sands and silts, generally within 12 to 15 metres of the ground surface. These soils are known as flexible soils. Shallow groundwater level is also an important requirement for liquefaction to occur.

Seaview/Gracefield and the southern portions of Petone, Moera and Woburn have such flexible soils and shallow groundwater conditions.

**c Ground Shaking Hazard**

The Hutt Valley would experience strong ground shaking during a large earthquake on the Wellington Fault. Larger earthquakes on distant faults could give rise to similar levels of ground shaking as would occur during a Wellington fault rupture. Such ground shaking could cause buildings to collapse, crack and disintegrate.

**Appendix 2: Timeframes for strengthening buildings by 2018**



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