



THE NEW RULES OF THE BUILD: WHAT THE 2024 NATIONAL BUILDING CODE MEANS FOR YOU

INTRODUCTION

The 2024 National Building Code came into operation on **1st March, 2025**, one year after it was published as Legal Notice No. 27. The 2024 Code is a pivotal shift, replacing the outdated regulatory framework, the archaic 1968 Local Government (Adoptive By-Laws) (Building) Order. The new Code is a testimony to the desire to be progressive, innovative, and to address the shortfalls of the 1968 Code.

The 2024 Code incorporates advanced construction practices, modern materials, cutting-edge technologies, quality control, and rigorous testing capabilities that were absent in its predecessor.

Some of the notable reforms are designed to achieve objectives such as multi-hazard resilience designs, promotion of energy efficiency, achieving universal accessibility, risk management, and quality control. The Code will result in stricter regulations and sustainability for developers and all stakeholders.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

We look at the vital reforms brought about by the Code below:

i) Professional Obligations

Critics of the 1968 Code rightly observed that the code had not been revised for half a century. As such, it remained stubbornly tethered to the past, failing to encompass adequate evolving trends. Notably absent from this antiquated framework was any meaningful recognition of the crucial roles played by the diverse array of professionals who bring a building to life – the

architects, engineers, surveyors, and contractors whose expertise is indispensable to the successful realization of any construction project.

The 2024 Code, in stark contrast, recognizes and integrates the roles, expertise, and obligations of these licensed professionals.

Consequently, these new provisions require a heightened degree of due diligence to ensure that professionals entrusted as actors possess not only the requisite credentials under the specific Acts of Parliament, but they also possess a deep and nuanced understanding in the comprehensive and detailed specifications of the 2024 Code.

ii) Durability, sustainability, and the minimization of harmful effects on health.

The 2024 Code prioritizes the promotion of order and safety as well as the health of those involved in Construction. Moreover, the entirety of the Code is built around these recurring themes. The resulting implication entails stricter requirements to regulate noise and dust emissions, rain penetration tests, ventilation, and the required satisfaction of the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 2007.

It places profound responsibility on owners and developers who must provide pre-construction information that may impact health and safety. This obligation compels the construction and maintenance of a health and safety file.

The health and safety file is a repository of crucial data including a brief description of the construction works, details

of any hazards that have not been eliminated, and information on the removal or dismantling of the installed machinery and heavy equipment. It should also contain guidelines for cleaning and maintaining the structure. Any utility services such as underground cables, gas supply lines, and firefighting equipment must be maintained as built drawings. Even after completion of the construction phase, the file must be maintained and transferred to subsequent proprietors of interest in the building.

iii) Compliance and Enforcement

The Construction Authority is vested with broad oversight powers. The Code mandates that all construction projects must comply with the provisions of the Code. Where tests are required, they must be conducted in the presence of an authorized officer of the Construction Authority.

If the Authority considers that any construction project is not in accordance with the Code, it may order an investigation, and by notice, order the owner or developer of the building to provide proof of compliance with the Code. It may also order a test to be conducted. Where the Authority considers and writes such notices, the owner is mandated to issue a written reply. Such a reply must then elicit details related to the testing apparatus, the conditions where the tests were carried out, the results of the tests and the conclusions thereof.

If the approving authority is unsatisfied, the Construction Authority may order corrective measures, or order the construction to be cut into, laid open or demolished.

If the authority resorts to these, and proof exists that they were triggered by a contravention of the Code, the costs shall be borne by the owner or developer.

iv) Duties of an owner or developer under the new Code

The new code imposes several obligations on property owners and developers. Central to these obligations is the overriding duty imposed is ensuring full compliance with the Authority's requirements.

Specific obligations include

- ⇒ Providing designers and contractors with pre-construction information
- ⇒ Maintaining a health and safety file.
- ⇒ Preserve the various reports prepared during the construction.
- ⇒ Ensure that the buildings comply with accessibility standards,
- ⇒ Ensure coordination of the activities of all parties
- ⇒ Carrying out annual reviews and give out fire and evacuation instructions
- ⇒ Maintenance of fire safety installations
- ⇒ Display of safety instructions including routes
- ⇒ Obtain the necessary equipment for the specific tests outlined in the Code

v) Renewable sources, sustainability, and Climate change commitments

The Code includes provisions for energy-efficient designs. It encourages the incorporation of renewable energy sources and the use of sustainable materials.

It additionally encourages the use of environmentally friendly materials and renewable energy sources that comply with the Energy Act. Further, building design may conform to building strategies derived from independent green building certification organizations.

vi) Requirements for LPG gas connections

The code prescribes comprehensive requirements for filler pipes ventilation mechanisms, handling, storage, and distribution of LPG. Additional imposed requirements include filler pipes, ventilating pipes, and dipping holes. Different guidelines exist where buildings will store more than 500 liters of LPG. Under such, the construction and the safety standards are expected to adhere to an industrial code and practice standard.

The Code includes requirements for smaller LPG containers such as the appropriate location, designs and control of the plot, correct installation, and the required adherence to specific codes.

vii) Digital Connectivity

Nodding to the digital era, the Code additionally imposes several mandates that must be met related to the installation of communication equipment and cabling. These include

conductor specifications cable management systems, accessibility for maintenance, and integration with the building design.

These regulations will ensure continued accessibility for maintenance, ensuring that communication channels and internet cables remain functional, reliable and easy to service.

viii) Charging ports for electric vehicles

The code mandates owners of commercial buildings to ensure that at least **5%** of the parking spaces provided in the building are dedicated to charging electric vehicles. This will increase the building appeal and stimulate electric vehicle infrastructure development.

ix) Performance-based outcomes

Related to the required safety methods and standards, the 2024 Code shifts from general material-based metric requirements to a performance-based system. To achieve these desired outcomes, several standards that must be met, such as structural integrity, comprehensive fire safety, and environmental sustainability.

The focus on performance fosters innovation and flexibility, allowing for the exploration of alternative solutions whose results may be superior. The Code empowers these proposals, provided that their efficacy can be demonstrated in meeting or surpassing the desired outcomes.

It additionally introduces reports and documentation on the various phases. For instance, in design for foundations, any building that is more than four storeys tall shall be preceded by

a geotechnical report determining the critical design parameters.

x) Universal Access

Part XX of the 2024 code addresses people who live with disabilities, underscoring the efforts towards inclusivity and nondiscrimination. From the initial designs, the initial access should accommodate universal access.

Mandatory requirements include water closet cubicles designed for universal access, wheelchair space, and ensuring that individuals can navigate premises with dignity and ease.

xi) Multi-disaster resilience.

The Code mandates rigorous risk assessment for the identification of potential hazards that the building may face. Designs must demonstrate the ability to withstand extreme disasters and conditions while the materials selected must be durable, designed with longevity and safety goals.

In emergencies, the buildings must have plans, mitigation strategies, and periodic updates to their resilience measures.

CONCLUSION

The new code comes into operation with a renewed hope and expectations for a safe, quality and sustainable built environment. While the 2024 Code showcases modernization through updated standards, new technologies, and improved safety protocols, it imposes formidable challenges on developers and qualified professionals. Compliance will demand rigorous due diligence and regulatory compliance with heightened expectations for contractors' expertise. The additional testing, approvals, and owner responsibilities will undoubtedly escalate costs. Yet, this is a necessary tradeoff to achieve safer, more sustainable, and resilient construction practices.

By mandating a meticulous balancing act between ambition and accountability, the 2024 Code offers a vision of progress fortified by responsibility—an essential blueprint for the built environment of tomorrow.

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