

Frequently Asked Questions

For patients and public

In May this year (2018), expert engineers reviewed the structural seismic performance of Taranaki DHB's priority buildings around its Taranaki Base Hospital campus. Draft reports, completed from July, are now under peer review and indicate provisionally there are some 'Earthquake Prone' buildings. But there is no need for alarm.

The safety of our staff and patients is our priority, as is maintaining our hospital's clinical and acute services. Here are some questions and answers to help you better understand the situation and what Taranaki DHB are doing about it.

Am I safe to be in a building classified as provisionally Earthquake Prone?

The safety of our staff and patients is our priority, as is maintaining our hospital's clinical and acute services.

Any risks associated with the Earthquake Prone Buildings are being proactively monitored and managed. If a building is found to be Earthquake Prone, this doesn't mean it shouldn't be occupied. The buildings themselves have not changed – they are still the same buildings that have been there for decades. What has changed is that today's building standards have been raised.

Seismic structural assessments of our hospital buildings in 2010/11 did not identify any Earthquake Prone Buildings.

National legislation that came into effect on 1 July 2017 changed the way Earthquake Prone Buildings are identified and dealt with. As a result more buildings may be considered Earthquake Prone. What also affects the rating is the soil categorization of New Plymouth's deep soil layers which was downgraded from category C (shallow soil) to D (deep or soft soil) in April

2017. This rating was used when the buildings were recently assessed.

The Earthquake Prone Building Act (2016) gives us 12.5 years to upgrade Earthquake Prone Buildings. Taranaki DHB is acting much faster than that and is proceeding with a business case for Project Maunga Stage Two hospital redevelopment to be built and open by 2023 or sooner.

What is a provisionally Earthquake Prone Building?

If a building has been classified as provisionally 'Earthquake Prone' it means the building is more likely to sustain damage following a moderate earthquake and, as a result, there would be a higher risk to staff and public safety. Hospital buildings are 'priority buildings' and are held to a higher standard than commercial or residential buildings because of their role in emergency support after a major disaster.

What is a 'priority building'?

Hospital buildings are 'priority buildings' which means they are held to a higher standard

Taranaki DHB takes health and safety issues seriously. The safety of staff and patients is our priority and risks associated with our provisionally Earthquake Prone Buildings are being proactively monitored and managed.

than commercial or residential buildings because of their role in emergency support after a major disaster. This means that the DHB must address the Earthquake Prone Buildings in 12 and a half years as opposed to the 25 years required if they were non-priority buildings. Acute hospital buildings with emergency facilities are required to meet a high earthquake rating, importance level 4 (IL4). This means the building needs to be able to withstand a one in 2500 year earthquake, and to be operational within hours of a one in 500 earthquake. Commercial and residential buildings are rated importance level 2 (IL2) in comparison.

What is the earthquake risk zone for Taranaki?

Taranaki is a medium risk zone for earthquakes compared to other parts of the country such as Wellington and Christchurch, which are categorised as a high risk zones for earthquakes. GNS Science calculates the annual likelihood of a magnitude 6.0 earthquake (large enough to damage buildings and move furniture) to be 5% in South Taranaki and 3% in the north. Around 200-300 earthquakes are recorded each year in Taranaki. Up to ten of those might be large enough to be felt by residents.

Are there any other options to provide the clinical and acute services in an alternative location?

We are investigating all possible options. However, for essential acute clinical services there are unlikely to be realistic alternative options. For the DHB to strengthen the provisionally Earthquake Prone Buildings to 67% of the New Building Standards (NBS), this would require vacating these buildings for an extended period of time. In this scenario we would need to relocate for one to two years to allow for this work to be completed, which is simply not possible. Building Project Maunga's Stage Two hospital redevelopment to the IL4 standard is the best solution and we are proceeding with the business case to be built and open in 2023 or sooner.

Why is it that these buildings are only now being classified as Earthquake Prone as they've been around for decades?

The integrity of the provisionally Earthquake Prone Buildings themselves has not changed –

they are still the same buildings that have been there for decades. National legislation that came into effect on 1 July 2017 changed the way Earthquake Prone Buildings are identified and dealt with. As a result, more buildings may be considered provisionally Earthquake Prone. What also effects the rating is the soil categorization of New Plymouth's deep soil layers which was downgraded from category C to D in April 2017.

When were the buildings assessed for seismic structural performance and why?

Between May 2018 through September 2018, Taranaki Base Hospital's buildings were assessed by three expert engineering firms for their seismic structural performance as part of preparing for Project Maunga Stage Two hospital redevelopment. Some of the building assessments are currently (Sept 2018) under peer review. The external structural engineering consultants are: Holmes Consulting from Christchurch; Beca from Wellington; and Aurecon, also from Wellington.

What do earthquake ratings mean?

Earthquake ratings mean the degree to which the building, or part of, meets the seismic performance requirements of the Building Code that relate to how a building is likely to perform in an earthquake and that would be used to design a new building on the same site as at 1 July 2017 – the date the new system came into force.

For example, if a territorial authority (such as New Plymouth District Council – NPDC) determines that a building meets 25% of the requirements of the building code described above (ie equivalent to 25% of the New Building Standard or NBS) the earthquake rating of the building would be 25%. Buildings measuring less than 34% of the current New Building Standard (NBS) are categorised as provisionally Earthquake Prone. Visit here for more information:

<https://www.building.govt.nz/managing-buildings/managing-earthquake-prone-buildings/what-earthquake-prone-buildings-system-means-for-you/territorial-authorities-earthquake-prone-buildings/#jumpto-determining-if-a-building-is-earthquake-prone-and-assigning-an-earthquake-rating>

What is the earthquake rating of the Earthquake Prone Buildings?

- Building 104 Clinical Services Building (Emergency Department, Radiology, Laboratory, Pharmacy etc.)
- Building 105 Block C (Renal, Dental, Audiology, Speech Language Therapy etc.)
- Building 107 Special Services Block (ICU, HR, Kitchen, Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Dieticians etc.)
- Building 116 Maternity Block (Maternity)
- Building 115a Central Block (old) (corridor and offices)
- Building 119a Boiler House (Boiler House which is unoccupied except for maintenance)
- Building 114 (Mortuary and ICT Services etc)
- Three tunnels supplying utility services connecting the boiler house to the hospital buildings under buildings 104 and 107 and 115a.

Have all DHB buildings been assessed, including Hawera Hospital?

The main clinical areas on the Taranaki Base Hospital campus have been assessed. The other buildings, including Hawera Hospital are part of the Seismic Risk Management Plan and will be assessed in the future.

How will people know about the rating of the buildings?

NPDC requires us to notify them of our buildings being provisionally Earthquake Prone and you will see a sign about this on the buildings in accordance with the legislation.

What is Taranaki DHB doing?

Taranaki DHB is absolutely committed to proactively monitoring and managing the risks associated with the buildings. External consultants, RCP who has extensive experience in working with Canterbury DHB in the management of the risks that emerged after the Canterbury earthquakes, has been engaged to fast-track the development of a seismic risk management plan (SRMP) and business continuity plan (BCP) for the DHB. These plans will identify interim remedial works that are reasonable to undertake to mitigate the risks in the event of a moderate earthquake.

The Earthquake Prone Building Act (2016) allows us up to 12.5 years to upgrade the Earthquake Prone Buildings. However Taranaki DHB is acting much faster than that.

In April 2016 and well before we were aware of the provisionally Earthquake Prone Buildings, we started planning and preparing a business case for Project Maunga Stage Two hospital redevelopment to be built and open by 2023 or sooner. This will de-risk most effected acute hospital services as the new build will meet the IL4 standards. Stage three will be completed by 2030.

What else are you doing?

We are working with the Ministry of Health, Treasury and the Minister of Health's office as part of preparing our business case for Project Maunga Stage Two hospital redevelopment, with the intent for the rebuild of our provisionally Earthquake Prone Buildings to be prioritised by the MOH Capital Investment Committee.

Why are you able to continue using these buildings when some parts of Yarrows Stadium have been closed to the public?

Hospital buildings are 'priority buildings' and the reality is that we still need to provide essential clinical and acute services to our community. Where as Yarrows were able to provide alternative arrangements immediately. Taranaki DHB has a plan to proceed quickly with Project Maunga Stage Two hospital redevelopment to be built and open by 2023 or sooner.

How can I keep up to date with information?

Updates will be provided regularly on the Taranaki DHB website www.tdhub.org.nz and Facebook page.

FAQs will be refreshed as your questions come in to us. You can ask questions directly via email to Customer.Services@tdhub.org.nz

Timeline of events

2010/2011:

The Canterbury earthquakes of 2010/2011 and the ensuing Canterbury Earthquakes Royal Commission enquiry (2011/2012) resulted in public scrutiny of the adequacy of current policies and regulations for identifying and addressing earthquake prone buildings.

APRIL 2016:

Taranaki DHB commenced a long-term programme to assess its buildings and ensure appropriate upgrades and developments of its buildings, infrastructure and maintenance services, as part of the preparation for the next stages of the long term investment plan for hospital campus development plans.

APRIL 2017:

NPDC announced the change to soil categorization from C - D for New Plymouth city area.

MAY 2018:

Project Control Group (PCG) formed, reporting to PSG to monitor and manage the technical reports regarding Taranaki Base Hospital's buildings and implement recommendations.

JULY 2018:

Draft Seismic Assessment reports completed and peer review initiated. This is three years ahead of the requirements of the building (earthquake prone building) amendment act 2016 which requires territorial authorities (NPDC) to assess priority buildings.

20 SEPTEMBER 2018:

Taranaki DHB hosted the Capital Investment Committee.

2010/2011:

NPDC commissioned a series of initial earthquake risk assessments of Taranaki Base Hospital Buildings following Canterbury earthquakes. No earthquake-prone buildings were identified.

NOVEMBER 2016:

Project Steering Group (PSG) formed for Taranaki Base Hospital's Project Maunga Stage Two hospital redevelopment.

JULY 2017:

A new statutory national system for managing earthquake-prone buildings came into effect through the Building (Earthquake-Prone Building) Amendment Act (2016).

MAY 2018 - ONGOING 2018:

Taranaki DHB commissioned a review of the seismic performance of its priority buildings around its Taranaki Base Hospital campus as part of the background work for the business case for Project Maunga Stage Two hospital redevelopment and appointed three external structural engineering consultants - Holmes Consulting from Christchurch, Beca from Wellington and Aurecon from Wellington to do this.

AUGUST - SEPTEMBER 2018:

Peer reviews underway on the reports by the above firms. Each are peer reviewing the other's reports (Holmes reviewing work by Aurecon and Beca reviewing work by Holmes).

OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2018:

It is expected that following receipt of the DSA's identifying buildings less than 34% of the current New Building Standard (NBS), NPDC will issue Earthquake Prone Building notices to Taranaki DHB for each instance.