

Building and Plumbing Newsflash 520

Requirements for garage doors in cyclone regions

Purpose

To reinforce the current requirements for garage doors in cyclone regions.

Background

On 1 May 2013, a revised version of AS/NZS 4505 - 'Garage doors and other large access doors' took effect under the National Construction Code (NCC) for Wind Region C in Queensland.

This standard was revised and adopted after the devastation that occurred during cyclones Larry and Yasi. In Cyclone Yasi, for example, the James Cook University's Cyclone Testing Station found that almost a third of garage doors in contemporary housing failed. Fifty per cent of the failed garage doors had detached and became wind-borne.

When a garage door fails, this can damage not just the walls, ceilings and roof claddings around the door, but also the building contents. In many cases, the cost of this damage is more than the value of the door itself. Wind-borne debris can be just as damaging, posing a serious risk to other buildings and the life and safety of people sheltering in these buildings.

Certifier discretion under the *Building Act 1975*

There may be some cases where a building certifier will have discretion about whether the new requirements apply. Section 37 of the *Building Act 1975* provides that there are certain cases where a building certifier may decide to assess proposed building work against previous building requirements. These cases include where:

- a building development application was submitted but not decided prior to 1 May 2013.
- there was planning for the proposed building work prior to 1 May 2013 and the building certifier certifies in writing that substantial progress has been made on the design of the building work and changes that would be required to amend the design to comply with the new requirements are not minor changes.

If a building certifier decides to exercise this discretion it will mean that the previous requirements, i.e. the structural provisions of the 2012 version of the NCC (in particular the performance requirements P2.1 of Volume 2 of the NCC for class 1 and 10 buildings and BP1.1 and BP1.2 of Volume 1 of the NCC for class 2 to 9 buildings), will need to be applied.

Given the high failure rates of garage doors and extent of damage observed in previous cyclones, it is recommended that homeowners install a garage door that meets the current requirements.

Garage door over 3 metres in height

As the scope of AS/NZS 4505 is limited to doors up to 3 metres in height, there have been some enquiries regarding garage doors that are over 3 metres high. All garage doors, regardless of height, must comply with the structural performance requirements of the NCC. For doors up to 3 metres in height, the acceptable construction manuals of the NCC (ie the deemed-to-satisfy requirements, including AS/NZS 4505) can be applied. However, doors over 3 metres in height will need a specific engineering solution.

If you have any questions about the requirements for garage doors in cyclone areas, please speak to your building certifier or contact Building Codes Queensland on 1800 534 972 or buildingcodes@qld.gov.au

Contact for more information

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