



Responding and building resilience to an increasingly volatile climate

The devastating floods that hit the North Island in early 2023 were a stark reminder of how vulnerable New Zealand's homes and communities are to the impacts of climate change. While our zero-carbon programme is aimed at mitigating climate change, another focus of our work is strengthening the built environment to withstand extreme weather events.

In 2023, tragic and devastating weather events spiked concern about climate change. As affected communities moved from rescue to recovery, attention soon turned to how we could ready our homes for the inevitability of more-frequent severe storms.

In the immediate aftermath of the Auckland floods and Cyclone Gabrielle just 2 weeks later, distraught homeowners needed information on how to restore their properties safely and effectively.

BRANZ was quick to respond by widely sharing our practical guide *Restoring a home after flood damage*. Published in 2021, the free online guide draws together knowledge from BRANZ experts and emergency response agencies. It steps homeowners through the important phases of restoration following a flood – from safely re-entering a home and cleaning up to drying out and undertaking repairs.

In the weeks following the floods, the guide was downloaded from the BRANZ website more than 2,000 times. Recognising the value of the guide to homeowners, Hikina Whakatutuki | Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) funded the production of 10,000 hard copies for distribution in the worst-hit areas. BRANZ experts gave interviews to media to provide further guidance and support.

Identifying the risks and challenges of an increasingly volatile climate to Kiwi homes and communities is an ongoing research focus for BRANZ.

This year, for example, a new national study got under way that will identify marae vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. This will lay the foundation of working with iwi and hapū to co-develop culturally relevant adaptation strategies (see story on pages 12-13).

As climate change is predicted to increase windspeeds in some areas of Aotearoa New Zealand, this sparked another research question to understand the impact. A WSP-led research project assessed the effects of a 5–15% increase in windspeeds on our light timber-framed houses. This comprehensive analysis, which involved scrutinising the relevant building standards, provides reassurance that the predicted increase in windspeeds should not cause significant issues for light timber-framed houses.

At BRANZ, we know there is more to learn about how climate change will impact our homes and communities and what we can do to adapt. Understanding these impacts and how to build for resilience is an ongoing focus of BRANZ research. Ultimately, our goal is to ensure the built environment has the best possible chance of withstanding the brunt of a changing climate and that any impact on people's lives is minimised.

READ MORE



BRANZ (2021). Bulletin 666 *Restoring a home after flood damage*. branz.co.nz/pubs/bulletins/bu666



BRANZ (2022). External Research Report 75 *Adaptation of new buildings for climate change*. branz.co.nz/pubs/research-reports/er75

IN THEIR WORDS



Building Performance, MBIE

What role did MBIE's Building Performance have in the aftermath of the recent flooding events?

When an emergency event takes place, Building Performance provides technical and regulatory guidance and advice to territorial authorities and practitioners. In response to the emergency situations that unfolded during the Auckland flooding and Cyclone Gabrielle events, we were on hand to support the territorial authorities with damage assessments to buildings, as required under the Building Act 2004.

How did the BRANZ guide *Restoring a home after flood damage* help?

Te Kaunihera o Tāmaki Makaurau | Auckland Council sought advice from Building Performance on how best to provide accurate and helpful advice to homeowners affected by flooding and land stability issue. The BRANZ guide *Restoring a home after flood damage* contains useful public information for homeowners whose buildings or homes have been affected by flooding. Auckland Council included BRANZ's authoritative guide alongside MBIE guidance in the thousands of printed information packs that distributed to impacted homeowners.

What feedback has there been on the guide?

The feedback via Auckland Council was that people were generally reassured by having a source of information they could go to. They said that homeowners often know something needs to be done – just not always what. The timely BRANZ update helped homeowners to better understand the things they needed to think about or talk to their insurer about.



The BRANZ guide *Restoring a home after flood damage* contains useful public information for homeowners whose buildings or homes have been affected by flooding.