

Based on The FM Lexicon by Martin Pickard
published monthly in Facilities by Lexis Nexis between 2008 and 2016

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UK Building Regulations are a set of legal requirements that apply to most building work, including new buildings, extensions, and certain types of renovation and replacement work. They are minimum requirements, and they are supported by a large body of guidance in the form of Approved Documents.

The Regulations are designed to protect the health and safety of people in and around buildings, to ensure that energy is conserved and to ensure that access and facilities are provided for everyone who needs them.

Anyone who wants to carry out building work (as defined in the Regulations) is required by law to make sure that it complies with the Regulations and to use a Building Control service. Building regulations that apply across England and Wales are set out in the Building Act 1984 while those that apply across Scotland are set out in the Building (Scotland) Act 2003.

Building control services may be provided by a local authority or by an Approved Inspector or firm in return for a fee. The responsibility for compliance with the Regulations lies with the person carrying out the works however in the event of non-compliance it will be the building owner who is served with an Enforcement Notice. It is important to establish who is making the Building Regulations application before the works begin.

There are 14 parts to the UK Building Regs. Each deals with different aspects of building design and construction. Topics covered include structure, fire safety, site preparation and resistance to contamination and moisture, toxic substances, resistance to the passage of sound, ventilation, hygiene, drainage and waste disposal, Combustion appliances and fuel storage systems, Protection from falling, collision and impact, Conservation of fuel and power, Access to and use of buildings, Glazing: safety in relation to impact, opening and cleaning, Electrical Safety and Materials and workmanship.

Each part is called an Approved Document, and contains practical and technical guidance on how the requirements can be met in common building situations. The guidance is not mandatory but anyone carrying out building works must be able to show that the result fully meets the requirements.

The Approved Inspector will inspect the plans and issue a 'Plans Certificate'. They will then inspect the work as it progresses and if all complies will issue a Final certificate. They will also notify the local authority of the intended building work on an 'initial notice'.

Non compliance with the Building Regulations will usually result in an Enforcement Notice and/or a fine for each day that the offence continues. Should the building owner not comply, the local authority has the power to undertake the works themselves and then recover the costs. Enforcement Notices normally give 28 days notice in which to rectify the defects during which an appeal can be made to the Magistrates Court.

An explanatory booklet on Building Regulations is downloadable at
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/buildingregulationsexplanatory>