Cork County Fire & Building Control Authority

Making Building Control Work

I.B.C.I conference 2008

Martin Ryan, Building Control Officer
Overview - Taking Stock

~ 67 BC officers
(conference 07)

37 BC Authorities
(all different)

Regulations A → M

78,027 dwellings

~ 7,000 FSC

DAC & BER

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Overview - BC System Considerations

- Organisation
- Staffing
- Management involvement
- Building Activity

Design your BC system to suit your Authority
Babylonian BC system

“If a builder has built a house, and has not made his work sound, and the house he built has fallen, and caused the death of its owner, that builder shall be put to death.”

- Hammurabi
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Chief Fire Officer/Building Control officer

Senior Executive

4 x BCO

North

East

South

West

Fire & Building Control Divisions
Laois, Louth, Longford, Kilkenny,
Offaly, Westmeath, Carlow = 371,143

Commencement Notices

2006 = 8,153 buildings
(~10 % national total)

= 2,038 buildings per BCO

block of 60 apartments = 1 building
Repeat inspections don’t count
Initial Problems

- No culture of Building Control
- Need to establish site credibility
# 1

**Inspection Targets**

12 – 15 %

*What should you inspect?*
# Inspection Regime

– *get bang for your buck*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building Type</th>
<th>affects many people</th>
<th>Gives good inspection statistics</th>
<th>General importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estates</td>
<td>✓ ✓</td>
<td>✓ ✓</td>
<td>✓ ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apartments</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single house</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assembly</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>office</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>industrial</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeat inspections</td>
<td></td>
<td>zero</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Quality over Quantity

- Encourage future compliance

- Use Fire Certs
- Good Records

= 2 Inspections

= 1 Inspection
Review of Drawings

- Fire Certs
- Plannings

- Drawings may change
- Does not count as an inspection
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# 2

Dealing with technical advisors
(Architects & Engineers)

Who has the best chance of resolving BC problems?
The enforceable parties should instruct their technical advisors

Reasons why dealings with advisors can fail

- Not retained for construction stage
- Not allowed to fix the problem
- Unwilling to address their own design errors
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Building Relationships

• Prove competence
• Always follow up
• Be fair & consistent
• No blame
# 3

Enforcement Notices

Should we serve more?
Enforcement Notices

- A failure to convince the parties that they are wrong
Chances for Compliance

- Initial inspection
  - initial letter (giving 2 weeks)
  - Overdue letter(s) (giving 1 week)
  - Phone calls & Clarification letters

- Re-inspection & Compliance
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Heading for Enforcement Action

- Pre-enforcement letter
  - Warn of consequences
- Pre-enforcement inspection
  - Final check & meeting
Consequences of Enforcement

“once an Enforcement Notice is issued on a premises, it is added to a permanent register, which is available to the public.

You may wish to bring this fact to the attention of your legal & technical advisors”

See Part IV - Building Control Regulations
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# 4 Engaging With Owners

Is this fair? Does it work?
The enforceable parties should always be kept informed

All official letters sent to owners & builders.

(Registered Post)
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Owners – innocent, interested, liable?

- Vested interest in compliance – *it’s their property*
- Must let builder comply
- Right to know
- They Control money

Party Wall – post sign off!
Why owners care about Building Regulations # 1

Your fire alarm system has not been interlinked.

You may not get sufficient warning of a fire downstairs.
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Why owners care about Building Regulations # 2

~ Increased Costs ~

Your insulation is installed poorly

You will have to pay higher heating bills
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Why owners care about Building Regulations # 3

Exactly how tall was the Engineer who signed off on your house?
# 5

Addressing Problems

*It's not what question you ask, - It's how you ask the question*
How do you approach the problem?
Set out exactly what you think is wrong

✔ Keep everyone focused on the exact problem

→ Avoids misunderstandings
→ Reduces wriggle room.
Black & white or shades of grey?

Always Refer back to TGD or Standards

✓ Gives you back up & Eliminates arguments
✓ Puts burden of proof on *them*
Requirement K1 - Stairways, Ladders and ramps

Paragraph 1.1.14 of Technical Guidance Document K provides guidance on the design of landings to stairways so as to ensure the safe passage for the users of a building.

It states that a door opening on to a landing should be so positioned that there will be a clear space of at least the full width of the flight between the door swing and the flight.

It appeared on site that the stairway leading to the 1st floor canteen was not in accordance with the above guidance as there did not appear to be adequate clear space between the top of the stair and the swing of the door.

.... setting out what they APPEAR to have done wrong.
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TGD are guidance only

Other valid means of compliance -
- Agrément certificates,
- Irish & European Standards,
- Calculations
Quoting from the Standards

Requirement A1 - Structure (Loading)
It appeared on site that the cold water storage tanks were not supported in accordance with Paragraph 12.6.2 and Figure 7 of I.S. 193 2006 as…………….Please provide details of your design to support the water tanks together with either calculations or certification from the truss manufacturer to prove that the supporting of the water storage tanks is in accordance with the above requirement.
Attaching Photographs to letters

Will this party wall resist fire for 1 hour?
Our Tactics

- Professionalism.
- Put ‘em under pressure
  
  *(keep onus for compliance on them)*
- The goal is compliance not enforcement.
- Get builders & designers on your team
- Bring owners into play – it’s their property
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# 6

Future Factors
Disability Access Certificates

- Major Staff implications
- Format of DAC?
Energy Rating Certificates

Will certs match reality?  
(who checks?)

What is the role of BC?  
? Increased inspections  
? Local authority buildings  
? Guidance & Advice
Impact of BER on BC

“ It is anticipated that any additional costs arising can be met from within existing budgets ”

- Regulatory Impact Assessment of Part L 2007

- 2,000 assessors vrs 67 BCO
- 78,027 buildings
  - Air pressure testing
  - Evaluation of new systems
Building Control : Potential

• Monitor & enforce compliance
• Provide guidance & assistance
• Promote Government Agenda
  (e.g. Part L & M)

To Infinity and beyond
Building Control: Needs

• Adequate numbers of officers
• Dedicated resources & career structure
• Coordination at a national level

To Infinity and beyond
Yes Bob, I know you can build it but who will check it?

Thank You.