



Ensuring Safety for Building Construction in the UK

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Summary

The evolutions basic content and intent of the UK Building Regulations is explained. An underlying trend of more comprehensive coverage but less prescriptive treatment of individual topics is identified. Finally, the changes consequent upon the eventual replacement of National Standards by the Eurocodes are anticipated.

Keywords: Buildings; Codes of Practice; Progressive Collapse, Regulations, Safety, Standards

1 Introduction

For building structures in the UK it is necessary to satisfy the Building Regulations. These have the status of a legal document and although published centrally are enacted locally. They contain some specific technical provisions e.g. covering progressive collapse, but are essentially a set of procedures designed to ensure satisfactory performance. Over time they have become significantly less prescriptive; although specific National Standards may be mentioned, the essential message is the flexibility given to a designer to make a submission based on any reasonable approach e.g. using overseas standards, engineering first principles etc.

Building Regulations have existed in the UK ever since the great fire of London in 1666, although evidence of earlier legislation concerning buildings constructed in the Middle-East suggests that such regulations were in place at earlier times elsewhere.

The purpose of the Regulations is to ensure that buildings are safe, are efficient in the use of energy and that where necessary they provide facilities for the disabled.

This paper concerns Part A of the Building Regulations applicable in England and Wales relating to structural safety. Separate legislation exists in Scotland.

2 Legislation

The safety of buildings in the UK is vested in the designer and the constructor. Whilst the local authority building control officer, or other enforcement authority, has an important role in pursuit of safety, this does not in any way reduce or effect the burden carried by the designer or the constructor.