

July 2025

Design Guidance Note: Technical Guidelines for the Seismic and Structural Design of Hospital Buildings

Frequently asked questions

1. Who approved the Design Guidance Note: Technical Guidelines for the Seismic and Structural Design of Hospital Buildings (Seismic DGN)?

The Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora (Health NZ) Commissioner approved the Design Guidance Note on 26 June 2025.

2. What is the purpose of the Seismic Design Guidance Note?

The Seismic Design Guidance Note (Seismic DGN) defines the seismic performance objectives for new and existing hospital buildings and ensure compliance with Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora Seismic Policy requirements for design.

3. Is the Seismic DGN just for new developments?

The Seismic DGN is to be followed for the design of new public hospital buildings and wherever possible for the alteration of existing public hospital buildings.

4. How was the Seismic DGN developed?

The Seismic DGN was developed by a technical working group comprising leading structural and geotechnical engineers with extensive experience in the hospital environment. The Chief Engineer of the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) and the Natural Hazards Commission was actively engaged in its development.

5. How was feedback on the Seismic DGN gathered?

Targeted consultation with clinicians, Health NZ design and project teams, and seismic engineering practices was completed in August and September 2024. Feedback from these parties was constructive and supportive, leading to further refinement of the document.

6. What are the key benefits of implementing the Seismic DGN?

Implementing the Seismic DGN will standardise design approaches, improve infrastructure delivery processes, enhance sustainability, and build construction sector confidence in hospital development processes. It will also contribute to a unified, smarter, sustainable, and equity-led health system.

7. When did the Seismic DGN take effect?

The Seismic DGN took effect from 1 July 2025. From this date, the Seismic DGN will apply to the design of all new public hospitals, in the concept design stage or earlier.

8. Are there any financial implications associated with the Seismic DGN?

There are no immediate financial impacts or funding requirements resulting from implementing the Seismic DGN. A qualitative evaluation of cost impacts has been undertaken, indicating that the structural performance settings in the Seismic DGN are not expected to increase upfront construction costs, with opportunities for cost reductions.

9. Where can I find the Seismic DGN

The Seismic DGN can be accessed [here](#).

10. Is there a continuous improvement pathway?

Design Guidance is updated on a 3-5 year cycle to keep up to date with changing technological, social and environmental conditions, and will be continuously improved by feedback loops (including post occupancy evaluation and alternative solutions approved by the design governance body). However, for this Seismic Design Guide an initial review will take place a year after the guidance is released.

11. What is the difference between AusHFG and the NZ DGN?

NZ participates in [AHIA](#), who develop the Australasian Health Facility Guidelines ([AusHFG](#)) with input from user groups and clinicians. The NZ DGN contains relevant NZ specific guidance where necessary (for example, to take into account our cultural, social, climatic, and seismic requirements). This information is eventually captured in the AusHFG when each document is revised and updated.

Questions or further assistance?

For any questions or feedback, please contact facilities.design@health.govt.nz and one of the FDA will be in touch.