



Kitchen Compliance Guide: New Zealand Building Code

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A new kitchen in New Zealand must meet the Building Code whether or not it needs a building consent. These are the 15 rules that matter most on a new kitchen installation, with the Building Code clause each one comes from and the detail behind it.

This guide is a plain-language summary for Sorted Home Solutions clients. It is not legal advice, and your council has the final say on consent for your property.

Consent and licensed trades

- 1. All work must comply with the Building Code.** This applies even when no building consent is required. Exempt work is still inspected against the Code if a problem or a sale brings it to the council's attention.
- 2. Adding a sink or a new kitchen needs a building consent.** A second sink, or a kitchen where there was none, needs consent. Moving or replacing the existing sink is exempt only if the number of fixtures does not increase and an authorised plumber does the work ([Schedule 1, exemption 35](#)). Removing a non-load bearing internal wall is exempt. Removing a load bearing wall needs consent.
- 3. Plumbing and drainage must be done by an authorised person.** Only a tradesperson licensed by the [Plumbers, Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board](#) can fix or unfix any pipe, plumbing fixture or appliance, or alter a drain. Homeowners cannot do this work themselves. Ask to see the practising licence and check its expiry date.
- 4. Gas work must be done by a licensed gasfitter.** Homeowners cannot install, alter or repair gas appliances. No gasfitting job is complete until the gasfitter issues a gas Certificate of Compliance, which must be given to you as soon as the work is finished

([WorkSafe](#)).

5. Electrical work must be done by a registered electrician. Anyone paid to do prescribed electrical work must be registered and hold a current practising licence ([WorkSafe](#)). A Certificate of Compliance must be issued for any fixed wiring work, including new power points.

Food preparation surfaces and moisture

These rules come from Building Code clauses G3 Food Preparation and E3 Internal Moisture, and their Acceptable Solutions [G3/AS1](#) and [E3/AS1](#).

6. Every home must have a working kitchen. That means a sink, a means of cooking, a food preparation surface, and space for a refrigerator. A renovation cannot leave the home without any of these.

7. Benchtops and wall linings must be impervious and easy to clean. Work surfaces and the walls beside the sink must not absorb water, and must be free of substances that could contaminate food.

8. Floors must be impervious near the sink and dishwasher. The impervious, easily cleaned floor must extend at least 1.5 m from the sink and any other water-using fixture.

9. Joints must be sealed, and an overflow must not damage a neighbouring home. The joint between the sink or benchtop and the wall lining must be sealed so water cannot get behind it. In an apartment or unit above another home, the sink needs a built-in overflow or the floor needs a floor waste.

Surfaces in detail

The sink and layout

- The sink bowl must be large enough to hold a cylinder 300 mm across and 125 mm deep, and its surfaces must drain to the outlet.
- A drainer that is part of the sink counts towards the food preparation surface.
- The cooker must be an oven with hot plates, or a wall oven with a separate hob.
- There must be at least 800 mm of clear floor space in front of the sink, cooker and benches.

Accepted surface materials

Surface	Materials named in the Acceptable Solutions
Benchtops	Stainless steel, high-pressure laminate, tiles

Surface	Materials named in the Acceptable Solutions
Walls and splashbacks	Stainless steel, high-pressure laminate, tiles, wallboard with a painted or applied impervious coating
Floors	Waterproof sheet material with sealed joints, or tiles with no more than 6% water absorption and waterproof grouted joints

Other benchtop materials, such as engineered stone, solid surface or sealed timber, can be used where they meet the same test: impervious, easily cleaned and safe for food.

Sealing and durability

- The sink is sealed to the benchtop, and the benchtop or upstand is sealed to the wall, with a continuous bead of sealant.
- Bench elements must last at least 15 years under clause B2 Durability ([BRANZ](#)).
- In a multi-unit building, a sink overflow must be able to carry at least 0.25 litres per second, with the tap flow limited to less than that. Otherwise the floor must contain the water and drain it through a floor waste.

Plumbing, drainage and hot water

10. The sink must have hot and cold drinking-quality water. Supply pipework must follow clause G12, and pipes and fittings must not contaminate the water ([G12/AS1](#)). Copper-alloy fittings in contact with drinking water are limited to 0.25% lead.

11. Sink and dishwasher wastes must be trapped and correctly sized. A kitchen sink and a dishwasher each need a waste pipe of at least 40 mm, connected through a water trap that stops sewer gas entering the room ([G13/AS1](#)).

Plumbing and drainage in detail

Water supply pipework

Pipe material	Hot water	Cold water	Notes
Copper	Yes	Yes	Long-established and rigid
Cross-linked polyethylene (PEX)	Yes	Yes	Flexible, so fewer joints inside walls
Polybutylene (PB)	Yes	Yes	Must be protected from sunlight

Pipe material	Hot water	Cold water	Notes
Polypropylene (PP-R)	Yes	Yes	Must be protected from sunlight
Polyethylene (PE)	No	Yes	Cold supply only
uPVC	No	Limited	Used for wastes and drains, not hot water

- Pressure at the tap must be at least 30 kPa, and static pressure no more than 500 kPa.
- An isolating valve is required where the supply enters the home, so the water can be shut off.
- Long hot water runs waste water and energy while you wait for the tap to run hot. BRANZ gives maximum hot pipe lengths of 25 m for a 10 mm pipe, 12 m for 15 mm and 7 m for 20 mm, with the hot pipe insulated ([BRANZ](#)).

Hot water

- The cylinder stores water at 60°C or hotter to control legionella.
- The 50°C tap limit is set for basins, baths and showers. A kitchen sink is not a personal hygiene fixture, though in most homes it is fed from the same tempered supply ([building.govt.nz](#)).

Waste pipes

Fixture	Minimum waste pipe diameter
Kitchen sink, single or double	40 mm
Dishwasher	40 mm
Sink with a waste disposal unit and a dishwasher on one trap	50 mm trap and pipe

- One trap can serve one or two adjacent sinks together with a dishwasher.
- Waste pipes must slope so they drain fully: at least 1:40 for a 40 mm pipe.
- Every trap must keep a water seal of at least 25 mm.
- A grease trap is required only where the sink drains to a soak pit, not to a sewer.

Island benches

A sink in an island has no wall behind it for a vent pipe, so the waste run under the floor decides the design ([BRANZ](#)).

Waste pipe	Suits	Needs an air admittance valve when the run exceeds
40 mm at 1:40	One or two sinks	3.5 m
50 mm at 1:40	Sinks plus a dishwasher	6 m
65 mm at 1:40	Future-proofed	10 m

Order of work

The plumber roughs in the supply and waste pipes before the walls are lined and the cabinets go in. For an island, the pipes go in before the floor is finished. The sink, tap and dishwasher are connected after the benchtop is fitted.

Electrical

12. Sockets must be kept clear of the sink. No socket may be installed within 0.15 m of the inside rim of the sink, or within 0.4 m above it.

13. The cooktop and oven need an isolating switch within reach. A fixed or freestanding cooking appliance must have a switch within 2 m of it, placed so nobody has to reach over the cooking surface to use it.

Electrical in detail

The distances are from WorkSafe's [electrical code of practice for domestic wiring \(NZECP 51\)](#).

Item	Rule
Socket beside a sink holding up to 45 litres	At least 0.15 m from the inside rim
Socket above that sink	At least 0.4 m above it
Socket beside a tub holding more than 45 litres	At least 0.5 m from the rim, or 1.0 m above it
Cooking appliance isolating switch	Within 2 m, and not reached across the cooktop
Sockets and switches near a floor that may get wet	At least 0.3 m above the floor

- New lighting and socket circuits need an RCD rated at 30 milliamps, which cuts the power if current leaks to earth.
- Sockets for a dishwasher, waste disposal unit or under-bench appliance are placed where they stay dry and can be reached to switch off.
- An oven, an induction or electric cooktop and other large appliances are wired on circuits sized for their load. Tell your electrician the exact models before the wiring goes in.

Your electrician confirms the final positions against the current wiring rules (AS/NZS 3000) for your layout.

Gas and cooking appliances

14. A gas cooktop must keep set clearances from anything that can burn. The gasfitter installs to the gas installation standard (AS/NZS 5601.1) and the appliance maker's instructions, whichever is stricter.

Gas in detail

Typical minimum clearances for a domestic gas hob, as summarised in a [New Zealand gasfitter's guide](#):

Clearance	Minimum distance
Rangehood above the hob	600 mm
Combustible surface above the hob, with no rangehood	650 mm

Clearance	Minimum distance
Non-combustible surface above the hob	450 mm
Hob edge to a side wall or combustible surface	200 mm

- There must be a way to shut off the gas to the hob quickly. The gasfitter fits an isolation valve where one is missing.
- A flexible gas hose must be rated for gas use in New Zealand, and must not be stretched, kinked or run through an enclosed cavity.
- Burning gas produces water vapour and carbon monoxide, so a gas hob should sit under a rangehood that vents outside.
- These clearances decide how high the rangehood and overhead cupboards can go, so confirm the hob model before the cabinetry is made.

Ventilation

15. A kitchen with a cooktop must have a rangehood or extract fan that vents outside.

The fan and its ducting must move at least 50 litres of air per second and exhaust to the outside. A recirculating rangehood does not meet this rule on its own ([G4/AS1, fifth edition, in effect from 28 July 2025](#)).

Ventilation in detail

- The 50 litres per second applies to the rangehood with its ducting attached. A long duct or tight bends reduce what it delivers, so the rangehood is chosen for the installed duct run, not the figure on the box.
- The duct must end outside the building. Venting into the roof space or a cupboard moves grease and moisture into the structure.
- A kitchen with a window still needs the rangehood. The window rule is separate: openable window area of at least 5% of the floor area.
- A hole through the wall or roof for the duct needs no building consent if it is no more than 300 mm across, but it must be flashed and sealed against the weather.
- In a rental home, the [Healthy Homes ventilation standard](#) also requires a kitchen extractor that vents outside.
- A glass splashback behind a cooktop must cope with the heat. Your glazier specifies toughened safety glass and the clearance the hob maker requires.

Paperwork to keep when the job is finished

Document	Who provides it	When it applies
Code compliance certificate	Your council	Consented work. The owner applies as soon as the work is complete, and the council has 20 working days to decide (building.govt.nz)
Electrical Certificate of Compliance	Electrician	Any fixed wiring work
Gas Certificate of Compliance	Gasfitter	Any gas hob, oven or pipework
Plumber's licence details	Plumber	All plumbing and drainage work
Appliance manuals and warranties	Supplier or installer	Every appliance

All residential building work also carries implied warranties under the Building Act for up to 10 years, and the builder must fix defects that appear within 12 months of completion (building.govt.nz).