

TO: ALL LOCAL AUTHORITY BUILDING STANDARDS MANAGERS

Dear Colleague

WEATHER DAMAGE REPORTING

Introduction

Severe weather events cause extensive damage and disruption to buildings and infrastructure. We are keen to learn from such events but the data is limited and we seek your help to provide more evidence. A formal record of damage, categorised and analysed, will help to formulate strategies for improvement or changes to future policies including Building Regulations. It is recognised that climate change is having effects which may mean more weather events that result in damage. The study is not concerned with the reasons for climate change, but only whether the consequences might lead to changes in construction practices. Your assistance will help to shape the future for more sustainable buildings and lessons will be learned to benefit our communities.

The Department has therefore established a programme for collecting descriptions of damage from Local Authorities and others. You are asked to help by reporting events where there has been damage to buildings or infrastructure due to a severe weather event, or an unusual natural event. This will be through an existing system, CROSS, which is also used to report structural failures and some Local Authorities contribute to, or are familiar with, their newsletters.

Causes of damage that may be reported are:

- Extreme rainfall
- Flood (including tidal and surge effects)
- Freezing temperatures
- Ground movement (including earthquakes and sink holes)
- High temperatures
- Moisture (including rising damp and condensation)
- Snow/sleet/hail/ice
- Combinations of these

The damage should be such as to require repair or re-construction of a building, or part of infrastructure. These may be under construction, in normal use, empty, or derelict. Further guidance is given on the website.

Submitting a report

On the Home Page of the website www.structural-safety.org click the orange button 'Submit report online'. Please ensure a postcode is added and upload any photos if possible. The reporter's name will be kept confidential, and the names of any individuals, companies or products mentioned by the reporter will be removed to create a de-identified (anonymised) report for analysis. They will be categorised so that relationships can be established between damage and weather events. Reports can be about events that have occurred from April 2017 onwards within a reasonable time from when they happen.

Next steps

The database of reports will be reviewed to look for trends and relationships between damage, types of buildings and structures, and extreme or unusual weather. The objective will be to learn lessons about whether changes need to be made to Regulations or Standards to take account of changing circumstances. By its nature this will take several years but significant reports may be published in the interim if there is value in doing so. The Building Standards Division will, after considering the data received, decide whether or not to effect changes if these are seen to bring sustainable benefit.

Conclusions

I would encourage all members to submit a report where they come across structural damage. It would be very helpful if you do submit such a report, that you send a copy to the LABSS Administration Convener (william.clark@moray.gov.uk) so that we are aware of what you are doing in this regard and LABSS can then use this information to inform Scottish Ministers and others accordingly.

Best regards

Gordon Spence

LABSS CHAIR

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A large, light blue watermark of the LABSS logo is visible in the background of the page, featuring the letters 'LABSS' in a large, bold, sans-serif font.