

JAPAN

Status of Codes

The Ministry of Construction is responsible for the building regulation in Japan through the Building Standard Law and related Enforcement Order, Ministry Order, and Notifications. The Building Standard Law applies to all buildings throughout Japan. However, the codes that it provides are not necessarily uniform over the entire country since some codes are determined in accordance with regional conditions such as snow accumulation and seismic activities.

The Building Standard Law, which must be examined and amended in the Diet, amended in 1998 to introduce the performance-based requirements. The law and related Orders and Notifications became effective in June 2000. The Law stipulates the objective and functional (qualitative) performance requirements of the buildings. The objective of the Building Standard is to protect lives and property from disasters and to protect health by ensuring environmental sanitation. Quantitative (technical) performance criteria and deemed-to-satisfy (prescriptive) provisions as acceptable solutions are provided in the Enforcement Order, the Ministry Order and Notifications.

Structure and Key Features of Codes

The Law consists of three parts, namely, general provisions, building codes and zoning codes (Fig. 1). General provisions stipulate administrative provisions such as building confirmation and inspection. The building codes stipulate structural safety, fire safety, hygienic safety. The zoning codes stipulate land-use zoning regulations, building height-bulk-shape control, restriction in fire protection districts and others.

Major points of the amendment of the Law in 1998 are as follows:

- Rationalization of building confirmation procedures
- Incorporation of performance-based-regulations
- Ensuring effective enforcement of regulations

It is expected that the introduction of the performance-based requirements will increase design freedom and promote technical development as well as use of various materials. The prescriptive requirements in the previous Law have been generally adopted as the acceptable solutions in Notifications.

Under the current system, there are three options for code users. Firstly, they may follow the prescriptive provisions for their building design as in the past. Secondly, they may follow the provided verification methods. Thirdly, they may wish to prove that certain construction methods or materials would satisfy the performance-based provisions. In this case, a designated (recognized) Performance Evaluation Body will conduct a test and evaluate the result (Fig. 2).

Fig.1 Composition of the Building Standard Law

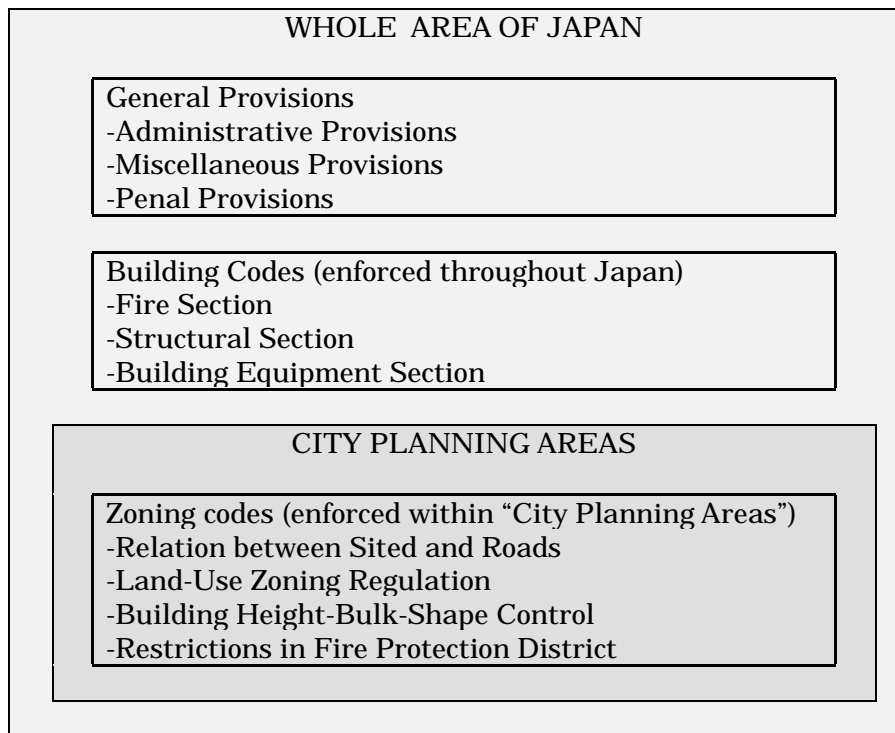


Fig.2 New Building Regulatory System

