Book Review

Understanding the building regulations

Simon Polley

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This is the fourth edition of a book first published through Spon Press in 1995. It was a great technical work for explaining the complexities of Building Regulation, particularly to construction-focused students 14 years ago, but has it developed with the times? The answer to that is quite definitely that it has, and now being available to buy with change from £14, it is a book that should be in every construction-based practitioner's, academic's and student's personal collection.

The stated purpose of this fourth edition is to extend the third edition, published in 2005 to include the Building Regulation Amendment Documents 2004–2006 and the Approved Documents 2006. It also seeks to simplify what are at best extremely complex and detailed regulations, for which the reviewer can only say amen. The book is an explanation of these Approved Documents that forms the main thrust of this book that is Tardis like, in that the amount of information and instruction to be found within its seemingly diminutive covers is extensive. The author Simon Polley is Managing Director of a specialist Building Control company, and this expertise in application of the regulations is well employed in their explanation to those with a lesser exposure to their specific implications.

The book starts by affording a historical perspective of Building Control in the United Kingdom, thus setting the scene for an introduction to the Building Regulations 2000, which forms the foundations from which the current and presumably future regime of Building Control is underpinned. This section covers the definitions and meanings of the five parts, three schedules and 24 individual regulations, which form the Building Regulations. The point is well made by the author that it is these regulations and not strict compliance with the Approved Documents, which form the statutorily enforceable part of Building Control; however, given that explanation of the current content of these Approved Documents outweighs all other sections in this work by a factor of 13, it is clear that the value of this book as a reference tool is in its ability to present Building Control in terms of understanding and application of the requirements of Approved Documents. Included in the overview of Building Regulation is a description of how they operate, and the relationship between Building Control Departments and those engaged in commissioning, designing and undertaking non-exempt building works. Also included is methodology for notification and obtaining Building Control approval. The author uses tables and diagrams to great effect in order to clarify the processes for the reader.

Having reached page 20 of a book of 282-page technical duration, the author now concentrates wholly upon the individual Approved Documents running from document A (Structure) through to Document P (Electrical Safety), pausing only to include that supplementary approved document un-attributed to the alphabet, which supports the

Building Regulation number 7 (Materials and Workmanship). The author once again employs tables, diagrams and an additional cartoon illustration to support the points made. It is within these sections that the Tardis like quality of this book becomes apparent as they deal with British and European Standards, technical specifications, work done by specialist research bodies like TRADA, relationships with regulation and orders from other statutory regulation, such as Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety Order) 2005, and a myriad of the author's personal advice and guidance. The sheer volume of useful information is staggering to the reviewer, and unfortunately from a reviewing perspective does not render the book a speedy or easy read. It is however the view of the reviewer that it is not, in spite of its size, purely a general overview book but rather one that could be read and digested in small sections in response to a specific Approved Document requirement.

In summary, in the opinion of the reviewer, for this price level this remains the most user-friendly, informative and useful book on the subject that the reviewer has thus far used. It is therefore recommended for construction students, construction operatives and construction and design professionals of any level, as one of those core textbooks that form a personal technical collection. Given the apparent unabated rise in regulatory control, particularly in the areas of sustainable construction and energy management, Edition 5 will probably not be that long in arriving.

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