

Construction & Engineering



Jane Wernick is director of Jane Wernick Associates Ltd, a consulting structural engineering company that is based in London. The firm, which now has six employees, follows around 30 standards in the course of its day-to-day work. Jane explains why standards are essential to her company

“The business was set up in 1998. Immediately, I knew that standards were essential, because I’d already used them throughout my career while working elsewhere.

When you design a structure you need to assess the loads and work out how big the columns and beams need to be. On a daily basis, this requires us to refer to the standards we use.

While we were working on the Young Vic Theatre in London, for example, we used BS 6399 to determine the wind loads and live loads. Live loads are non-permanent loads that move around, they include such things as people and snow.

We also used BS 8110 for concrete and BS 5628 for the use of structural timber. We also apply standards for all of the other materials we used.

We carry out calculations that are submitted for approval to our local council’s building control department. We’re obliged to follow best practice, so a checking engineer will use standards to make sure that we are doing this.

Although the standards we follow aren’t regulations, they do help us to meet our legal obligations. They’re also helpful because they

represent the accumulation of knowledge and experience gathered by industry.

Sometimes we might design a structure that doesn’t fit the guidance given in a standard. But, ultimately, we’re responsible for making sure it is safe and strong enough. If something goes wrong and you haven’t followed the relevant standards you might be accused of not following best practice.

We sometimes have to buy new standards before we start a new contract or type of work. If I don’t already know which one might be needed, I ask our librarian for advice. When the standards we already use are updated, we usually find out through the Institution of Structural Engineers’ magazine.

When we buy a new standard, the member of our staff who will be using it reads it through to check they understand everything. When clarification is needed, we might contact the Institute of Structural Engineers’ representative on the technical committee responsible for that particular standard. Alternatively we phone one of the other structural engineers we know to discuss it.”

For further information about Jane Wernick Associates visit www.wernick.eu.com

What is BS 8110?

It gives recommendations for the structural use of concrete in buildings and structures, excluding bridges and structural concrete made with high alumina cement. Recommendations for robustness have been prepared by using the assumption that all load-bearing elements (e.g. slabs, columns and walls) are made of concrete.



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