

EDITORIAL

In my last Editorial I outlined the significant workload (and positive outcomes) from the Accreditation process. We have passed the first hurdle and sent off our application to International Accreditation NZ, and we await their written response to our document audit.

In line with the process, we have undertaken a full review of the total cost structure within the Building Control function. The department must remain totally self funding (with no rates input), and consequently all costs and fees must rise.

I hear a loud gasp!, but this impost is thrust upon us by Government. They collect an enormous amount of fees from building activity, yet were reluctant to soften the blow to the public by paying the costs to the Accreditation agency.

However, the Department of Building & Housing did stump up small amounts of cash to assist in some of the preparatory work.

Council is left with additional costs of compliance and tougher standards to assess plans against, and to provide on-site inspection and monitoring work.

We have also provided a better range of documentation for your designer to work with - but the old adage still remains true, better documentation, better plans and details will assist in a quicker service at a better price.

Jeff Jamieson
Team Leader Building Control

PLAN PACKET ENVELOPES

Council is now changing over from plastic bags to waterproof envelopes to keep the 'approved' building consent plans in on-site.

These have been produced at no cost to Council through advertising on the cover.

All building consents are required to be kept on-site at all times for viewing by the Building Control Officer, and these new envelopes will keep the information together and dry.



FEE INCREASES

Council has recently undertaken a full review of the cost structure within the Building Control function.

The combined effect of full cost recovery and increased costs due to building accreditation requires a 33% increase in the Building Control costs.

The flow-on effect from this increase means that Building Consent charges will increase and become effective from 1 July 2007.

In addition, we have also introduced our new look application form (to comply with Accreditation requirements).

We have a full range of support documents to enable you and your designer to provide better documentation to Council to ensure faster throughput and minimise costs.

To enable the infrastructure (water, stormwater, sewerage) costs to be confirmed more quickly, a range of fixed costs have also been implemented.

Some new fees have also been introduced, one being the \$10 fee to enable you to access the plan packets (the fee includes a small amount of photocopying).



PUBLICATION OF THE NEW ZEALAND BUILDING CODE HANDBOOK AND THE COMPLIANCE SCHEDULE HANDBOOK

The *New Zealand Building Code Handbook* has been revised. This new edition reflects the changes introduced by the Building Act 2004, Building (Specified Systems, Change the use, and Earthquake-Prone Buildings) Regulations 2005 and amendments to other documents.

The latest guide provides information on:

- how the building controls regulatory framework works
- Building Code clauses
- current definitions
- lists of all standards referenced in the Compliance Documents
- a current index for Compliance Documents.

Importantly, the revised Building Code Handbook material has been separated into two publications. The *New Zealand Building Code Handbook* now contains five sections covering the information above.

The revised 'compliance schedule' section from the first Building Code Handbook is now contained in a separate publication called the *Compliance Schedule Handbook*. Both handbooks contain more comprehensive guidance material than the previous version. In particular, the *Compliance Schedule Handbook* not only contains information about the compliance schedule and building warrant of fitness regimes, but guidance on how to develop a compliance schedule, how to determine whether a given system is a specified system and suggested inspection and maintenance procedures.

The *New Zealand Building Code Handbook* and the *Compliance Schedule Handbook* are available for free electronically, and hard copies will be available for purchase through the Victoria University Book Centre www.vicbooks.co.nz

If you have any questions about either of the handbooks please contact the DBH (Department of Building and Housing) call centre on 0800 242 243 or email info@dbh.govt.nz.

SOLAR WATER HEATING

As we all strive for lower energy bills, an increasing number of people are considering the installation of solar water heating. Obviously this is a great way to save money in the long run and reduce dependence on our gas and electricity supply.

The installation of a solar water heating system does require a building consent, and all the plans specifications and technical information to accompany it.

There have recently been articles stating that a significant number of solar water heating panels have been installed throughout New Zealand without building consent. Should your system have been installed without a building consent then this can be 'recorded' through the Certificate of Acceptance (COA) process.

Please contact our Customer Services people for further advice.

In May the Government spokesperson on Energy Efficiency & Conservation, Jeanette Fitzsimons, launched a cash grants scheme and a new website to help householders reduce their greenhouse gas emissions through the installation of solar hot water heating systems. Information on these grants can be obtained from EECA (Energy Efficiency Conservation Authority) on 0800 358 676 or email solar@eeca.govt.nz.

'NEW LOOK' FORMS

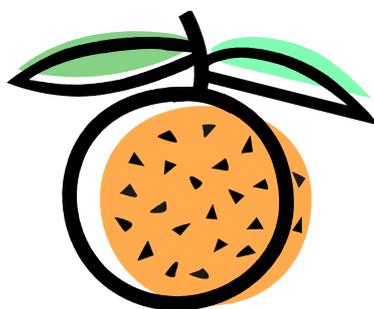
The Accreditation process that we currently undertaking has had a myriad of flow-on effects for our organisation. Another is the requirement to produce better documentation and we have produced a range of 'new look' pamphlets to ensure our compliance with the Building Act and Regulations.

They have all now been colour co-ordinated with appropriate graphics to guide you to the correct forms on which to apply for various applications.

The information pamphlets have also been improved and the range expanded, and this is all explained in a new multi-page brochure to be available soon at the front counter.

A number of Council personnel were involved in this task and we were able to take advantage of the subsidised funding from the Department of Building & Housing (DBH) to reduce cost of production.

Look out for the new forms – they are **orange!**



Jargon Buster – QUICK TIPS ON TERMINOLOGY

A **COA** (Certificate of Compliance) is the process used to record unconsented works done since 1993.

A **CfPU** (Certificate for Public Use) is the document issued to allow the use of a commercial building (when it is safe) when a Code Compliance Certificate has not been issued.

A **CCC** (Code Compliance Certificate) is the document issued at completion of the building work when all work complies.

A **LBP** (Licensed Building Practitioner) is the new term for a range of people required to be licensed to practice in various sections of the building industry (coming in a voluntary phase in November this year).

The **DBH** (Department of Building & Housing) which has the overall function in administering the Building Act (they have a very good website – www.dbh.govt.nz)

3604, correctly the New Standard 3604:1990 with amendments, is the code of practice for light timber framed buildings not requiring specific design. It gives lots of technical/detailed information for builders (commonly called the 'builders' bible').

Section **364** (not to be confused with 3604) is the requirement for a residential property developer to obtain a CCC before they sell a property.

A **PIM** (Project Information Memorandum) is a document issued under the Building Act, which is an initial first step to gain legal approval for building work for the project (before the issue of a building consent).

An **IQP** (Independent Qualified Person) is a person who checks the systems and features in a commercial building to enable the signing of a BWOFF by the building owner.

A **BWOFF** (Building Warrant of Fitness) is the document that is displayed on the wall in commercial buildings confirming that all of the systems and features (fire alarm, lift etc) are working correctly.

A **EPB** (Earthquake-prone Building) is a building that doesn't meet the threshold strength of one third of the current structural design code.

A **DGI** (damn good idea) is to get a building consent before starting consentable building work.

ARE YOU BUILDING?

There are two excellent publications available free from our Customer Services counter to assist people in sorting out the issues associated with building a new house or house alterations.

The Guide to Applying for a Building Consent (simple residential buildings) is produced by the DBH and is targeted at designers/builders to assist in the preparation of documentation for simple residential buildings.

The NZ Homeowners Building Guide is also free and, in addition to explaining the building consent process, provides a project workbook with information on kitchen design to sustainable development and almost everything in between, including a budget workpage.



SOLID FUEL HEATERS

A quick reminder that solid fuel heaters do require a building consent before you install them. Since 2005 they have been required to be energy efficient and comply with specific 'clean air' requirements for all properties under two hectares in size. There are some exceptions for multifuel and cooking appliances – so if in doubt, please ask at Council.



Ps: It's also a good time to clean the flue before winter sets in.

HOME SPRINKLERS

PROTECT WHAT YOU VALUE THE MOST:

Every couple of hours a home burns in New Zealand. Last year 14 people lost their lives in home fires and over \$141 million damage was caused. But the emotional and financial devastation caused by fire doesn't have to happen.

Installing a home sprinkler when you're at the framing stage of your new home is the most cost effective way of protecting the things you value the most. But, increasingly, installing sprinklers into existing homes (retro-fitting) is becoming a viable alternative.

Home sprinklers use ordinary domestic plumbing and can be installed by a qualified plumber in around a day. But here are some other things you might not know about sprinklers.

- They don't operate all at once – only the sprinkler closest to the fire will activate.
- Sprinklers reduce fire damage – the average house fire causes \$42,000 in damage. With sprinklers installed, it's only around \$2,000.
- Sprinklers only cost around \$10 per square metre installed – or about \$350 per sprinkler head fitted in bedrooms and living areas.
- Sprinklers save water – in most cases a sprinkler head would use about 600 litres of water to put out a fire. A fire crew would take about 12,500 litres.
- Sprinklers save lives – in most cases, a sprinkler will put out a fire without the family even knowing they had one.
- Sprinklers are inconspicuous – these days they are more like light fittings than plumbing fixtures and can blend in with custom interiors and even be completely concealed beneath colour-matched plates.

If you're building a new home, or just thinking about it, the New Zealand Fire Service encourages you to consider installing home sprinklers and hard-wired smoke alarms. These are the only fire detection and suppression methods that will give you and your family round the clock peace of mind.

For all this information on home sprinklers, visit: homesprinklers.fire.org.nz