

## **Editorial**

2009 - this year will prove to be an interesting time for us all...

We have the inevitable mini slowdown as a result of the economic times, but the local builders currently have a mixed bag of work commitments.

Now is the time to catch up on those things that had a lower priority, to ensure that we are all ready and poised to move again quickly when the momentum builds.

Commercially, if you haven't already had a look – it is worthwhile driving past the new UCOL building and the new hospital buildings. And soaring into the sky is the new milk powder plant tower in Heads Road.

We are well served in Wanganui, with quality construction and not subject to the extremes of the larger centres.

The Government has signalled that there is some more work to be done with councils and we welcome the reduction in bureaucracy they are proposing - we will be looking for a collaborative approach from all sectors.

Jeff Jamieson  
Team Leader, Building Services

## Site fencing

One of the often forgotten issues on residential construction sites is the need for site fencing.

It is a requirement of the Building Code (F5) that “construction and demolition work on buildings shall be performed in a manner that avoids the likelihood of unauthorised entry of children to hazards on the site”.



This is another reminder that the only practicable way to ensure compliance is to completely fence the property. We have recently been visited by the Department of Labour inspectors and they have indicated that they too will be taking a more active role in ensuring this requirement is met.

We don't want anyone of our team of tradesman and sub-trades ending up with a problem on-site (remember the child in Auckland last year who was killed when a stack of plasterboard fell on him).

Please treat this as a friendly reminder to ensure your worksite is safe at all times.

An added bonus is that on-site theft can be reduced as well.

## Guidelines for energy efficient HVAC plant

Heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems are no longer excluded from the NZBC (New Zealand Building Code) Clause H1 as at 31 January 2009 and a new performance standard (H1.3.6) is added as follows:



H1.3.6 HVAC systems must be located, constructed, and installed to –

- (a) limit energy use, consistent with the *intended use* of space; and
- (b) enable them to be maintained to ensure their use of energy remains limited, consistent with the *intended use* of space.

H1.3.6 will apply only to buildings that are classified as commercial.

There is currently no acceptable solution or verification method for the NZBC clause H1.3.6, as this document provides guidance for designers and BCAs (Building Control Authority) on the energy efficiency of HVAC systems in commercial buildings.

## Anchor piles and branding

The NZ Standard (NZS3605:2201) requires that anchor piles are to be specifically branded with the letter 'A'.



Up until recently, there has been no stock of these specific piles available, but now the merchants are able to supply.

Council staff have been actively monitoring this requirement since 1 February 2009.

Please ensure that you 'get it right first time' and factor in this requirement for compliance.

## Exempt building work list extended



We've had a number of requests to repeat this article on the extended range of exemptions from obtaining a building consent – so here it is!

The Building Act applies to all building work. Building work is defined under section 7 of the Act, and the Act generally requires a building owner to obtain a building consent from a Building Consent Authority (Council) before undertaking building work. All building work (regardless of the need for a building consent) must comply with the Building Code.

Schedule 1 of the Building Act 2004 sets out the circumstances where building work is exempt from needing a building consent. Its intent is to apply for an appropriate balance between minimising compliance costs (by exempting low risk and minor building work from the consent process) and requiring some consistent regulatory oversight of building work that risks health and safety.

In addition to the exemptions already in place, the following work was added to the exempt list late last year. Please note that this list is strictly of a general nature.

- Removal/alteration of a wall that is non load-bearing and not a bracing element.
- Awnings, pergolas or a verandah over a deck (sizes apply).
- Installation or replacement of windows, or exterior doors or roof windows, provided structural elements are not modified.
- Alterations of dwellings for access purposes, including doorway modifications and access ramps, but excluding wet area accessible shower.
- Internal shop or office fit-out where the work does not modify, or require modifications to, any specified system or means of escape from fire.
- Alterations to existing plumbing in bathrooms, kitchens, laundries, toilets, including minor drainage alterations (e.g. shifting a gulley trap), but excluding new connections to services where: - work is carried out by a registered plumber in accordance with the Plumbers, Gasfitters and Drainlayers Acts 1976 and 2006.
- Erecting tents and marquees of up to 100m<sup>2</sup> where they are for private use and up to 50m<sup>2</sup> when they are intended for public assembly.

This article is intended as a general guide to Schedule 1 of the Building Act and should be read in association with the Act. While the Department of Building and Housing (the department) has taken every care in preparing this information, it should not be relied upon in establishing whether building work

requires a building consent or the exemptions under Schedule 1 apply. Readers should always refer to the source documents, including the New Zealand Building Code, and be aware that in specific situations it may be necessary to seek independent technical and/or legal advice, or discuss your particular issue with the expert team at the Council.

Further information can also be obtained on [www.dbh.govt.nz](http://www.dbh.govt.nz), and Council has a good pamphlet at the counter.

Even though work may be exempt under the Building Act, it may still require a resource consent.

## **Plumbers, gasfitters and drainlayers licensing**

A reminder to all plumbers, gasfitters and drainlayers that your licence is due for renewal before 1 April 2009.

To householders and people employing tradesmen - ensure that you sight their licence to establish they are qualified to do the type of work you require.

Please remember that this is a specialist occupation and all works (apart from minor miscellaneous works) must be completed by qualified, registered and licensed tradesmen.



## Infringements



Council now has the option of issuing infringement notices to people who commit an offence by not complying with certain provisions of the Building Act.

In the past, the option was to go direct to Court proceedings which normally involves a greater degree of work and costs.

The new infringement options give instant access to defined fines for a range of offences but, for larger cases, the Court option is still available.

## Carbon calculator for homes

A careful choice of materials when building a house can make the difference of nearly 50 tonnes in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions – the same amount emitted by a car in its lifetime, according to a new carbon calculator for houses.



The NZ Wood website ([www.nzwood.co.nz](http://www.nzwood.co.nz)) has just launched its building materials carbon calculator for working out the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions or savings that can be attributed to the building materials used for a new home.

## Building work done without consents

Of late we have noticed an increase in building work done without proper consents (please also see the attached article on work that is now exempt under Schedule 1 of the Building Act 2004, which is somewhat more generous than before).

We all know that with the extra professionalism involved in both the customer putting together their proposal and Council issuing and inspecting building consents to the requirements of the 2004 Building Act, along with the user pay environment that exists today, consents have increased in dollar value quite significantly, and perhaps this is the reason for the increase in work “done under the cloak of darkness”.

Unfortunately these little or large issues have a nasty way of catching up with us - perhaps when we decide to sell, or someone looks over the fence and sees work going on that doesn't seem right, quite often in a way that upsets a neighbour.

When work has been done without building consent, it never can have consent as there is no provision for retrospect consents - work either has to be removed, or, if done to a compliant standard, a Certificate of Acceptance can be applied for, and sometimes a new consent to rectify substandard work is also required. Rest assured it will always cost more than if done properly in the first instance.



A Certificate of Acceptance will still require all of the same documentation as if you had taken out a building consent in the first place - it does cost more and, if it was deemed appropriate, prosecution could follow.

It is extremely wise and prudent to get a Council LIM (Land Information Memorandum) report before purchasing a property. Please also be aware that you inherit illegal work when you become the new owner.

To summarise, please be aware that there is exempt building work. This can be checked on the Department of Building and Housing web site, or if in doubt please ring us at Council - otherwise you will require building and planning permission.

## Swimming pool protection

It has come to Council's attention that a number of plastic/blow-up swimming pools bought this Christmas have not been fenced correctly.

Under the Fencing of Swimming Pools Act, all qualifying pools (generally holding over 400mm of water) require a complying fence.



To assist in ensuring our community is safe, and in addition to our advertising, we have lowered the application fee to encourage compliance.

Obviously for large inground block/concrete pools, they will still require the full services of construction inspections, as well as the final fence compliance inspection.

We have had some accidental pool drownings in Wanganui recently; it is vital that all pools are fenced correctly.

We have a pamphlet available at the counter, and on our website [www.wanganui.govt.nz](http://www.wanganui.govt.nz).