

## Editorial



As we head into winter, we are certainly noticing a decline in our building consent numbers.

When the industry tightens up a bit, the local builders tend to progress onto more addition and alteration work coupled with maintenance projects.

The Government signalled late last year that it would extend the list of 'exempt works' that require a building consent. This is great for those people who understand that even though the building work may not require a building consent, it still must be constructed in accordance with the Building Code; but it can be fraught with danger as well, with the potential for people to assume work is exempt and attempt projects often of a dangerous or structural nature.

When work is not inspected, there is no independent check on suitability. We have been through the 'leaky building' syndrome, but the Government is treading the fine line between reducing bureaucracy and allowing people to do various minor projects on their house without supervision.

Council can help you – all you need to do is ask if your project is exempt, or check the DBH (Department of Building & Housing) website.

Jeff Jamieson  
Team Leader, Building Control

## Marquees



A 21<sup>st</sup> birthday party, an after wedding function or a similar event often needs a marquee to provide the extra temporary space – but do they need a building consent? The answer is **yes** and **no** – it depends.

The Government has expanded the list of exemptions for obtaining a building consent, and split the marquees into private and public options.

The construction, alteration or removal of any tent or marquee that has a floor area **not** exceeding 50m<sup>2</sup>, if used for **public assembly** for a period of not more than one month, is exempt.

A similar exemption is available with floor area 100m<sup>2</sup> for **private use** for a period of not more than one month.

When hiring your tent or marquee please ensure that you get all of the correct information and safety requirements from your hire company.

## Roof space heating systems

There are many varieties of systems that take the hot air out of your roof space and circulate it into your house via pumped ducted system.

All of these systems are exempt from requiring a building consent, so the Council has no record of where they are being installed.

An item of concern has recently been highlighted to us: A local person had occasion to go up into the roof space after one of these systems had been fitted and was horrified to see the state of her new roof space.

Structural membranes had been broken through and left discarded in a jumble (see photo).



Most companies have good installers who do a professional job, but our tip is to have a look in your ceiling space immediately they have finished to ensure that the integrity of the roof/ceiling construction is intact.

## Sleepovers at schools

A quick tip for School Boards of Trustees is to ensure you will fully comply before organising sleepovers at your school. There is a range of very specific requirements to be implemented before this can occur and you are urged to consult with the Ministry of Education's document "Fire Safety and Design Requirements for Board of Trustees, Project Managers and Design Consultants".

This should assist you to approach fire safety on the basis of managing risks by developing good fire safety practices.



## Successful prosecutions for unconsented building work –

Community Development Committee Chair Cr Ray Stevens announced recently that Wanganui District Council's Building Control team has made a number of successful prosecutions for unconsented building work.

The Council prosecuted two Wanganui residents after they refused to comply with a Notice to Fix and apply for Building Consent for a swimming pool. The defendants were also charged with an offence under the Fencing of Swimming Pools Act.

The Court fined each defendant \$200 for failing to fence their pool, and \$2000 each for failing to comply with a Notice to Fix under the Building Act. Court and solicitor costs were also awarded against the defendants.



Prior to the prosecution a Council officer had visited the property on a number of occasions over a long period of time, leaving messages for the owners to contact him. In the majority of such cases it is usually possible for council officers to obtain compliance by working closely with property owners and builders. However, in this instance warnings were ignored by the owners, resulting in Council taking the last available option – prosecution.

This successful prosecution follows an earlier prosecution where another Wanganui resident was fined \$5000 plus costs for constructing a garage type building without obtaining building consent for the structure or complying with a Notice to Fix. This was a costly lesson for the local builder who had been encouraged to remove the building but failed to do so until the Court ordered its removal.

The Building Act 2004 places a greater obligation on Council to ensure compliance and Council officers will continue to ensure that the district has safe and compliant buildings.

## **Septic tanks and wastewater**

The Plumbers, Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board has recently prosecuted a company for allowing a non registered person to lay an effluent drain (wastewater out of the rear of a septic tank).

The work on installing and connecting the drains up to and from a wastewater treatment system, no matter what the type or brand, the size of the pipework or whether pumped or gravity fed, is the work of a registered drainlayer who must hold a current licence issued by the Board.

Please check that your tradesman is a registered drainlayer and does hold a current licence.

Council will continue to monitor this requirement. Also please note that all practicing plumbers, gasfitters and drainlayers should have a current 2009/10 licence.

## BWOFs

BWOFs is the acronym for Building Warrant of Fitness.

This is the document that records your safety systems and features, and your signature that they are all up to date and in good working order. (eg: fire alarms, auto-doors etc).

Council has noticed that a significant number of commercial premises do not have current BWOFs.

We are addressing this issue promptly, in the first instance by re-contacting tardy respondents, and then we will audit them. Council audits are charged out at our standard hourly rate, and if any non compliance is found, and then not corrected, a Notice to Fix would be issued followed by appropriate legal options.



Council has also indicated a willingness to audit a range of business/commercial premises on a risk profile basis, with higher risk buildings being audited on a more frequent basis.

Staff have been trained and the processes are in place for the audits so please ensure that **all** documentation is in place and correct.

## Starter Homes winner

The Department of Building & Housing organised a competition to encourage architects, designers and those in the building industry to come up with designs and solutions for good quality, affordable homes that show what can be done with limited resources. There were 140 entries and the supreme winner of the Starter Home Design competition was architect Stephen Smith of S3 Architects Ltd in Auckland.



With a trend to building larger homes compounding the increasing cost of houses, the competition promoted the use of clever design to create smaller sized homes that offer quality, affordable options.

Designs and floor plans for all winning and shortlisted entries can be seen on the Department's website at [www.dbh.govt.nz/starter-home-design](http://www.dbh.govt.nz/starter-home-design).

## Looking after local heritage

This coming weekend there is a seminar on the conservation and restoration of heritage buildings organised by the Whanganui Branch, NZ Historic Places Trust – 10am Saturday, 23 May 2009, at St Peter's Church Hall, Koromiko Road, Wanganui.



Wendy Pettigrew will talk on recognising heritage, with Chris Cochran, Conservation Architect, on planning to conserve, restore and maintain heritage buildings. After lunch and viewing St Peter's Church, Sue Dunlop will speak on the 'how and what' of Lottery grants with a panel discussion to round out the afternoon.

The cost is \$25 cash or cheque for this unique investment in looking after our heritage.

For more details contact Wendy Pettigrew on (06) 347 2575 or 027 226 6316.