WDC— QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR THOSE IN THE BUILDING INDUSTRY

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Wet Areas Seminar

Branz is running a Wet Areas Seminar to discuss the design and construction principles for wet areas to ensure houses are healthy, comfortable and safe to live in (as well as Code Compliant).

The seminar is essential for architects, designers, BCAs, builders, kitchen and bathroom designers, tilers, plumbers, waterproofing applicators and manufacturers. The nearest seminar to us is at the Coachman Hotel, Palmerston North, on Monday, 31 August 2009, from 1-4pm.

For more information on the seminar and to register, go to: www.branz.co.nz

Cable cars

Over recent months we have become aware of a number of properties with cable cars that have not been registered for a compliance schedule.

The Building Act 2004 requires that all buildings (including a single household unit) with a cable car attached to it, or servicing it, requires a compliance schedule from 31 March 2008.

A cable car is defined in the Act as:

(a) means a vehicle—

(i) that carries people or goods on or along an inclined plane or suspended cable:

(ii) that operates wholly or partly outside of a building: and

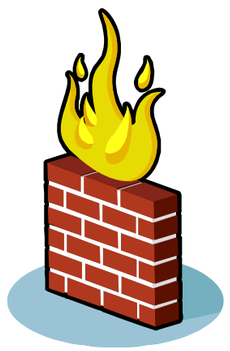
(iii) the traction for which is supplied by a cable or any means: but

(b) does not include a lift that carries people or goods between the floors of a building.

If you think that you may fit into this scenario, then please contact Council and we can help you through the process.

Fire safety in commercial premises

When the Building Act was first put in place back in 1993, the Government didn't make a lot of the fire safety initiatives retrospective. In a typical commercial environment it is recognised that, on average, shops and commercial premises upgrade or change approximately every seven years.



When a premise undergoes a 'change of use' or 'alteration' as defined in the Building Act, then a number of issues are required to be addressed at the building consent stage (some of the issues revolve around fire safety, accessibility, structural etc). However, it is possible, and very common in Wanganui, that the business has been in existence for a very long time.

The New Zealand Fire Service (NZFS) also checks premises for fire safety and has identified a number of older premises with no fire safety systems in place. As indicated, these have been here for some time, and although there is no retrospective requirement to install fire safety systems when there is no building consent triggering them, it is important that the safety of staff and customers is maintained.

Do a fire safety audit yourself, or seek expert guidance, and if you decide to install a complying fire alarm then seek a building consent for its installation.

OFF-CUTS
QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR THE BUILDING INDUSTRY

August 2009:

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Editorial

We often criticise the Government for not helping enough, but the EECA (Energy Efficiency & Conservation Authority) Warm up NZ home insulation & heating scheme is certainly a great initiative to improve people's health (by having warmer, drier & healthier houses) and to reduce electricity costs.

The unfortunate initial consequence of this is that there was not enough infrastructure in place to deal with the surge of enthusiasm. A quick look on their website shows that the nearest 'official' installer is in a town 50km away. But do not despair—we are aware that a number of local businesses are applying to be service providers to offer this service to local customers.

The programme is due to run for four years, so it is a matter of being a little patient ("good things take time"), but don't let this 'gift' slip by—and keep it on the radar.

The other biggie at the moment is the increase in uncertainty in small jobs that are allowed to be constructed under the Schedule 1 exemptions. This is creating a great deal of enquiry at the counter and over the phone.

The exemption allows the Building Control Officers to concentrate on the more complex issues, but already there is confusion when people apply for a LIM (Land Information Memorandum) as to when these smaller works may have been constructed. There is another lesson here—always record what you do and when, but if in doubt, ASK. Don't run the risk of building work without a consent, when one is required.

Jeff Jamieson
Team Leader, Building Services

Streamlined building law under way

A Bill which will speed up the building consent process and reduce costs was given the Royal assent by Parliament on 31 July 2009.

Building and Construction Minister Maurice Williamson says the Building Amendment Bill (No 2) is an "important first step" to reform the Building Act 2004, but adds "there is more to be done".

The Bill introduces multiple-use building approvals—a measure that will reduce duplication and fast-track the consent process for group home builders who build homes on sites across the country using the same, or similar, designs.

It also defines a new streamlined process to manage minor variations to building plans after the consent is issued, saving time for applicants and councils. And it makes project information memorandums, known as PIMs, voluntary.

Identifying boundaries

A helpful tip when identifying boundaries is to not assume that existing fences or hedges define the boundary. Before building it is important that you know exactly where your boundaries are—normally on the four corners of a typical residential section. Boundary pegs traditionally have been a timber peg painted white on top with engraved information on their sides. Newer models are plastic stakes with a white oblong top.

The distance that you are building off the boundary is very important to allow compliance with the Building Code, Resource Management Act and the District Plan. (Various buildings that are close to, or on, the boundary require fire walls). If the boundary pegs can't be found, a surveyor can provide two 'line pegs' which define where the boundary line is in relation to the specific building.

If your building work references a dimension to a boundary then you will need to be able to show either the relevant boundary pegs or two 'line pegs' to the Building Control Officer.

If in doubt, please ask us at Council or contact a land surveyor.

Skillion roofs

Skillion roofs are traditionally low sloping roofs which are also lined on the underside (eg you can't get access into the space), and are often used to construct a lean-to or the current trend of mono-pitched designs.

The rafters are selected from the appropriate table for span size, but the roof is also required to satisfy H1—Energy Efficiency for insulation.

The insulation requirement is now increased and a 25mm gap is needed for clearances to the building paper, without compression of the product.

The designer may have to specify a rafter bigger than the span tables, just to accommodate the insulation.

Here again, each manufacturer has different R values for their product, but it is the combined total of the linings and insulation as installed that gives the construction R value (which is an important figure).

Thicker insulation: changes roof design

Designers should be designing roofs with enough space between the roof underlay and top plate for the thicker ceiling insulation now commonly used.

The Building Code has changed recently and thicker insulation is required to satisfy H1—Energy Efficiency. People are also now more conscious of the benefits of extra insulation.

What is happening is that there is now not enough space between the top plate and the underside of the roof underlay to accommodate this change. Plus, in addition to the extra height insulation required, a 25mm clearance is needed between the insulation and any non-rigid roof underlay.

These changes require innovative thinking at the design stage to accommodate the changes. Some of the solutions are outlined in the latest BUILD magazine (produced by Building Research Association of NZ—Branz www.branz.co.nz).

Modifying the way a truss is constructed is one evolving option, where the top chord is positioned differently from conventional to give the extra space required. At building consent stage we will be asking for details on how all of the requirements for H1 are being addressed.

Building facades

Building facades (or parapets) are that part of a building that protrude traditionally above the front of a building and often contain fancy details and designs and regularly feature the original name and date of construction.

Council is currently looking at registering a number of buildings (Plan Change 15 Central City Heritage Protection) to add to the District Plan.

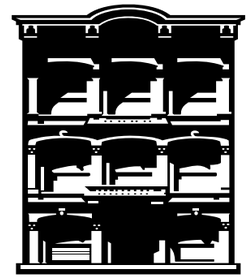
There are currently proposals to list just the facades of a few, instead of the whole building. Often, below the verandah line in commercial situations the shop fronts are modified significantly to project "buy me now" signals to potential customers.

However, generally above the verandahs the easily seen visual architecture of the building can be viewed, and this makes the façade even more valuable.

Running in parallel with this proposal is the EPB (Earthquake Prone Building) policy which has also recently undergone public submissions. As part of this policy, we are also tasked with reviewing how we manage and promote the saving of this valuable visual resource.

During the recent Gisborne earthquake, it was the facades and parapets that snapped off and caused considerable damage.

Please start thinking about budgeting now and talking to your engineer about how you can 'save' your facade from a potential earthquake, by tying it back or strengthening it.



Heat pumps

As is quite often the case with newish products and procedures, no sooner do we start using them than little issues crop up, and it would appear that heat pump systems are no exception.

Firstly noise—Council's noise control people are getting more calls from people saying their neighbour's new heat pump is going night and day and making an unacceptable amount of noise.

Getting right back to basic noise requirements, it is stated in the District Plan that any noise must not *exceed 50 decibels L10 between the hours of 7am to 6pm, and 40 decibels L10 between 6pm to 7am.* This would be measured at the appropriate boundary.

Since heat pumps on their own are a non consentable item, Council has no control over where they are positioned on your property, so you or your installer need to be mindful of where they go.

Obviously if it is close to, say, your neighbour's bedrooms you could be in for complaints, and if over the decibel readings as above, something will have to be done.

Secondly, the installation of these heat pumps requires a condensation drain and, again, as a non consentable item Council seldom gets to see how this is done.

Recently, we found that an installer had cut almost half way through a line of weight bearing wall studs to install his pipe. The following is what is stated in NZS 3604 regarding holes and notches in timber framing:

Be not more in diameter or depth than:

(i) *90mm deep studs: 25mm. This may be increased to 35mm where not more than 3 consecutive studs are drilled or notched.*

(ii) 70mm deep studs: 19mm. This may be increased to 22mm for purpose of fitting metal angle braces only.

So installers, or whoever, please be mindful of regulations other than just what pertains to your actual installation, otherwise rectification or ramifications could be rather expensive. If in doubt—ASK.