

August 2012

## Editorial



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This issue of 'Off Cuts' has a safety focus. Safety is of paramount concern to all of us and none more so for those of us who have responsibility for making sure that our buildings are safe for staff to work in. The Health and Safety in Employment (HSE) legislation governs our responsibilities in this area.

Council, along with other building owners around the country will be assessing the risks and safety concerns of individual buildings in relation to their ability to withstand moderate to strong earthquakes. This will include the Initial Evaluation Procedure's (IEP's) as well as more detailed evaluation where necessary.

Building owners will then have to assess the relative risks of the building and putting in place immediate and practical safety steps as well as considering more detailed retrospective seismic upgrades.

Building owners' responsibilities to upgrade earth-quake prone buildings are detailed within the Council's Earthquake-Prone Buildings Policy which can be found on the Council's website.

The first step to assessing risk is to get an IEP undertaken – see the item on the Earthquake-Prone Building Community Taskforce in this issue of 'Off Cuts' for more information.

Statistics suggest that more than 300 people are killed in car accidents each year yet we still drive. There needs to be a clear level of reasonableness in our approach to earthquake issues.

I started with safety and I'll finish with safety. Unless you know how good (or how bad) your building is, you can't control the decisions on how to safely manage it.

**Jeff Jamieson**  
**Team Leader Building Services**

## Internal moisture

We were recently called to a property in Wanganui by a local tradesman who was asked to repair a bathroom and adjacent room which was presenting with various kinds of mould.

A shower over a bath had not been installed correctly and the floor, wall framing and linings showed significant signs of water penetration.

This type of work can now be exempt, but even though exempt it still needs to be constructed in accordance with the Building Code. This is where your Building Inspector checks for compliance when a consent is issued.

If you notice mould or black mould present then that is a sure sign that something needs to be done to correct the situation. Seek expert help!

## Responsibilities of your Designer

This year we had the introduction of Restricted Building Work (RBW) and Licensed Building Practitioners (LBP).

Restricted Building Work is an important concept because it relates to the exterior weatherproofness and structural stability of housing. To ensure that this important work is designed and constructed correctly the Government introduced the LBP Scheme to ensure only qualified and skilled people can provide these services.

Builders and designers need to be Licensed Building Practitioners in order to carry out restricted building work.

We, as a Council, have noticed that a number of designers are not fulfilling their legal obligations and are providing Council with incomplete documentation.

This is frustrating as it requires us to write a request for further information letter and then spend more time re-assessing the response to the questions. This slows down the building consent process while we recheck the plans, but it also costs more due to the extra time involved.

The Government legislated for the conceptual change when they cited the Building Amendment Act in 2012, it clearly set out the following:

“14d - Responsibilities of designer

... is responsible for **ensuring** that the plans and specifications and the advice will result in the building work carried out under the consent complying with the building code.....

“14f - Responsibilities of building consent authority

... is responsible for **checking** ... whether... the plans and specifications accompanying an application for a building consent comply with the building code.

Please check when engaging a designer that they are qualified and seek assurance as to their previous levels of compliance with Council.



## Exterior Wall Insulation

When the DBH (Department of Building and Housing) altered and amended the exemptions in Schedule 1, they specifically left in the requirement to get a building consent if you are installing insulation into an exterior wall - eg retrofitting rigid or semi-rigid segments and sheet insulation, injected loose fill insulation or injected foam insulation. There are a range of specific issues to address because there can be a range of unintended problems if the insulation is unsuitable.

Some people take off the matchlining (to older villas) and install new fibreglass batts and then refit new internal linings. Similarly owners remove the newer internal wall linings and these often form part of the houses bracing requirement which is why we are required to check plans and installation systems - particularly for gibraltar board linings.

Another system considered is to install proprietary expanding foam through holes drilled through the external wall linings. Often these have a formaldehyde base and pungent smell associated with the installation which have to be managed very carefully for householders.

Council is required to ensure that the external envelope of the building is waterproof and sound and that the products and installation complies with the performance criteria of the Building Code. The greatest unknown, and potential risk, when installing insulation into external walls of existing houses is the effect on moisture transfer within the wall and the effects any increase in moisture will have on fungal growth in a wall.

Electrical safety can also be compromised if existing electrical wires are covered by thermal insulation and as a consequence, the current rating of the wire is reduced below the electrical loads on the circuit.

Full and complete documentation is required and we check the suitability and compatibility of the options to ensure on-going compliance for your home into the future.

Before considering any of these options there is a good 18 page guidance document on compliance for retrofitting insulation in external walls available on the DBH website.

## MoBIE

The Department of Building and Housing (DBH) has now been incorporated into a new 'super ministry' called the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MoBIE).

MoBIE will integrate the functions of:-

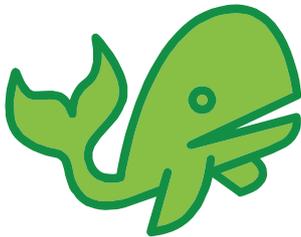
The Ministry of Economic Development

The Department of Labour

The Ministry of Science and Innovation

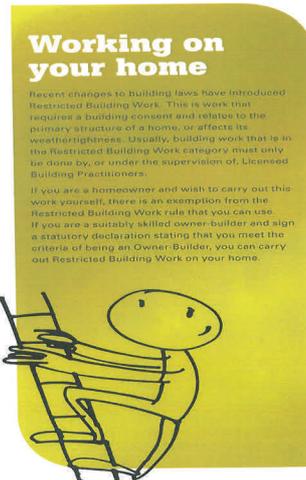
The Department of Building and Housing

If you see references to DBH or MoBIE you'll know they are/were the same!



## Working on your home

For further information visit [www.builditright.govt.nz](http://www.builditright.govt.nz) or pick up a pamphlet from the Council



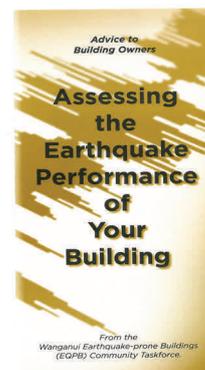
## Wanganui Earthquake Prone Building Community Taskforce

The Taskforce has previously written to all building owners in the Central Business District and the Old Town Conservation Overlay Zone advising of the requirement to provide an IEP (Initial Evaluation Procedure) before December 2012. This is a very important step in establishing the status of buildings in the busy central areas.

The Taskforce has also recently written to the balance of the commercial/industrial building owners in the Wanganui District. These too, have to provide an IEP to Council before December 2012. This is a large task and it is feasible that some buildings may not have received their letter yet. Please don't wait, act soon and book your engineer now.

At this stage, buildings constructed after 1976 do not need to be assessed although you may well want to in order to establish its level of 'earthquake proneness' and have a better level of negotiation with your insurance broker.

For more information please read the pamphlet on the front page of Council's website at [www.wanganui.govt.nz](http://www.wanganui.govt.nz)



# Water Blasters can damage your home

There is growing concern at the damage that water blasters can cause when used to clean the outsides of buildings - especially New Zealand houses.

Where water blasters were once the preserve of professional cleaning specialists, now anyone can buy one at the local hardware store, or hire one, and without any knowledge or understanding of how to use them properly, point them at their homes and 'blast away'.

While it is important to regularly clean and maintain roof and wall claddings to keep them looking good and prolong their life so they continue to do their job of keeping weather out, it was never intended that this be done with the indiscriminate use of high pressure water blasters.

Most claddings simply are not designed to withstand the water pressures generated by even the smallest of these pieces of equipment. For example, cladding systems and joints described in the Acceptable Solution for External Moisture E2/AS1 (most New Zealand homes) are designed to withstand maximum pressures in the 1.5-2.5 kPa range, which is the pressure you might expect from a 180 km/hr (or kph) wind gust. But a relatively small 1200 psi water blaster has a nozzle pressure of 8300 kPa that would cause a tremendous 'punch' on walls and joints!

The materials, joints and seals used for cladding the average New Zealand house are simply not designed to withstand these excessively high pressures. Water blasters can etch out soft weatherboard, tear out mortar from brick joints, knock off paint film along cladding edges, dislodge sealant, force water into joints where water would never otherwise get to, etch away paint film thickness - and much more. If the building did not leak before it was 'cleaned' by water blasting, there is a high chance it will afterwards. Where buildings are regularly cleaned in this way, parts of them may never get a chance to dry out, and decay of materials and framing may result.

Water blasters, used indiscriminately, will damage your home. Banning their use (even if it was possible to do so) might avoid this damage occurring, but there are occasions where the proper use of water blasters, on some materials, may be appropriate. The best method of cleaning the house will always be with the garden hose and a soft brush or broom. However, if you are going to use a water blaster, there are some simple rules you should follow to reduce the risk of damaging claddings and joints.

- Always read the operating instructions first.
- Check the maintenance requirements of your cladding or roofing material - many exclude the use of high pressure cleaning (ie, water blasters).
- Use the lowest pressure setting available.
- Set the nozzle on 'wide spray' and maintain it at least 500 mm clear of the building's surfaces.
- Don't hold the nozzle up close to a surface to dislodge stubborn dirt - use a brush or broom for that.
- Never point the nozzle directly at joints or aluminium joinery, because many of these rely on sealants for their weather-tightness, which can be dislodged by high pressures.
- Use cold water only.
- Use infrequently. It is better to wash down your home more frequently with a low-pressure garden hose and soft broom than to use high-pressure water blasters occasionally.

If you want to have your home cleaned, there are professional water blasting companies with experience in building cleaning. References from their previous work should help provide you with proof of competence. If you are concerned that a water blaster has been improperly used on your home, do not wait for the potential leak to cause damage. Have a building professional check your home with moisture meters to detect the presence of moisture in walls or in the roof.

A leak found early is an inconvenience. A leak ignored can result in more serious problems.



## WDC— QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR THOSE IN THE BUILDING INDUSTRY

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