

building & consent news

KEEPING YOU INFORMED OF THE BUILDING AND CONSENTS PROCESS

Issue 08 June 2010

Builders Bouquet

As the plans are getting more and more site-specific, builders are showing they look closely at what is drawn plus making sure that they are reading the specifications in full.

When receiving the building consent on site, it is essential that all workers on site are brought up to speed on how to read and understand the documents that have been consented. In doing this, the builders/workers are clear about when an inspection is required and can then programme their day to suit. The building consent tells the builder what the inspector is looking for at each inspection.

Since I have been in the Horowhenua District Council, I have noticed that all the builders I have come across are looking at the plans and reading the specifications, which in my view is a vast improvement on years gone by.

The number of failed inspections has diminished and this is attributed to builders taking more time to build what is drawn

and not taking the "she'll be right" attitude.

The reading of these documents is essential, as before a Code Compliance Certificate can be issued, it has to be shown that the building work has been completed as per the consented documents.

To the credit of builders, they have gone through a lot of changes in the past few years and have endured a lot of heartache, but I think they are finally seeing the light at the end of the tunnel.

Some of the builders in the Horowhenua have identified that one of the reasons for areas of the buildings failing is that some of the designs produced have not been designed specifically for the New Zealand environment.

I have been in the industry for 30 years and believe there has been little structured upskilling of the building trade for builders and designers. I think this is one of the main changes for the decline of understanding of the Building Act and the Code Compliance documents.

While the building industry has seen many changes in recent years, I have been impressed with the high standards maintained in the Horowhenua.

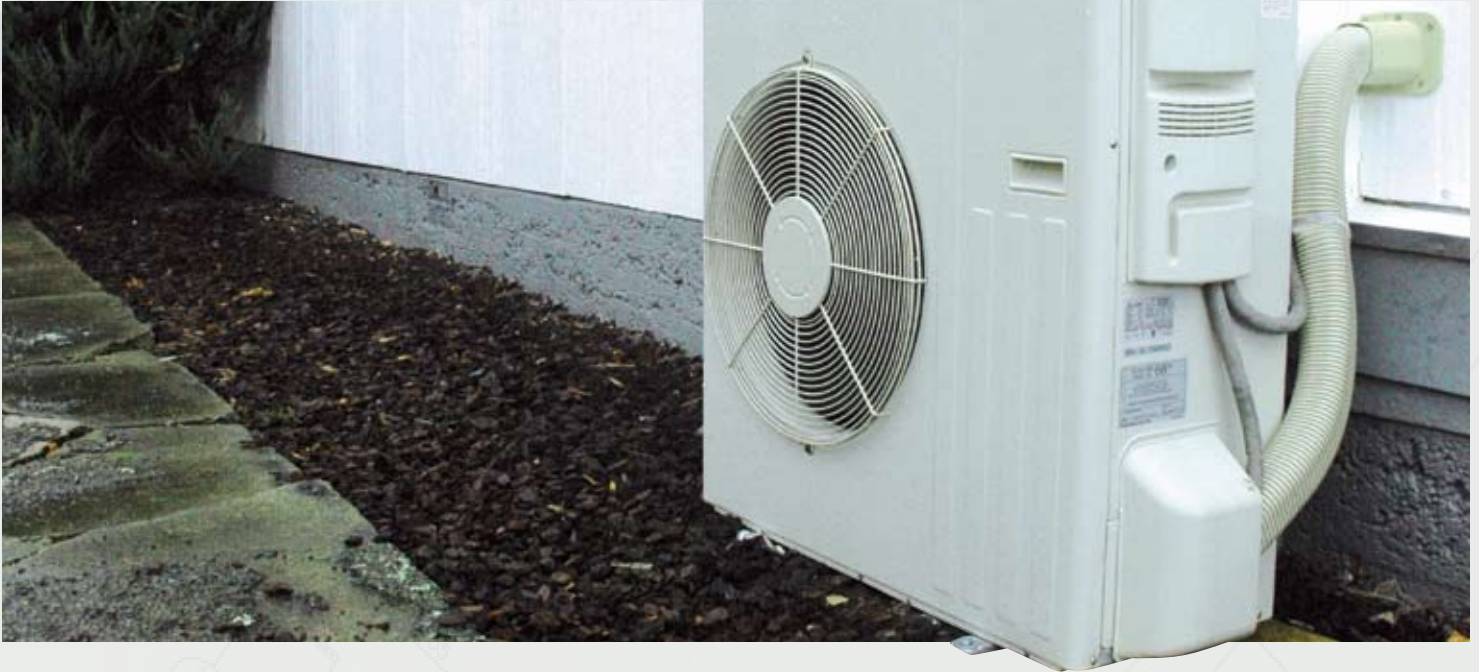
So all you builders out there, well done carry on the good work.

Bruce Harris
Building Advisory Officer



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Heat pump installers beware

- fan units can exceed residential noise limits

Over the last few years, the number of heat pump units being installed around the country has sky-rocketed, but there have also been some increasingly common reports of noise nuisance caused by these units around the country. Here in the Horowhenua we have recently had our first noise complaint regarding one of the fan units associated with a heat pump, and it was found to be significantly exceeding the noise limits set by the operative District Plan.

In this particular case, there were some obvious contributing factors to this being such a problem. The heat pump's fan unit was located on an exterior wall of a house located on a small residential section which was bordered by similarly small residential sections. Both houses were located close to, or at, the minimum setback distance of 1.5 metres from their shared boundary, and each house also had a fairly high site coverage ratio which restricted the ability to site these houses

further apart. The heat pump fan was located in a position that was convenient and most efficient for heat distribution within the new house, but perhaps without as much consideration for maximising the distance from any neighbouring homes and minimising any noise nuisance for the neighbours.

If possible, designers and installers could help prevent noise from these units generating noise complaints if they avoided placing these units opposite any neighbour's bedrooms where night-time quiet is more crucial for good neighbourly relations. They should also consider selecting a wall that is the greatest distance from neighbouring dwellings, for example where there is a driveway or larger back yard(s) between them.

The size and power ratings of these units should also be used as a guide as to whether noise is likely to be a potential problem for neighbours, as the larger units will clearly generally be more noisy. It would pay to check the noise ratings quoted by the heat pump manufacturers as a guide to whether noise limits could be exceeded beyond the property boundaries.

Timers can be set on units to ensure that they do not operate during sensitive times of night. Thermostat controllers may also be able to be programmed so that they operate at lower rates of heat output (and therefore lower fan speeds and noise levels) during night-time, and only operate at full heat output during day-time when the permitted noise limits are higher.

The Horowhenua District Plan noise limits for all days of the week when measured at a residential property boundary are as follows:

- Between 7.00am and 10.00pm (ie day-time): 55dBA (L10)
- Between 10.00pm and 7.00am (ie night-time): 40dBA (L10) and 65dBA(A) (Lmax)

Once these units have been installed, it is very difficult and expensive to modify the equipment or relocate them to less sensitive positions on a property. Prevention of such issues is obviously far preferable to any cure!

Philip Lake
RMA Enforcement Officer

Resource consent requirements for new buildings

In September 2009 the Council publicly notified a change to the District Plan (Plan Change 22). This Plan Change has sought to identify landscapes and features within the Horowhenua District that have outstanding natural or high amenity values and protect these from inappropriate development.

Council engaged a landscape architect to identify the areas considered worthy of protection. Planning provisions were drafted to set the appropriate level of protection.

The big impact that this Plan Change has on the building industry, is that new buildings (aside from a few exceptions) will require resource consent if they are to be built within an area that has been identified as an Outstanding Nature Feature, Outstanding Natural Landscape or High Amenity Landscape. These areas cover approximately half of the District.

The Plan Change also requires that resource consent is obtained for activities involving network utilities and earthworks.

The Plan Change has been through two rounds of submissions with over 100 submissions received. A public hearing will be held later this year to determine whether or not the Plan Change should be approved and if so, whether there should be any additional changes made. Until a final decision on the Plan Change has been made, the Council is required to apply both the existing rules and the proposed rules. Resource consent applications will therefore need to be lodged for new buildings in the identified areas, even if the building may be permitted under the existing rules.

It is worth being familiar with the areas that have been identified so that you or your client can make the necessary allowances for the resource consent process. If you are involved with lodging a resource consent application, make sure you understand the particular aspects that the Planning Department need to assess, these aspects may include the design, siting and external appearance of the proposed building. If you have any doubts about whether or not a site you are involved with would be affected, you are strongly advised to speak with a member of the Council Planning Department.

David McCorkindale
Project Manager, District Plan Review



Licensed building practitioners

Are you a builder without recognised qualifications?

Then read on, we have a programme to assist you to become a Licensed Building Practitioner. So what's the catch? There is none, just your time.

We have started to run lunchtime meetings to assist the industry to understand and complete the LBP application forms. The first session was held on 24 March with seven attending with the Department of Building and Housing staff present to answer any questions that arose from the meeting.

The next series of meetings to be held will centre on the standard application forms for Carpentry and Site for those who do not have the recognised qualifications to meet the streamlined criteria.

- The first meeting will be to show the forms and the requirements needed to complete these, with an outline on how to fill these out.

- The second meeting will be filling out the application and getting any copies of required documents signed by a Justice of the Peace and passport photograph taken.
- The third and final meeting will be a tidy up to ensure all applications are complete and ready for dispatch to the DBH for processing.

If applicants attend all three meetings, we will endeavour to get the DBH up to have a presentation evening with media coverage to help promote the Licensed Building Practitioners in the Horowhenua District so all in all, it could be a good win-win endeavour for all who take part.

To assist us with our planning, if you are interested in attending these sessions, please contact Colin on Ph 06 366 0999 ext 6816, or email him at coling@horowhenua.govt.nz, no later than 22 June 2010.

Drains from hot water cylinder relief valves - Guidance for plumbers, plumbing designers and building consent authorities

The Department has received several enquiries about drain lines from pressure relief and temperature and pressure relief valves discharging to a PVC-U plumbing and drainage system. In some cases, the PVC-U pipes and stacks have melted, causing a failure of the plumbing system and extensive damage.

It appears that this is due in part to the increasing use of solar water heating, and other heat sources that cannot be controlled by an energy cut-out device, requiring relief valves to discharge to prevent hot water cylinder explosions.

Relief valves are designed to reset after discharging and can discharge again and again until the heat source is reduced or a fault, such as replacing a failed thermostat, is fixed.

What is the function of relief valves?

Pressure relief valves are designed to relieve excess pressure to make sure valve-vented storage water heaters do not explode.

Temperature and pressure relief valves are designed to keep the temperature below 99°C and to relieve excess pressure to make sure valve-vented storage water heaters do not explode.

What do the compliance documents say?

Acceptable Solution G12/AS1, and Standards AS/NZS 3500.4: 2003 (cited in G12/VM1) and NZS 4607: 1989, all require:

- the drain line from the relief valve to be in copper
- discharge to an appropriate place that does not cause damage to the building.

AS/NZS 3500.2 (cited in G13/AS3) says the range of temperatures likely to discharge to the plumbing and drainage system must be taken into account when selecting materials for use in the plumbing system. Therefore, if the drain line discharges over a tundish into the plumbing system, the plumbing system has to be constructed of a material that will take the high temperature discharge from relief valves.

Failure to comply with these simple requirements could cause the PVC-U plumbing system to melt when a relief valve discharges, resulting in a failure of the plumbing system.

(Extract from Codewords April 2010 Issue 041).

Building and consent statistics

From time to time we are asked what is happening in respect of building consent numbers, so for your information we've extracted some details from our records. July to December last year was relatively quiet when compared to previous years, however since February of this year there has been a noticeable increase in both the numbers of consents coming through the door and the type of consents. Some comparison figures:

• Inspections

July 2007 to May 2008 - 2735

July 2008 to May 2009 - 3015

July 2009 to May 2010 - 2519

• New House Consents

July 2007 to May 2008 - 197

July 2008 to May 2009 - 60

July 2009 to May 2010 - 80

And finally, last month we granted 63 consents and all within statutory timeframes.

