

Reducing building waste



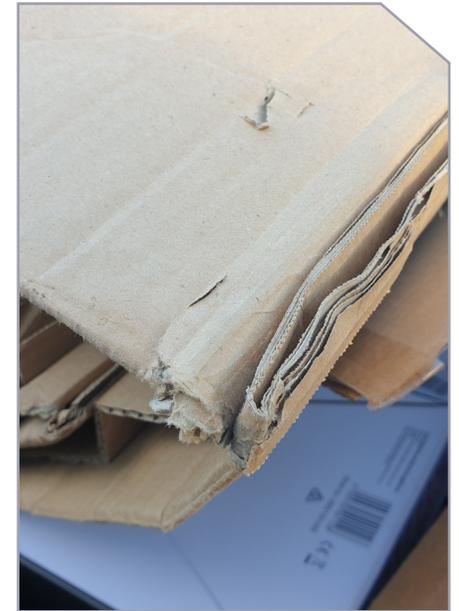
Donnelle Dunlop of Dunlop Builders talks to Wastebusters about how they're reducing waste on their building sites by reusing and recycling what materials they can.

Dunlop Builders have been in business for almost two decades. Keenly aware the construction industry is a big contributor of waste to landfill, they're taking steps to reduce the impact of their projects. Co-owner Donnelle Dunlop is particularly passionate about reducing waste on site. Sick of seeing

skips full of building material, she started to investigate reuse and recycling avenues for leftover materials a number of years ago. She says it's been quite a journey from those early days when they first tried to implement more sustainable waste management practises. "We started a few years ago trying to

do more recycling. We talked to Wastebusters to get an idea of what we can and can't recycle, and set up wool fadges on our building sites for clear plastic wrap, cardboard, polystyrene so they can be recycled," Donnelle said.

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Reuse and recycling is prioritised

Planning for reuse & recycling

They prioritise reuse and recycling by placing the wool fadges they use for recycling in front of the skip. Long lengths of treated and untreated timber are put to one side so they can be used again. Dunlop tries to reuse the timber offcuts on site and has also used them for community projects, like bike features for Bike Wānaka. More recently they have started donating leftover materials to Wānaka Community Workshop.

Their staff take untreated timber offcuts for firewood and steel is put to one side to be collected for scrap. Donnelle said they try to order as close as possible for their needs, allowing for wastage, and return longer lengths of timber which haven't been used, as well as unused blockwork, unopened bags of insulation, and sheets of ply. They also have a storage site for leftover materials so it can be reused on another project or donated.

Celebrating successes, facing challenges

Donnelle counts two main factors which have contributed to the success of their waste reduction journey - their dedicated staff and their systems.

"We're lucky we've got a crew of some really dedicated staff who are really passionate about it. They're really onto it."

She said having guys on site every day who don't mind telling subcontractors 'you've got to stick that in the recycling, it doesn't go in the skip,' makes all the difference.

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Having separate areas for reuse and recycling and trying to standardise their set up from site to site has also helped.

"The fadges for recyclable material are really working on site."

Their biggest challenge is the lack of local infrastructure for recycling building materials. Donnelle would like to see a local solution for plasterboard where it can be crushed up and used in gardens.

"And there's so much treated timber - anything outside, all the framing, landscaping timbers. It's a big problem. There's a lot of little offcuts that we can't do anything about."

Timing can also be an issue.

"At the end of the job we find there's a lot of appliances - fridges, freezers - with a lot of cardboard that could be recycled but no space left for recycling fadges as the landscaping is underway."

They try to get around the problem by having a trailer on site. They try to arrange the trailer so all the landfill waste is at the bottom of the trailer, and all the cardboard is on top so it can be dropped off to be recycled before the rest goes to the tip.

Building for the future

Donnelle is keen to get a trial going with their timber suppliers to swap out single use plastic wrap for a reusable returnable wrap.

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Dunlop Builders is also building a new office hub, which will have dedicated yard space to make it easier to keep materials tidy before they're recycled or reused.

She thinks there's scope for real gains in waste reduction in the sector, "things are changing, we're definitely seeing a shift and we're going to keep pushing for it".

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