

Building without the skip



Clint Gollop of CBG Quality Builders talks to Wastebusters about building without a skip, creating less waste and where the industry must go to reduce its environmental impact.

CBG Quality Construction is bucking a trend that sees its industry contribute 40-50% of the waste to landfill in New Zealand. With seven generations of builders in his blood, CBG Managing Director Craig Gollop says he's always trying to find better ways of doing things. From the type of house they build to the way they manage the site, the

recycling and the rubbish - CBG does things differently. "We haven't had a skip on site in about ten years. There's no need for it. Skips actually promote waste," Craig said. "We just came up with other ways of dealing with items that would have gone in a skip." By the end of a house build they'll have less than a caged tandem trailer of unavoidable waste.

Recycling and reusing on site is cost effective too. Back costing on the whole business shows a saving of 50% compared with the cost of hiring a skip, transporting it, and emptying it.

Resource recovery

Better waste management systems take attendance time and management.

"The industry is filled with lazy habits so you've got to have the drive from top or it's not going to happen. The best way to approach any job is to get the most junior guy and the most senior guy on the same page and you literally squeeze everybody in the middle."

Craig said his apprentice is a key asset, "without them, you're never going to pull it off".

It's their responsibility to keep the site tidy and ensure the subbies know how the onsite reuse and recycling systems work.

CBG sets up labelled fadges on their sites for recyclable polystyrene, clear plastic wrap and cardboard which are audited by the apprentice to ensure quality recycling. Steel is separated out for recycling, and timber offcuts are sorted and stored by the saw benches for reuse.

Managing rubbish and recycling starts with cutting a house pad which

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includes a 2m perimeter for working on so they have flat access and egress around the home and it's easy to see if anything has been left lying around. "Everything within the boundary pegs is maintained to a clean standard at all times so we haven't got stuff coming out of the site and into the local environment."

Ordering is a big part of managing waste out of their system. Craig knows what he needs at each part of a job and tries to get a truckload of material to cut down on packaging waste. He's careful not to over-order as materials lying around on site can get damaged and create more waste. Where possible they chose materials that can be recycled and materials that naturally avoid waste like precut Structural Insulated Panels (SIPs) and pre-nailed frames.

Facing challenges

Craig is actively working on solutions to the materials he finds problematic, like plastics. Alongside companies from Cromwell, Alexandra, Queenstown and Wānaka, CBG is in talks with suppliers about plastic packaging on timber, like wrap and strapping tape. He suggests a reusable tarp could be used to cover timber while recyclable metal strapping, used in other parts of the country, should be used instead of the plastic equivalent which can't be recycled.

CBG works on getting the timing right for the delivery of the frames from their suppliers.

"We request them not to wrap it in plastic and when it shows up on site we're ready to start standing it."

All the timber offcuts generated throughout a build are sorted and stored by the saw benches so they can be used again and again - for stud centres, dwangs etc - until only very small blocks are left.

He said there's also a lot of polystyrene and plastics generated at the fit off stage of the job. Some of it can be recycled, but much of it cannot.

Gib offcuts are also one of the biggest waste items he's looking to address on a local level.

Constant conversations and good relationships are important to getting people on board.



Recyclable materials are audited to ensure quality recycling

"It's getting subcontractors to see they're operating at a lower level when they're working on another job, and when they're with us it's they're operating at the level they should be operating at.

"We find the right guys who actually appreciate it. We guarantee when a subbie comes onto our site that it will be clean and tidy, with better access and egress. They haven't got anything under their feet, they're not tripping over anything and their work environment is better."

"That's how you change their opinion, when they see how it benefits them."

Building for the future

Craig said the building code is far below what it should be, and working above the code puts his business in the minority. "It's a hard environment to do the sorts of things we're doing."

He wants leadership from the top to raise the standard, and regulated product stewardship for the industry's materials.

"Across the country we can deal with lots of materials, but we need to be able to do that everywhere. We don't have much local infrastructure but the industry in Wānaka, Queenstown, Cromwell is so busy there's enough volume here to warrant it.

"If we don't address the industry's waste now it's going to end up in our waterways, in our ground, in all the wrong places. There's a huge amount of micro plastics which will get into our environment if steps aren't taken."

He says houses are deteriorating faster than they should because of the poor design and the poor materials.

"We should be assessing materials based on the waste offset and whether they are fit for purpose. We've got to close the loop."

He'd like to see more recycled plastic being used in the industry and research undertaken to see how construction waste can be processed and reintroduced back into the industry.

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He's keen to get like-minded companies together to advocate for the phase out of harmful and underperforming materials; to make reusable packaging options the norm; and to raise the industry standard.

Craig is determined "One house at a time, we can do better."

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