

Why building with wood works

Timber has been the building material of choice in New Zealand for more than two centuries. Since the early European settlers arrived here in the 1800s we have been building our homes with timber.

And there are a number of good reasons why timber is still a leading construction material today. The New Zealand Timber Industry Federation says timber offers a number of advantages and benefits that its competition simply can't match including safety, affordability, sustainability and durability.

Environmentally friendly

Forestry has been a key industry in New Zealand since the beginning of European colonisation.

Today plantations occupy about six percent of our land area and produce more than enough to meet the country's future needs. Almost all of the timber used in New Zealand's construction is sourced from these sustainably managed plantation forests and not from our indigenous forests. This plantation resource continues to expand as harvested trees are replaced.

Both our native and plantation forests absorb and store carbon dioxide for the full duration of their life cycle. By actually soaking up and storing carbon, timber is the only construction material which has a positive impact on greenhouse gases within the atmosphere.

Other major building materials require very significant energy in the form of heat in their production and furthermore do not store carbon in their finished state.

Timber is easily the most sustainable and environmentally friendly building material available for residential home construction.

Seismic strength

In New Zealand wood has long been favoured over brick for residential buildings because of its ability to flex under stress.

Timber – why it should be your number one choice

- Creates a seismically safe space
- Cost competitive
- Superior thermal insulation
- Natural electrical insulator
- Ease of use building with timber
- Readily available
- Nationally recognised standards for use
- An all-natural product.

Experiments carried out last year by the Building Research Association of New Zealand (BRANZ) show timber is the best construction material for coping with New Zealand's seismic conditions.

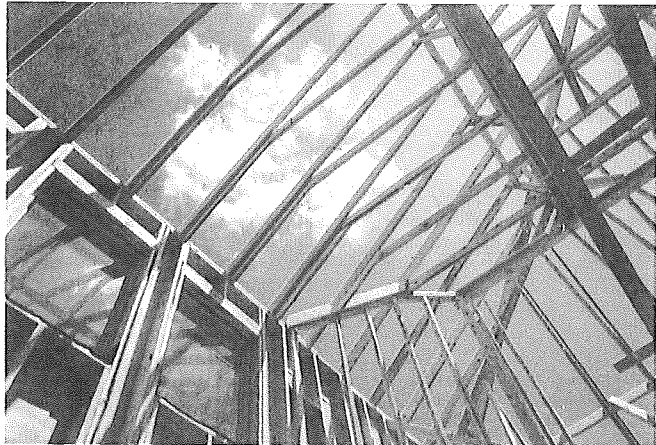
Commissioned by the Ministry of Education to determine how much force its school buildings could withstand in an earthquake, the BRANZ tests showed timber framed buildings can cope with stresses three times that of the Canterbury earthquakes and remain standing.

Built to last

A number of other factors make timber a superior product for use in construction, including thermal insulation and electrical insulating properties.

The New Zealand Building Code requires houses to comply with thermal insulation standards.

Timber framed construction methods have superior thermal insulating qualities to



competing products because of its lower thermal bridging properties.

Modern preservatives provide timber with protection against the effects of moisture and insect attack balanced with minimal use of chemicals and unlike steel, timber does not rust.

Timber is also a natural electrical insulator, particularly when dry as is the norm in modern house framing.

Although timber burns, its contribution to total fire load in a burning house is very small compared to the load from flammable building contents such as furnishings.

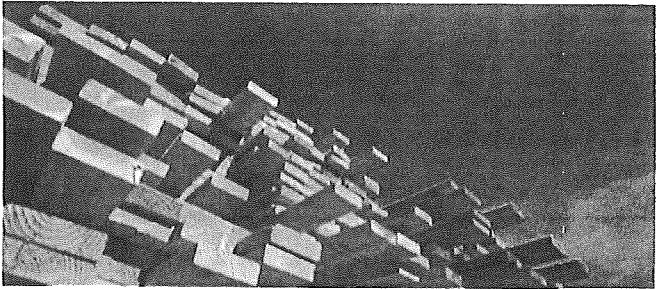
In addition, timber remains dimensionally stable and retains structural strength until the cross section has been considerably reduced, whereas steel will suffer rapid temperature rise and loss of strength when exposed to fire.

Another key benefit is ease of access to plumbing, electrical and communication services a raised timber floor provides.

"With piled systems you have that ease of access, whether you are installing, maintaining or repairing services such as your electrical wiring, plumbing, IT cabling etc under the house. In a solid concrete foundation this becomes much more difficult and a much bigger challenge," NZTIF director Kevin Hing explains.

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