

'Green' bricks are neat, strong and environmentally friendly



IMPRESSIVE: Cheryl Neave of the Cape Town Building Centre with a sample of Cape Brick's 'green' bricks.

EVEN SUCH basic materials as bricks can be part of the rapidly growing green movement in the building sector, says Cheryl Neave of the Cape Town Building Centre.

For instance, one of the Building Centre's six brick manufacturer exhibitors, Cape Brick, uses recycled crushed concrete for 70 percent of the ingredients in its bricks.

Delivery and fuel costs involved in getting materials to the plant are kept to a minimum as its plant in Salt River is only 5km from the centre of Cape Town, where most demolitions take place.

Energy-efficient materials have two characteristics.

First, they provide efficient thermal insulation, which reduces the amount of energy required to heat or cool the

building.

Second, they have a low "embodied energy" count. This means energy input during the manufacturing process and the transport of materials is reduced.

Neave says the products cut down the amount of construction and demolition waste, and help reduce the size and growth of landfill sites.

"The amount of raw materials quarried for the manufacturing process is also reduced," she says.

Another plus is that the recycled aggregate used to manufacture the bricks is a more uniform shape than the quarried aggregate, and produces a neat brick which uses less cement in the concrete mix to achieve the same compressive strength.

In addition, Cape Brick's own waste products are recycled, as it aims to produce zero waste.

Cape Brick was founded in 1938 with a contract to transport waste ash from the Salt River power station. Ash was used to make bricks and could be sold to clay brick manufacturers.

In 1998, the company bought a state-of-the-art VB4X brick plant from Pan Mixers South Africa. This doubled its production capacity and improved efficiencies.

In 2001, Cape Brick set up a waste and recycling plant with the purchase of a gyro and jaw crusher, resulting in its environmentally friendly products.

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