



Happy customers Pete Algie (red bin) and Geoff Orchard (green bin).

clean air inside clean air outside

Throughout the country there's been an increased focus on improving workshop extraction. Driven in part by Worksafe NZ's drive towards safer work practices, there's also an increasing awareness about the dangers of working in dusty, polluted environment. One solution increasingly used around the country has been the installation of a unit from Australian dust-control experts Micronair. With a wide range of models and technologies, Micronair have solution that will provide efficient and long-lasting filtration to just 1 micron for almost any situation. One of their most popular models in NZ is the VC8 – and two installations in the lower North Island earlier this year are already proving their value.

Pete's Joinery in Greytown provides predominantly panel and some timber joinery services both locally and around the Wellington region. With a CNC, large edgebander and traditional machines spread across a big workshop their extraction requirements are fairly typical of a medium-sized joinery shop. They had a large cyclone unit in the rear carpark but a visit from Worksafe NZ prompted a search for a new extractor – one that would be quieter, more effective, and work with their existing underfloor ducting. A 15kW VC8 now stands in the same place as the old extractor, but taking up half the space. "We're really wrapped with it" says owner Pete Algie. "Previously we had dust all through our gutters, our neighbour's gutters, all over the back yard. Now the area is spotless".

Across the Tararua's in Paraparaumu, Orchard Joinery have got the same Micronair model. A traditional joinery shop catering for predominantly private, residential customers, Orchard's original baghouse unit caught fire when embers from a wide-belt sander ignited in the fluming. Fortunately Orchard Joinery is right next to the local fire station, so help was on hand quickly (although that help wasn't dressed appropriately – because firemen don their gear while driving to the fire!) – and the fire was restricted to the extractor. They too now have the small but powerful VC8.

Geoff Orchard is very pleased with it: "for a start we don't have compressed air issues any longer" Geoff explains. "The old unit used a lot of compressed air for cleaning, and each time it did so the drop in pressure would stop the edgebander, or sander. No such issues with the Micronair, which uses vibration to clean itself at shut down."

Geoff's wife Christine points out another advantage of the new unit – particularly noticeable from her position near the entrance to Orchard's smart showroom. "I can't hear it" she says. "It's much quieter. I could certainly hear the old one running." With each unit fitted with a rockwool industrial silencer, even the vibration cycle that takes place at each shut down on the Micronair is a quiet affair – as the dust is shaken from the tough spun bonded Polyester filters.

Both new VC8 owners are also enjoying the ease with which the bins are emptied. Each machine is constructed with a custom-made skirt to fit the size of bin the customer specifies. This provides an excellent seal – meaning no more having to sweep up the yard, because no dust whatsoever escapes. Emptying the bin is simple: after the VC8 is switched off then flicking a switch pneumatically lifts the skirt so the bin can be removed and emptied. While demonstrating the pneumatics, Geoff also points out the consistent distribution of the dust inside. "With our old system we'd regularly have to open the bin and re-arrange the dust because it always built up in one particularly area. The Micronair distributes it evenly" he says.

Good dust extraction is often overlooked when considering the machinery for efficient joinery production, but the negatives of bad extraction – particularly to workers' health – can be significant. Through sensible investment both Pete's and Orchard Joinery are not only ahead of the regulatory issues that can really disrupt business costs and scheduling, but also benefitting from the increased efficiency, decreased noise and cleaner air that a Micronair unit can bring.



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