

A SHORTCUT TO CBI

by Construction Information Limited

WHAT IS CBI?

CBI (Co-ordinated Building Information) is a classification and coding system designed by and for members of the building and construction industry, to provide a basis for co-ordinating the five main information sources:

**drawings
specification
quantities
technical and research information
trade information and publications**

WHAT IS CBI CODING?

CBI coding is presented on four levels:

Level 1 Classes

- 1 General
- 2 Site
- 3 Structure
- 4 Enclosure
- 5 Interior
- 6 Finish
- 7 Services
- 8 External

These eight classes represent the most fundamental subdivision of the building industry. Below this are:

Level 2 Groups

There are 54 groups, each classified and numbered under its appropriate class. For example:

- 44 Membrane roofing and waterproofing
- 74 Drainage

Level 3 Sub-groups

These are categories of similar types of work and are identified by a 3-digit code:

- 424 Profiled sheet cladding
- 742 Surface water

Level 4 Work sections

Each work section is a clearly defined amount of building work, generally representing a subcontract "package." For example:

- 4242 Plastic profiled sheet cladding
- 7422 Surface water treatment systems

FINDING YOUR WAY

Finding your way through the CBI system is as logical as 1, 2, 3. For example:

- 3 Structure
 - 31 Concrete
 - 311 Formwork and reinforcement for concrete
 - 3111 Formwork for in situ concrete

The aim is to provide a unique, logical "slot" for each item used in building and construction. Anyone needing to know whether a project contains say aluminium doors, can find the appropriate location and then be confident that all relevant information has been discovered.

It's just as easy to position and then relocate relevant information in the materials and products library, in a specification, on a drawing, or in a bill of quantities.

FILING HARDCOPY PRODUCT INFORMATION

CBI coding is effective because it covers all aspects of the building process, allowing co-ordination of specifications, drawings, quantities, technical reports and product information.

For example, the code 4242 is the specification section number for profiled plastic sheet cladding. The same code used on the drawings shows where it is specified, where it is located in the schedule of quantities and where information is located within the product library.

The first step in filing product information is to give the brochure or manual a CBI number. In time manufacturers will do this for you.

In most cases, this will be a four-digit number (e.g. 4242 Plastic profiled sheet cladding).

However, entry is possible at any chosen level of detail. Profiled plastic sheet cladding can be coded under 4 (Enclosure) 42 (Wall & Soffit Cladding) 424 (Profiled sheet cladding) or 4242 (Plastic profiled sheet cladding).

The choice of level is determined by the size of the library - a small design practice may decide to only code down to level 2 - and the form of the information being filed. For example, many brochures contain more than one product or system, while larger companies produce manuals containing a wide range of product types.

There will also be some products and materials, which are more generic in nature. For example, hollow concrete blocks would generally be coded under 3 Structure and down to level 4 under 3321 Hollow concrete blockwork. However, they also relate to 8112 Hollow concrete block site retaining walls and 8334 Masonry fencing and walling. Logic demands that the information be located under its major use classification, with a cross reference note placed under any secondary listings.

Duplicating information should be avoided as it leads to uncertainty regarding the currency of a particular piece of information.

ADVANTAGES OF CBI

The main advantage of a common classification and coding system is ensuring greater confidence and reducing risk. CBI helps the designer arrange information in response to the on-site construction process. This gives the contractor increased confidence, leaving more time for management and less time spent on finding and confirming information.

For more information on CBI contact:

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