

# INTRODUCTION



Firstly, from everyone at NKD, a big thank you for choosing us to build your new home. We know that you had other options and are flattered that you have picked us. We very much look forward to building a beautiful home that you will enjoy for many years to come.

The construction of a new home is very exciting. It is when all of the ideas and dreams that you spent weeks, months or years discussing begin to rise up out of the ground. NKD takes every step possible to ensure the smooth running of our construction projects, maintaining the highest standards of construction. However, every project is different and presents its own unique challenges. You have handed us the responsibility of building your home and so, as your main contractor, these challenges are ours to face.

Of course, we are not going to draw a curtain around the site and only reveal your home to you once it is finished. We want you to be involved and feel a part of the process, which means that you will see every aspect of the build. Whilst we have a vast experience of building in Thailand and so are used to what to expect, we understand that for you it may all be new. We want you to soak in as much of this wonderful experience as possible, and feel that a little preparation for what to expect will enable you to enjoy the process all the more. This brochure is therefore intended to give a little more detail on some of the aspects of a construction project that could lead to frustration, if unexpected.

There are three distinct topics. First is the general flow of a project, to give an idea of what to expect in terms of the perceived pace of the build. Second is a little about our workers and their way of working. These two topics are common to most projects. Finally we cover the topic of the "unexpected" events unique to individual projects.

## BEFORE WE BEGIN...



# PROJECT WORK FLOW

There is a certain flow to projects that gives rise to a variation in the perceived pace of work. At times there seems to be a lot of progress, but then there are also times when progress appears slow, even on a project running perfectly smoothly. If you are unaware of this and things suddenly seem to slow down, it can be disheartening. It is therefore worth giving an overview of the general flow of an average project.

Presumably, you have started with an empty plot of land. You are full of excitement and anticipation. Work begins. Suddenly, there are excavators digging holes, there are workers preparing re-bar for the concrete structures. Within a couple of days, the site has been totally transformed from an empty plot into a site buzzing with activity! First the footings go in, then the columns that come up from the footings to the ground floor beams, then the footing holes are filled in, then the steel work for the beams, then the concrete beams are poured, then the floor slabs go on..... Take a breath! That was quick. It seemed like every day was something new. You can now walk around in the ground floor space and imagine the rooms. If there are more floors to add on, work will still progress quickly, but adding second floor structures is slower than ground floor structures. You obviously have to add in all of the necessary support to cast structures suspended in mid air, so there is already a change of pace.

Next may be the roof frame. It will take some time to prepare all of the metal required for the frame and so progress may appear slow. The excitement of seeing the structure shoot up out of the ground may have settled a bit by now and so the relatively small change in roof structure might seem like a bit of an anticlimax. However, once the roof frame and purlins are ready, the roof tiling will take no time at all and it will seem like a sudden spurt in progress.

Depending on the project, brickwork may start before, during or after the roofing, but whenever, progress will also appear quick during this stage. It is very quick to put up block walls, but then things will appear to slow down as preparations are made for rendering. All edges of surfaces to be rendered have to be carefully prepared to give a straight corner up to which rendering can be applied. It is also in this stage that we have to chase all of the electrical conduits and plumbing pipework into the walls. This is all a very labour intensive process, but it is barely visible, compared to the rest of the structure, so expect some time with not much noticeable impact.

You have now got used to the sight of the new large structure on your land. Even though the rendering process that comes next is relatively quick and turns bare brick into smooth walls, it still might not feel like such a big or exciting step. It hardly matches the excitement of the initial structure appearing.

We now move on to the the tiling and painting. This is exciting. Now we are breathing life and character into the bare shell. You are now seeing the tiles and paints you have chosen spreading throughout the house. It is starting to feel like your own home. Even so, some parts are quick and some slow. Large expanses of floor tiles go down quickly, but intricate mosaic work in bathrooms may be slower.

It feels so close to being finished now, with tiles and freshly painted walls. Surely it will be complete any day now? As we add in all of the fixtures and fittings, things will be really coming together and you will no doubt be eager to move in, now that all of your personal finishing touches are being applied. Well, there may well still be a lot of small jobs to complete, each one small in itself, but time consuming to complete in total.

It is also worth noting that some exterior work such as boundary walls, may also be left until towards the end so that it does not interfere with interior work and hinder access to the house during major construction. So, whilst your home may appear close to completion, there could still be a lot to do outside, which may become more of a focus of attention, thus slowing down progress on the house itself.

We hope that by understanding the flow of the project and the natural changes of pace that occur, it will help eliminate any frustration that may have otherwise been felt during the slower periods of the build.

# WAYS OF WORKING

We strive to build homes to a high Western standard, though we use local workers. So, you may wonder, how is this possible when most local houses are not up to the standard that you are expecting? We can not simply impose Western ways of working on them and expect good results. It is only through selection of the best craftsmen and then the careful management and guidance we provide to them during construction along with our rigorous quality control that ensures our high standards are maintained. We understand that they have their own experiences, beliefs and customs which must be respected if we are to get the best out of them. A lack of understanding could lead to confusion or frustration so it is important that you also share in our understanding.

## WORKING HOURS AND DAYS

The fact is that for construction workers, there is no standard working week, as you may be used to. They do not just work Monday to Friday, they work every day but then may take off "Buddha Days" which are on the full moon and new moon. There may be other religious days that they also take off. This can take people by surprise if they turn up to site on a seemingly random Wednesday afternoon and then wonder why no one is working! Also, one must remember that construction labourers work very hard and in difficult conditions, exposed to the elements. During the rainy season, it is wet and muddy and then during the dry season the heat can be stifling. Sometimes, they just need a break! If they have been working for ten days non-stop and then have just spent a day on something particularly labour intensive, such as pouring concrete, then do not be surprised if the foreman gives them the day off afterwards.

## VILLAGE FESTIVALS

Aside from standard holidays such as Song Kran and the new year, most villages will have an annual festival which lasts several days. The dates of such festivals will be different for every village. If it is the time for the village festival in the village of the workers, they will not be working! Similarly, if it is the village festival in your village, work will also stop.

## BIRTHS, DEATHS & MARRIAGES

Wedding celebrations can go on for several days, as can wakes following a death. These are big affairs involving extended family, friends and neighbours, often involving the whole village. This is an aspect of the Thai community spirit that is sadly lacking in many Western countries these days. However, it does have an impact on construction projects! We have yet to experience a project where there has not been a birth, death or marriage in some way relating to our workers or the location of the project. In fact there have usually been several over the course of the project. If the village is either celebrating or mourning then understand that work will stop.

## WORK ON OTHER PROJECTS

The life of a construction team can be a precarious one, not knowing where the next job is coming from. Fortunately, we are able to provide our contractors with future work opportunities, which gives them some security. However, there may still be gaps between their contracted periods of employment with us. As such, in order to provide for their families, they must consider their options for employment once their contract with us is complete. This means taking on other jobs for other people and in some cases there may be overlaps between the work they are doing for us and the work they are doing for others. This can result in a reduction of labourers on our jobs, at times. It would be easy to demand that they maintain a certain staffing on our jobs, but this would be unfair and show a disregard for them and the responsibility they have to their staff and their families. Because of the fair way we treat our staff and because of the fact that we do offer them such good opportunities for future work at a fair price, we usually find that we get priority over any other projects, but nevertheless it is a point worth mentioning.



# EXPECTING THE UNEXPECTED

So far, we have talked about the sort of things that are in many ways common to most projects. They are not issues that need resolving. They are just facts that we understand and are accustomed to working with. However there is always the possibility that a problem may arise unexpectedly during construction. In some cases these can be rectified swiftly with little or no impact on the project, whilst in other cases, they can cause delays. The love we have for construction is born out of the varied nature of our projects and the new challenges that we face with each one. If an issue does arise, we take it in our stride and resolve it with the minimum of fuss. Obviously, we cannot predict the unexpected. Though we can give a little insight into the sort of issues that we have faced in the past and what effect they had on the project.

## WEATHER ISSUES

No matter how much planning and how many resources are put into a project, we cannot control the weather. Whilst we can generally work all year round we are sometimes at the mercy of the elements and there are times when work is forced to stop. With one particular project we needed to drive piles in a particularly muddy plot of land. A "tracked" pile driver was not available and so we had to use one on wheels. We needed three clear days without rain for the ground to dry out sufficiently for the pile driver to move around on the site. We did not get that break in the weather for 2 months. We had done all other possible preparation work that could be done whilst waiting, but it still meant a total slip of 6 weeks in the project. Extreme cases like this are rare, but when they occur there is not much that can be done and, however frustrating, has to be accepted.

## MATERIAL STOCK ISSUES

It was at about the same time as the example above that Bangkok was faced with the worst flooding in years, with much of the city cut off. The effects of this were felt all the way up to Nong Khai, with many local suppliers being out of stock of the items that would usually come from the factories and warehouses in Bangkok. We had a project that was using thermal insulating blocks, but we only had enough for part of the home. The factory in Bangkok had advised that it would be two months until they were operational again. In this case we gave our client the option of waiting or continuing with a different type of block, and they chose the latter. We used the insulating blocks in areas that were more critical and standard blocks in others. As the alternative block was cheaper, we reimbursed the difference to our client.

## MATERIAL QUALITY ISSUES

We make every effort to select the best suppliers, selling highest quality materials, but in some instances, we have had sub-standard materials delivered to site. Of course, every delivery is checked and poor quality materials will not be used on our projects. In cases where sub standard materials are delivered, they will be sent back. Materials are ordered in advance of when they are required and so occurrences such as this will usually not have an affect on the project.

Always remember that if problems do arise during construction, we have the experience, capacity and responsibility to resolve them, so you can rest assured that you are in safe hands.

**In this brochure we have covered a range of things to expect. What we have not revealed is all of the wonderful moments during construction... We will leave those for you to discover and experience for yourself, as the surprise is what makes them special!**



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