

THE FINDIN' OF THE "GREEN"

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The environmental impact of sustainable green construction is indisputable. There is reason for addressing how new construction impacts and really effects not only the construction, but the environment created by it.

While voluntary, the concept is plausible and far-sighted.

But why is it so hard to find information regarding the current litany of construction products and their compliance to LEEDS standards? Why are we inundated with new products that we have no exposure to previously, and which have no track record with us as to success or failure of use?

How are we to best serve our client who desires to be a "good neighbor" and provide a LEED-certified project to the community, when we cannot find reliable and pertinent information? Sure, we can guess, but that usually is not the mythology of the specifications writers. Neither do we want in any way to imperil our firm's liability exposure by merely specifying any "green" product that happens along.

Of course, manufacturers operating on close margins are reluctant to spend more time (and money) for establishing LEED compliance and documenting it, than they have for testing and certifying their products for general use. It even is costly to provide information based on a cursory analysis of the current product line. Hence the field of available, complying products is further and drastically reduced.

Some manufacturers, for some reasons, choose to issue papers for some of the complying products, but not all of them. Here the design professional is left to possibly eliminate the reputable manufacturer from consideration, or face the need to spend restricted fee money to dig in the depths of the internet to "see if" the manufacturer has any other products (or if the products previously specified comply)

Whose nickel should be spent?

Then on top of this is a highly involved, convoluted and labor and paper heavy documentation process that has already created a new cottage industry for "specialty consultants". These good folks immerse themselves in the collection of the documentation that the "green" board evaluates for certification. Now it appears that even many of those passing the examination and being verified as "LEED AP" have some insight but are short of what the "green" projects really entail and required.

Certainly seems that there is need for a more mutual approach to this program. Design professionals come up losers when a complex system demands more time that is not necessarily covered by the fees collected. And to add to that is the lack of participation by many manufacturers who also choose to spend no more money than necessary. With massive costs to legitimize their products in more rational venues (UL, ASTM, etc.) it is apparent that manufacturers have not bought into the "green" program, in a whole hearted manner--i.e., with information about their entire product lines in regard to compliance or not with LEED requirements.

On the upside, there is a good many manufacturers who have done very fine jobs of getting this "green" information in good form and readily available. Thanks!

No one doubts the good intentions of the LEED program but with professional fees pinched to the max, the program is awfully strenuous, and the voluntary nature of the program (that includes added costs for achieving certification) is problematic.

Maybe many of us are just too spoiled--always seeking the easy way out. But in all things isn't there a legitimate need to see how we can be "green--easier"?