



Embodied Energy

The Next Phase or Ages Away?

BY TARA TAFFERA

In the May issue of DWM magazine, one of our columnists, Ric Jackson, wrote about embodied energy. In it he says consumers will be asking increasingly more questions about factors related to window production including how much energy was used, etc. He discusses how companies can reduce their carbon footprints, a term increasingly bantered about in all industries. Here is a quick definition of this concept from Wikipedia.

A carbon footprint is: a “measure of the impact human activities have on the environment in terms of the amount of greenhouse gases produced, measured in units of carbon dioxide. It is meant to be useful for individuals and organizations to conceptualize their personal (or organizational) impact in contributing to global warming.”

I’m sure you’ve heard stories in all industries of forward-thinking companies that make sustainability a priority and make it a clear goal in their company. At beer maker Heineken, for example, sustainability serves as

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one of its core values and the company sets specific targets to reduce its carbon dioxide emissions.

Companies in the building industry are making carbon foot print reduction a priority as well. For example, Windsor Windows and Doors is doing a great deal at its plant to reduce its energy consumption. Also, PPG Industries has joined The Climate Registry and has set aggressive greenhouse (GHG) emissions reduction goals. The Climate Registry measures and reports publicly on GHG emissions in all industries. I applaud PPG for committing itself to this program. When it joined in January, it was the first Pennsylvania-based company to join the program. Hopefully companies in this state and others will take a look at this, and similar programs.

While actions such as this undoubtedly will raise PPG’s profile, a continued emphasis on reducing energy consumption also will save them money. A representative from PPG says it reduced its energy use by just more than 1 percent annually each of the last five years, saving about \$40 million overall. Meeting its new energy savings goal would realize a savings of \$15 to \$20 million a year at today’s energy prices.

Will Others Follow?

Companies would be remiss if they didn’t start considering some of the issues Jackson addresses in his column. He says embodied energy is the next phase and soon consumers will be asking about this when it comes to their windows. He doesn’t define soon (and I’m not going to nail him down on that) but I’m not so sure consumers will be asking about how much energy it took to produce a given window—at least not in the near future. But consumers will ask questions about what makes a window energy-efficient even though they are not as savvy as to other issues yet. (As you deal with consumer comments, please correct me if I’m wrong.)

Jackson is correct—this trend definitely is coming, but it takes time to implement many of these sustainability concepts. Some companies are still struggling with small issues such as where to recycle their waste. But it all starts with small steps. So I encourage everyone to start small, and once consumers become more savvy, they will ask you how much energy it took to produce a particular window you’ll be ready with the answer.



DWM Sponsors Seminar on Going Green

Door and Window Manufacturer magazine is sponsoring a seminar at the upcoming International Woodworking Fair in Atlanta aimed at how all segments of the woodworking industry can go green. Attendees will learn what specific steps to take toward becoming an eco-friendly plant or shop. Representatives from the door and window, furniture and cabinet industries will participate in a panel discussion regarding various aspects of this discussion including cost and logistical issues, benefits, items to consider when making this transition, and much more. Tim Petersen, LEED AP, of VT Industries is one of the panelists. Also speaking is Dennis Creech, executive director for the Southface Institute. DWM publisher Tara Taffera will serve as the moderator.

The seminar will be held August 20 from 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.

For more info on IWF, go to www.dwmmag.com/studio to view a video regarding the upcoming show.

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