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May/June 2008

GREEN TILE

A Perfect Fit for the Sustainable,
Greenbuilding Marketplace

TileDealer
Ceramic Tile Distributors Association
100 Roosevelt Road, Bldg. C, Suite 312
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Showroom Seminar: Selling Design Services
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GREEN TILE

A Perfect Fit for the Sustainable,
Greenbuilding Marketplace

Green—it isn't just forest, kelly, or lime anymore. These days, green is more likely to refer to environmentally friendly products and buildings that are not only better for the earth, but also healthier for those using the built space.

Although there may be a learning curve for you and your customers, the green movement is very relevant to flooring and is gaining momentum. Ultimately, the tile industry stands to benefit by this shift toward environmental responsibility because tile is inherently greener than many other flooring options.

by **ZOE VOIGT**

GREEN IS EVERYWHERE AND IT ISN'T GOING AWAY

Terri Boyd, president of Craftsman Court Ceramics in Scottsdale, AZ, says, "I'm seeing people ask for green products more and more. We never had anyone ask before this year, but now more people are requesting it."

In newspapers and consumer publications, environmentally friendly products abound. "I'm seeing more of a demand both in the local shelter magazines and with people coming in and asking for green products," says Boyd. "There've been more articles about it and it really seems to be coming to the forefront."

"I deal mainly with designers and architects, but the end-users are starting to think about sustainable design, too. Designers will be forced to ask about environmentally friendly products."

As the shift toward sustainability and environmental health increases, it will be important to stay informed on the subject. For tile dealers, in fact for everyone in the building industry, the challenge will be in understanding the many aspects to the green movement and all the certifications that go along with it.

GET THE FACTS

Patti Fasan, of Professional Attention to Tile Installations, recommends that tile retailers, "Research and know the facts. Platitudes on how green your product is without substance are everywhere and do not distinguish the store as green, honest or believable. Back up your claims with actual data and don't overstate the product or industry's efforts towards sustainability."

As more consumers, designers and architects turn towards the green movement, they are going to be coming into flooring showrooms armed with more and more knowledge on what is and isn't green.

The trouble is, even though you and your customers may have good intentions regarding the use of green products, it can be challenging to pin down exactly what that means—which suppliers offer green and which are just "green washing," or slapping a meaningless label on their boxes. Many manufacturers claim that their products are green, but how can one be sure?

Fasan suggests that retailers, "Focus on health, safety, air quality, and landfill issues, as ceramic tile achieves an excellent report card in all of these areas."



dards for indoor products, environments, and buildings. Currently, Florida Tile is the only ceramic tile manufacturer with certification from GEI, with certification for 36 products. Laticrete has twenty products certified by GEI, including adhesives, mortars and grouts.

MAPEI has made concerted efforts to improve indoor air quality with technological advances to reduce dust during installation and products that inhibit the growth of mold, mildew and bacteria in many of their products. The company is a member of the US Green Building Council and has developed dozens of environmentally sustainable products that contribute points toward LEED-certified projects.

EMISSIONS

In general, the manufacturing process of ceramic tiles produces some air pollution. The US EPA issued a report on “Emissions from Clay Ceramics Manufacturing Facilities” in 2003. In it, the EPA found that the production of clay ceramic products results in the emissions of pollutants including particulate matter, nitrogen oxides, sulfur oxides, carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, VOCs, and hazardous air pollutants. These are generally produced due to fuel combustion during handling and transfer at the kilns and at some of the dryers. The final processing of ceramics also results in some emissions. Polishing and final grinding, as well as surface coating and chemical treatment of ceramics also causes VOCs.

What is LEED Certification?

One of the terms being bandied about in the press and by many architects is “LEED certification.” The LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Green Building Rating System® is a sustainable building program created by the US Green Building Council. The program is a whole building certification program that is setting standards and gaining momentum. This system does not certify individual products, but they can contribute to the project by earning points.

Ashley Katz, communications coordinator for the U.S. Green Building Council says, “The rating system doesn’t specifically call out tiles. However, projects can earn a point within the rating system if they choose products with either 10% or 20% recycled content. If a tile contains this amount of recycled content, it can be used in the rating system and can help earn a point towards certification. Additionally, materials that are extracted, processed and manufactured regionally can earn a point in the rating system.”

“LEED evaluates buildings in the following areas: sustainable sites, water efficiency, energy and atmosphere, materials and resources, and indoor environmental quality. Each of these categories is considered a credit. For each credit, the rating system identifies the intent, requirement, and technologies or strategies to achieve the credit. One or more points are available within each credit, and points are achieved by meeting specified requirements,” says Katz. LEED credits can also be awarded for innovation in design.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE GREEN?

Greenness isn’t just about recycling. Some of the factors to consider in deciding if a product is green include sustainability, life cycle impact, indoor air quality, emissions, soil erosion, efficient use of water, transportation, and of course, use of recycled materials—of which there are multiple kinds.

INDOOR AIR QUALITY

The US Environmental Protection Agency regulates volatile organic compounds (VOCs). VOCs are emitted as gases from certain solids or liquids and include a variety of chemicals, some of which may have short- and long-term adverse health effects. This is a bigger issue for indoor air quality as concentrations of VOCs can be many times higher inside a building. The good news is that tile usually fares better for air quality than carpeting, wood products and resilient flooring. Some areas of concern might be the installation materials and maintenance products.

There are multiple agencies certifying air quality for various flooring industries. There is Green Label and Green Label Plus for carpeting, FloorScore for resilient floor coverings and GreenGuard Environmental Institute (GEI) for multiple product categories.

A non-profit organization, GEI oversees the GREENGUARD Certification Program. According to their website, GEI is an American National Standards Institute (ANSI) Authorized Standards Developer, and establishes acceptable indoor air stan-



impact of tile, because if it lasts longer, the overall LCA will be better.

“Get a copy of the Tile Council of North America’s Life Cycle Cost survey for ceramic tile to promote both the financial and environmental savings ceramic tile offers,” suggests Fasan.

TRANSPORTATION

“Tile, in general, is a green product because it is of the earth,” says Boyd. “But what about the glazes—does the manufacturer recapture them? Do they contain lead? Do they reuse the clay? What do they do with the water after they’ve used it? You really have to be conscious of all of that. They can make the tile in a conserving way, but then they still have to ship it, which of course uses fossil fuels. So this is a difficult thing to balance.

“Concrete tends to use less energy and has no glaze. Recycled glass is another good one. There is an interesting cellulose product that is made from vegetation and recycled old buildings. The problem is that it is made in Thailand and you have to stick it on a boat and ship it here,” says Boyd.

Obviously, tile is heavy. Tile manufactured closer to its installation site is going to use less fossil fuel than tile imported from the other side of the world. If the raw materials to create the tile are harvested from within 500 miles of the factory, then the US Green Building Council considers it to be more environmentally friendly and awards points toward LEED certification.

Crossville Inc. offers a map showing the 500-mile radius from their manufacturing facilities in Tennessee, allowing builders to see how far the tiles have to travel to get to the building site.

RECYCLED MATERIAL

There are different kinds of recycled material. Post-industrial and post-consumer are the recycled materials that are mentioned most often, usually as a percentage by weight. The LEED program awards points toward the final project for use of recycled materials.

Many glass manufacturers are using recycled post-consumer content. Some reuse old windshields, bottles and other materials. Other manufacturers are able to recapture clay and glazes to recycle materials within the factory. Although this may not technically count toward recycled credits, it does keep these substances out of landfills and water supplies.

Scientific Certification Systems (SCS) awarded certification for the recycled content of Crossville’s EcoCycle line. These certifications can help towards LEED credits. Fireclay Tile, Eco-Tile, Terra Classics and Crossville are mentioned on the Green Building website for their use of recycled materials.

LIFE CYCLE ISSUES

“There is good news for those in the tile industry. When compared to other flooring, such as vinyl and carpeting, tile fares very well,” says Fasan. “Research alternate floor and wall covering choices and know the competition. Ceramic tile has an excellent environmental story and value.”

One of the biggest issues in green construction is the life span of materials. Life cycle assessment (LCA), or cradle-to-grave analysis, is the investigation of the environmental impacts caused by a product’s existence throughout its usable life. The environmental impact of longevity usually far outweighs the impact of the manufacturing process.

Tile’s performance, durability, ease of maintenance and longevity make it a greener choice than most other flooring options as it will last much longer before it needs to be replaced. Other products may wind up in a landfill in six to ten years, whereas tile can easily last 50 years, and of course, some types can last much longer.

In 2005, the Tile Council of North America commissioned Scharf-Godfrey, an independent construction cost consulting firm, to compare tile to other flooring such as vinyl, hardwood, carpet, etc. The study concluded that all types of tile were more durable and therefore less expensive over the course of the product’s life span. This information also applies to the environmental

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Green Choices Multiply

Environmentally-friendly building is here to stay and an increasingly important option for all homeowners, buyers and remodelers. Market trends revealed at the recent International Builders Show in Orlando confirmed the consumer's continued interest in green building products. Gopal Ahluwalia, NAHB's vice president of research, reported that new home buyers are interested in anything "green." Gayle Butler, editor-in-chief of *Better Homes and Gardens*, agreed, reporting that in a recent study by the magazine, more than half of the respondents wanted to consider green building and remodeling options.

What makes a product green, or environmentally friendly, often has much to do with where or how it's made as well as what it is (or is not) made of. Here is just a handful of green products that represent the worldwide impact of greenbuilding.

Crossville's EcoCycle™ Series of eight Porcelain Stone™ tile products have a certified recycled content of 40 percent. Scientific Certification Systems (SCS) confirmed that EcoCycle meets the necessary criteria for recycled content claims based on internationally recognized standards and guidance established by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the US Green Building Council's (USGBC) LEED™ Rating System.

In addition, Crossville will be introducing a new recycled glass product for walls, countertops and floors in the second quarter of 2008. The line comprises five sizes and a 15-color palette, designed by Barbara Schirmeister, which includes white, black and red, as well as soft blues, greens and ambers. It will be available in three finishes: clear, frosted and iridescent.

Hakatai Enterprises has improved and expanded its popular Ashland glass tile to include the new Ashland-e series comprised of 30 to 70 percent recycled glass from bottles and/or other waste glass that would otherwise enter the solid waste stream. The new series offers architects, specifiers, designers and homeowners an environmentally-friendly glass mosaic tile option for commercial or residential projects.

EcoDomo LLC, an importer and distributor specializing in green architectural details, offers Recycled Leather Tiles now listed in GreenSpec®. They are hand-stitched in the United States by Amish artisans. The tiles are a completely "green" product that uses scraps of leather from BMW car seat manufacturers and other tanneries that would otherwise go to landfills. The leather scraps are shredded and bound together again using natural rubber and Acacia tree sap. The process is similar to the making of recycled paper.

Green building applies to more than the tile itself. Increasingly, the materials and products used in the surface preparation and installation of tile and stone products have benefited from new technologies that result in the manufacture of greener products. For example, most MAPEI products qualify for LEED credits. In addition, MAPEI has added its BioBlock technology to select products to help inhibit the growth of various types of odor- and stain-causing mold, mildew and bacteria and promote healthier indoor air quality.

Photo courtesy EcoDomo LLC



Cork underlayments have some environmental benefits that most other products cannot match. It is a truly renewable and sustainable resource. Unlike solid wood, composite wood products, paper and other renewable resources; no trees are cut down to make cork products. In fact, Cork Oak trees in Portugal, Spain and most other producing countries in the Mediterranean area are protected by law. To harvest cork, the bark is stripped from about 1/3 of the tree every 9 to 12 years. This process actually enhances the life span of the tree. The manufacturing process of cork products also produces a near zero waste stream and results in no toxic emissions. The bottom line in green building is that some cork products meet many of the key criteria of the organizations that promote and support green building initiatives.

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