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BD&C News & Trends

Top 10 Green Building Products

Laboratory casework made from straw-based particleboard and a spray-foam insulation derived from soybean oil — these are among the winners of BuildingGreen's 2003 Top 10 Green Products awards.

The Brattleboro, Vt.-based publisher of the GreenSpec product directory and Environmental Building News evaluated hundreds of new products to compile its second annual list. GreenSpec is considered to be one of the industry's most comprehensive directories of green building products, with more than 1,750 listings.

The winners were announced this week at the U.S. Green Building Council's Greenbuild Conference in Pittsburgh.

EnvironOxide pigment is an iron oxide pigment recovered from abandoned coal mine drainage. Hoover Color Corp., Hiwassee, Va., produces a range of nontoxic, nonbleeding pigments that can be used as a colorant for concrete, cement block, paint, wood stain, and brick. www.hoovercolor.com

What makes this product green? Post-industrial recycled material; reduces material use; restores ecosystems.

BioBase 501 soy-based foam insulation is a low-density, open-cell polyurethane spray-foam insulation derived in part from soybean oil. Developed by Bio-Based Systems, Spring Valley, Ill., the insulation performs like petroleum-based open-cell polyurethane foam, but the polyol component of the two-part polyurethane consists of approximately 40% soy oil. www.biobased.net

What makes this product green? Rapidly renewable products; reduces energy loads.

LEED credits: EA Prerequisite 2 — Minimum Energy Performance; EA Credit 1 — Optimize Energy Performance; MR Credit 6 — Rapidly Renewable Materials

MemBrain is a "smart" vapor retarder made from a polyamide (nylon-6) film. Manufactured by CertainTeed Corp., Valley Forge, Pa., the transparent film changes permeability according to the relative humidity, varying from less than one perm at 20% relative humidity, to more than 10 perms at 70% relative humidity and over 20 perms at 95% relative humidity. This capability allows the vapor retarder to protect against condensation in the winter while allowing for the drying of the building envelope in the summer, when humidity levels are typically much higher. www.certainteed.com

What makes this product green? Blocks entry and spread of pollutants.

American Pride latex paint, from Southern Diversified Products, Hattiesburg, Miss., is a line of low-odor interior latex paint that uses

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acrylated castor oil as the building block. Southern Diversified Products, 601-264-0442

What makes this product green? Rapidly renewable products; releases minimal pollutants.

LEED credits: IEQ Credit 3 — Construction IAQ Management Plan; IEQ Credit 4 — Low-Emitting Materials

Keim Mineral silicate paints from Keim Mineral Systems boast extraordinary durability (a lifespan of 100+ years has been reported) and minimal release of pollutants. Unlike conventional coatings, mineral silicate paints do not form surface films that can flake off; instead, they soak into and permanently bond with the substrate. www.keimmineralsystems.com

What makes this product green? Durable or low-maintenance product; reduces construction impacts; releases minimal pollutants.

LEED credits: IEQ Credit 4 — Low-Emitting Materials

EnviroGT wall and corner guards are made from 100% post-industrial recycled high-density polyethylene (HDPE) and a combination of 100% recycled HDPE and Forest Stewardship Council-certified ash. Unlike most wall and corner guards, which are made almost exclusively from vinyl, the EnviroGT line from InPro Corp., Muskego, Wis., contains no vinyl. www.inprocorp.com

What makes this product green? Alternative to vinyl; uses FSC-certified wood and post-industrial recycled material.

LEED credits: MR Credit 4 — Recycled Content; MR Credit 7 — Certified Wood

Straw-based laboratory casework has been developed by Case Systems, one of the largest U.S. manufacturers of high-pressure-laminate laboratory casework. In 2003, the company switched its entire manufacturing process from wood-fiber particleboard to straw-based particleboard (utilizing Dow BioProducts' WoodStalk product). The casework has improved moisture resistance and does not off-gas formaldehyde. www.casesystems.com

What makes this product green? Agricultural waste material; releases minimal pollutants.

LEED credits: MR Credit 4 — Recycled Content; MR Credit 6 — Rapidly Renewable Materials; IEQ Credit 4 — Low-Emitting Materials

The Mirra office chair was designed for Herman Miller by Studio 7.5 of Berlin, Germany, in cooperation with McDonough Braungart Design Chemistry (MBDC), Charlottesville, Va., using an ecological design protocol developed by MBDC. The chair has a minimum number of components, most of which are recyclable and are made from relatively benign materials. www.hermanmiller.com

What makes this product green? Designed for disassembly or recycling; alternative to hazardous components; alternative to PVC; releases minimal pollutants.

The Taco Hot Water D'MAND System provides on-demand hot-water circulation. In a typical home, 9,000 gallons of water per year are wasted by homeowners waiting for hot water to reach the fixtures. Taco Inc.'s electronically activated water-pumping system quickly delivers hot water, while returning water that has been sitting in the hot-water pipes back to the hot-water tank. www.taco-hvac.com

What makes this product green? Conserves water; uses energy efficiently.

LEED credits: EA Prerequisite 2 — Minimum Energy Performance; EA Credit 1 — Optimize Energy Performance; WE Credit 3 — Water Use Reduction

The Toto EcoPower sensor-activated faucet, from Japanese plumbing manufacturer Toto, uses a tiny hydro-powered generator to keep a manganese dioxide lithium battery charged for up to 10 years. Conventional