

Sustainability in San Antonio

Green and Sustainability Take Center Stage at AAMA's Fall Conference

By Penny Stacey

The American Architectural Manufacturers Association (AAMA) held its fall conference September 21-24 in San Antonio at the Hyatt Regency Hill Country Resort. And one topic seemed to prevail throughout all the sessions: the ideas of green product certification and sustainability and how to promote them.

Opening Session

Rich Walker, president of the association, opened the general session meeting with several updates, including one on the Precipitation Imaging Probe for which AAMA has been providing funding to assist in the study of hurricanes. The device was deployed during both of the most recent hurricanes, Ike and Hannah.

"They hope to start getting some good data from that," he said.

One popular topic throughout the conference was the group's green certification program, which currently is under development. Walker advised he has meetings planned with both the U.S. Green Building Council and the Green Building Initiative in order to get feedback on the AAMA program as it develops.

"We don't want to go too far down our road without having their input," he said.

Glass Cleaning

The Glass Care and Cleaning Task Group, chaired by Tracy Rogers of Edgetech, worked during the fall conference to pin down the scope of the newly

formed group. In working on this task, first-time attendee Kathy Krafska-Harkema of Pella Corp. brought up some concerns that she felt need to be addressed by the group's work.

"You're going to see a lot of green products and issues with sealants down the road," she warned.

However, Rogers reminded the group that currently, that's beyond the scope.

"With that you're getting beyond the glass," he said.

Much discussion also developed about working with the Glass Association of North America (GANA), which also has produced several documents about glass cleaning, to build on what the two groups have created. However, many noted that much of GANA's work has focused on a concern about using metal scrapers (in response to the efforts of the International Window Cleaners Association), and what this does to the glass.

"I think [this brochure] should be a more positive thing," said Margaret Webb, executive director of the Insulating Glass Manufacturers Alliance (IGMA). "I think I can say comfortably that IGMA wants no part of that battle."

After much discussion, Rogers narrowed down the group's options to:

- Using the GANA documents to develop a brochure;
- Reprinting GANA's documents (with permission);
- Focusing on framing materials, too;
- Focusing on architectural and commercial or residential, or both; or
- Updating AAMA's already printed brochure "Caring for Your Windows and Doors" to incorporate glass.

Mike Burriss of Cytec reminded the group the value of including the framing system in the final document.



AAMA held a networking reception, complete with tabletop displays provided by suppliers, to offer attendees a chance to relax and catch up.



AAMA's green certification council meeting was one of the most popularly attended.

"If you're not going to include the system, what's the value in it coming from AAMA?" he asked.

Webb noted that Krafka-Harkema's concerns about the sealants and what cleaners might do to these would be of interest as well.

"Do we want something around cleaning or protecting the glass?" Rogers asked, in response to these comments.

Krafka-Harkema also suggested branching out into other communications, such as the AAMA website and possibly video demonstrations, which led to a vote to change the scope. Tim McGlinchy of GED Integrated motioned to change the scope to include "communications" rather than a brochure, and to say that the communications would "address," rather than detail, the proper cleaning of glass. PPG's Paul Bush seconded the motion.

The group ended by deciding upon a basic outline for a brochure or other communications:

- Provide do's;
- Provide don'ts;
- Add tempered glass to the products covered;
- Address specific methods for cleaning glass; and
- Provide a reference to the manufac-

turer's recommendations for cleaning.

In an effort to develop specific methods, the group will review various manufacturers' instructions prior to its next meeting.

"We may find out when we're done that we're way beyond this brochure," Rogers added.

Aluminum and Low-E

The Aluminum Low-E Task Group held its first meeting during the fall conference. Chaired by Robin Randall of TRACO, the group worked to narrow its scope, which, prior to the meeting, read: To develop a specification describing test procedures and performance requirements for high-performing coatings that result in a low-emissivity surface when applied to aluminum extrusions and panels for architectural products.

After much debate, the group decided to remove "high-performing" from the scope so that the specification could include various types of coatings; in addition, the group debated whether to reference AAMA 2603, 2604 or 2605 in the specification.

"[Eliminating high-performing] eliminates the 2603, 2604 and 2605 issue," pointed out Raj Goyal of Goyal and Associates.

Green Specification

Rogers, who also chairs the green and sustainability specification development task group, introduced the group's first draft of a possible specification document. While the draft was rough in form, it included a list of the possible items that might receive points under the green certification, and detailed a matrix in which a ratio is calculated, resulting in two final "green" scores—one for features and one for performance. Performance includes items such as air/water/structural performance, while features include such items as recyclability, recycled content, etc.

Much discussion ensued after the introduction of the document about what makes a product sustainable.

"I don't know how structural performance has anything to do with sustainability," said one attendee.

"It's because it affects the life cycle of the product," Rogers said.

The group also had some discussion about whether the glass and framing material should be considered separately when it comes to "recycled content" of the product, though no conclusion was reached. Many were concerned about the basics, such as what constitutes recycled content. Currently, the draft references FTC 260 for identifying what is consid-

ered recycled content.

The task group hopes to have the specification balloted early next year.

Three Different Green Building Programs

A panel of three experts took the stage to discuss various green building programs available to the construction industry: the U.S. Green Building Council's (USGBC) LEED program, the National Association of Homebuilders' (NAHB) Green Building Program and the Green Globes program.

Heather Holdridge of Builders Energy Rater in San Antonio, whose company certifies homes for LEED and other energy certifications, headed the discussion of the LEED program. She explained that the program is voluntary and consensus-based and that credits are given for a variety of factors, such as indoor air quality, energy efficiency, daylighting, whether the building uses salvaged materials and more.

She warned, though, that the program as it stands today will soon change.

"There are about to be a lot of changes," she warned, "and the only way to know about them is to become a member."

Holdridge advised that the USGBC has local and national chapters across the United States, and that some of these are even free to join.

Amber Wood of the NAHB Research Center followed Holdridge with an explanation of the NAHB's green building program. She noted that, with regard to fenestration, the green homebuilding guidelines do require ENERGY STAR® windows or the equivalent.

"The big picture is that NAHB is also developing a fenestration process to go along with this," she added.

Kevin Stover described the Green Globes program, noting that being involved in a green program of any sort can help a company's public relations effort.

"It's a positive image for an organization to be [looking at green] today," he said.

But, he said, with so many options

available, it's important to figure out what path to take first.

"We encourage you to establish a goal early and see what the best approach is," Stover said.

Green Globes looks at a variety of aspects of fenestration in its projects, such as overall building energy performance, thermal performance, daylighting to reduce energy use and enhance indoor environments, life-cycle assessment and even whether a building is designed to minimize bird collisions. The process by which a product was created also is very important to Green Globes.

"We feel process leads to excellence and performance," he added.

One popular question, initially raised by Rogers, was how the programs might recognize an AAMA green certification rating, if at all, and whether it might be implemented in the programs. Most were favorable to this idea.

"All of the programs mention ENERGY STAR labels, so yes, all the programs would be open to putting another easily defined label in the programs," Holdridge said.

Wood agreed.

"The [NAHB] standard is very amenable to referring to other certifications," she said.

Green and Sustainability Committee

The green and sustainability committee held one of the largest meetings of the conference. Committee chair Steve Fronck of Wausau Window & Wall Systems heard reports from the various subcommittee and task group chairs.

Among the highlights of the meeting was a report from Dave Moyer of Architectural Testing, chair of the procedural guide task group, who noted that the group is in a bit of a holding pattern, trying to develop a procedure for a specification that's not complete yet.

"The procedural guide task group is doing what we can, but we're kind of the tail on the dog and the dog isn't there," he said. "I'm wondering if we might be a little

premature in our efforts."

Moyer recommended that the group hold on its efforts until the spec is complete. Fronck called on Rogers to explain how long he expected the specification to take. Rogers said that with many comments and balloting still in the future, it likely would not be complete for at least a year.

John Lewis, AAMA technical director, expressed some concern about this timeframe.

"It looks like we're looking at a year and a half or so until this is complete, but we could be facing a different world a year from now," Lewis said.

Brent Slaton of Keymark, who chairs the aluminum sustainability task group, questioned the motivation to push the program through so quickly.

"I'd think we'd like to give it a little thought and do it right the first time," he said.

Fronck agreed.

Lewis noted, though, that the program that emerges first often is the leader in a given area; for example, he noted that of the Green Globes, the NAHB and USGBC green building programs, he expects eventually the USGBC's is the one that will last, as it was the first to make strides.

"Being the leader in this for fenestration is what's important," Lewis said.

But, Rogers argued, the way the process for developing standards within the association has been set up prevents rushing a document through—and with reason.

"The process doesn't allow it," he said. "I could ask the people involved to put their thoughts aside in the interest of time, but that will end up taking longer."

AAMA's 72nd annual conference will be held February 22-25, 2009, in Coronado, Calif., at the Loews Coronado Bay Resort near San Diego. ■

the author



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