

# Using recycled materials 'greens' up your commercial building

## Recycling is good for your building

Did you know that recycling paper products reduces air pollutants by 75 percent and water pollutants by 67 percent? A ton of recycled paper saves 17 trees and three cubic yards of landfill space. Recycling aluminum saves 95 percent of the energy used to produce aluminum from raw materials.

Buying recycled products is an essential part of closing the loop on the recycling process. As builders, we can play a major role in helping to reduce waste and promote recycling by encouraging our customers to ask for recycled products.

As you consider your next renovation or new construction project, you may want to consider using recycled materials in as many areas as possible. Using recycled materials does not provide the quick return on investment that is generated by other energy saving features, but it does provide high value by limiting the adverse effects on our environment. And recycling is a great morale booster for your employees and community, and creates positive public image for your company.

Using recycled materials reduces the demand for raw materials. By minimizing what is discarded from construction materials and business operations, you are able to maximize landfills and protect the environment by removing harmful substances from the waste stream.



**GOING GREEN**  
with Joe Bontrager  
LEED Accredited Professional

Here are just a few recycled building materials that are available today:



## Green Flooring

Look for environmentally friendly floor coverings. Carpet, linoleum, vinyl composition tile and even hardwoods can be environmentally friendly options.

Carpet tiles are a great choice because they are manufactured from 90 percent post-consumer waste from recycled tires. The cost is approximately 2 percent more than conventional carpet, however, when you include the ability to lay carpet in exact quantities and eliminate carpet waste from 12-foot-wide rolls, tiles are less expensive than standard rolls for many applications. Using carpet tiles also allows for easy

replacement of areas that become soiled or damaged with use, rather than replacing an entire room.

Another environmentally friendly flooring option is ionized polymeric flooring. IPF is made from recycled materials and uses naturally occurring ionized minerals. These negatively charged ions attract

positively charged airborne antigens to the ground. In layman's terms, the flooring reduces the number of germs, odors, volatile organic compounds (VOC) and other contaminants floating in the air. Contaminates are pulled to the ground by the negative ions and are removed from the room through normal floor cleaning and maintenance.

## Green Countertops

Recycled glass and concrete countertops are another renewable resource available for your next building project. The countertops are LEED certified, highly durable and

VOC-free. Recycled countertops are produced in about 30 different colors and many have a Cradle-to-Cradle Gold Certification from the U.S. Green Building Council. That means they are environmentally safe, the composite materials are non-toxic and non-harmful, there is minimal use of water and energy in production, they are manufactured from recycled materials and can be recycled at the end of their productive life, and the companies manufacturing the product use renewable energy and practice environmental responsibility.

There are hundreds of other recycled materials you might consider in your next building project that will conserve our natural resources, reduce the demand for raw materials and protect the health and environment from harmful substances. We encourage you to look for renewable products and help keep our air and water free of pollutants. ■

*Joe Bontrager is a LEED Certified Project Manager for J&S Construction Company Inc. in Cookeville, TN. J&S is a locally owned, full-service construction company with more than 52 years' experience building projects, relationships and trust. It has completed more than 90,000 square feet of LEED certified buildings and over 5,000 unique projects with more than a 75 percent repeat customer rate. J&S employs 100 of the finest craftsmen and trade professionals, including a number of nationally recognized and award winning architects and engineers.*

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