

Building Green with Concrete

GREEN BUILDING

Recently the construction industry has seen an increased emphasis on sustainable development and green building design by government, design professionals and building owners.

Green Building addresses three key issues: Resource Use, Ecological Loading and Health Effects. Material choices are a major component of the Resource Use issue, and include topics such as extraction, processing, transport, installation, operation, disposal, re-use, and re-cycling. They can also affect Ecological Loading and Health Effects through considerations such as waste management, off-gassing and VOCs.

LEED

A measurement system is required if buildings are to be evaluated for their environmental performance. LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) is one such system that is rapidly gaining recognition as a 'green building' design tool by the Green Buildings BC initiative of the provincial government, GVRD and City of Vancouver (LEED BC).

There are many concrete solutions available under each of the five environmental categories that will assist building designers to achieve the sought after LEED level of certification.

When considering LEED as a measurement system for the selection of green building design components, it is worth noting that the current LEED does not take into account important environmental impacts such as the durability of the structure. Durability of materials is generally recognized as a green building issue, as illustrated by the GVRD Best Practice Guide for Material Choices for Sustainable Design, Recommendation 3:

"Select durable long-life materials requiring little or no additional finishes and minimal maintenance." The use of durable concrete and masonry as structural, envelope and interior finish materials will conserve resources over the building lifecycle and reduce waste. The concept of using these products, which are made from plentiful natural materials and can last for the

life of a building, contrasts sharply with the trendy recycling or rapidly renewable approaches used for shorter service-life materials. These durability benefits are best identified through the use of a life-cycle analysis of maintenance, repair and replacement requirements."

Concrete's long-lasting and dependable nature is one of its best-known qualities. However, the additional ways that it contributes to the triple bottom line of social, environmental and economic fabric of our society are often overlooked. The impact of these three key factors must be determined over the entire lifecycle of the structure - from cradle to grave.

Due to its flexibility in design, affordability, energy performance and environmental soundness concrete is, and will continue to be, a cornerstone of BC's Construction Industry. 🏠

For more information, please contact:
Concrete and Masonry Green Building Committee of BC 604-269-0582 / 604-881-2522 / 604-291-1458

Saturday Mornings
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