

The green side of tiles



What makes a construction product "green"?

What are its characteristics of eco-sustainability?

The two categories of users - private customers and dealers on the one hand, and architects and specifiers on the other - have different expectations on this front, but both are based on the same characteristics of the materials.

The first group believes that a material is eco-sustainable if its production process has low environmental impact and it enhances the salubrity of the building it is used in. The priority of architects and specifiers, by contrast, is to identify products which have already obtained the necessary environmental certification - of which LEED credits are currently the most in demand - to allow developers to certify the low environmental impact of their buildings.

Because of their physical and application characteristics, ceramic tiles meet all of these requirements in full. Thanks to the latest technology, modern production processes use less water, minimise energy wastage, reduce fuel consumption and re-use waste products from ceramic raw materials and other industries. What's more, installation systems have very low environmental impact and do not involve the use of harmful substances.

And it's well known that ceramic



tiles are one of the healthiest covering materials around. They do not release volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and their maintenance does not normally require the use of hazardous chemicals. Another characteristic that makes ceramic tiles environmentally friendly is their long service life, which makes a big contribution to reducing environmental impact over the complete life-cycle.

The cost of the life-cycle of ceramic tiles (i.e. the sum of the total costs of design, construction, installation, maintenance and decommissioning) is in fact lower than that of all other coverings, as demonstrated by a study commissioned by the TCNA from the independent agency Scharf-Goodfrey.

The results of the research, which can be downloaded from www.tilethenaturalchoice.com, show that the average cost of ceramic tiles is 0.35 dollars per year, as against 0.98 dollars for concrete and 1.8 dollars for carpet, the latter of which is one of the most widely used floor coverings in North America.

The green characteristics of ceramic tiles, combined with their outstanding aesthetic potential, therefore make them an ideal material for interior finishings. Capable of meeting the requirements of individual consumers and the most discerning architects alike, they also contribute to reducing man's impact on the environment. X

THE TCNA GREEN INITIATIVE

www.tilethenaturalchoice.com

"Tile, the natural choice" is a campaign being promoted by the Green Initiative Committee, a committee formed by the Tile Council of North America to sensitise North American buyers to the eco-sustainable qualities of

ceramic tiles and to the industry's commitment to safeguarding the environment.

To support ceramic companies in obtaining environmental product certifications such as LEED, CHPS and ICC700, the TCNA has also provided the industry with a laboratory equipped to conduct various tests,

including checking for the presence of volatile organic compounds, measuring solar reflectance index (SRI) and determining anti-microbe properties. The TCNA is also setting up a voluntary certification scheme for certifying the sustainability of ceramic products and installation materials.

STONEPEAK AND THE USGBC HEADQUARTERS

StonePeak Ceramics' 12x24 Limestone Gray porcelain tile has been chosen for the lobby and reception area of the new US Green Building Council headquarters. The new headquarters, located in Washington DC, is designed to meet the new LEED-CI rating system and achieve the Platinum score. It is the first project to obtain

certification under the latest version of the LEED green building rating system.

The USGBC outgrew its previous office space as a result of exponential growth over the past few years. Today, more than 35,000 projects are participating in the LEED system, comprising over 5.6 billion square feet of construction space in all 50 states

and 91 countries. The expansion of the USGBC headquarters is reflective of the green building industry, which is projected to grow to \$60 billion by 2010. Graziano Verdi, President and CEO, is proud that StonePeak Ceramics has been chosen to participate in such a prestigious project, which is paving the way for the future of green building.

