

Issues

MARKET TRANSFORMATION

- Overview
- Health Care
- Pharos Project
- Healthy Homes
- U.S. Green Building Council

TARGET MATERIALS

- Overview
- PVC Plastic
- Pressure Treated Wood
- Plastic Lumber
- Formaldehyde
- Biopolymers

LIFE CYCLE ANALYSIS

- Overview

FOUNDATIONS

- Environmental Justice

Search

Healthy Building News

Sign up to receive our biweekly email with insights and analysis on building materials and environmental health.

Current Newsletter:

[Transparently NeoCon?](#) (June 10, 2013)

- [Newsletter Archive](#)

AN INSIDE LOOK AT EMERGING MARKET AND POLITICAL TRENDS

Healthy Building News

Transparently NeoCon?

By **Bill Walsh**, Executive Director
Healthy Building Network

June 10, 2013

The Carnegie company is introducing a new green product line of wall coverings — [Bio-Based Xorel](#). With a Cradle-to-Cradle Gold certification, third party confirmation of 60-85% plant-based content, manufacturer take-back program, and a [Health Product Declaration on file](#), this is a heavyweight addition to the green product showcase. But it will not debut this fall at Greenbuild, the world's largest green building conference. And it didn't launch last month at the Living Future, the world's preeminent deep-green building *un*conference. It will be introduced this week at NeoCon, the building industry's preeminent "un-green" conference. Now that's interesting.



Bill Walsh

Carnegie's decision to unveil its industry-leading green product at NeoCon is one of several initiatives at this year's conference where manufacturers, responding to customer interest in content disclosure and related health concerns, are leading the discussion on content disclosure, and leap-frogging over the [chemical industry's destructive attacks on efforts to include transparency and hazard avoidance in the LEED rating system](#).

This year's NeoCon program boasts as many as ten seminars dedicated to material sustainability, including such titles as *The ABC's of Chemical Toxicity and Materials*, and *Solid Evidence: New Transparency Tools Offer Proof Against Product Greenwashing*. According to one presenter, new transparency tools are needed to navigate a marketplace in which "[a]pproximately 95% of green consumer products are mired in false advertising."^[1]

But what's really eye-catching are two sessions convened by leading furniture makers. The Herman Miller company has organized a session entitled *Aligning Action on Chemicals of Concern*. This panel features HBN's Policy Director Tom Lent, and Dr. Arlene Blum, a prominent leader in the nation-wide effort to remove highly toxics and unnecessary flame retardant chemicals from furniture. The session highlights the potential for successful collaboration all along the supply chain to produce healthier products, and more effective policies and standards. Teknion, a Canadian company that supplies a "Red List Free" product to Living Building Challenge projects, will present *Common Sense Sustainability: Tools For Better Workplaces*. That session will highlight the Pharos Project, the Living Building Challenge and the Health Product Declaration. Last year Teknion and Herman Miller also pioneered the Health Product Declaration in its pilot project.

With their focus on "common sense" and "aligning action" on toxic chemicals, savvy manufacturers are reflecting the reality that increased disclosure and proactive dialogue with their customers can lead to far more productive results than the stonewalling tactics encouraged by the chemical industry. Indeed, manufacturers that have invested most in improving the healthfulness of their products, their manufacturing facilities and their supply chain are finding that increased disclosure positively differentiates their products and their brand from the uncultured herd of greenwashing competitors.

Asked about his decision to announce Biobased Xorel at NeoCon and provide a Health Product Declaration, Carnegie President Cliff Goldman said: "Neocon is the historical and symbolic centerpiece of the commercial furnishings industry. Real progress can only be made when architects and designers specifying materials for offices, hotels and schools understand the importance of material inputs and transparency."

That's common-sense sustainability.

A Man of Good Cheer



Robert West, a long-time friend of HBN and collaborator of Blue Vinyl Director Judith Helfand, died last week from a brain tumor. Robert founded Working Films, an organization dedicated to helping filmmakers engage in meaningful activism with communities featured in their documentaries. He brought *Blue Vinyl* to Greenbuild 2005 in Austin, TX, and optimism everywhere. He lived in a renovated firehouse in Wilmington, North Carolina. He was 60. He looked 50, or maybe 45. He helped scores of filmmakers get their message out to activists, and scores of activists make the most out of compelling films that brought attention to their message. He had a special compassion for challenges faced by gay teenagers coming out in an often hostile world. He lived his last year with such impeccable grace. And he always signed off with the most memorable valediction: *Be of Good Cheer*, he would say. *For those who would like to honor Robert's life and legacy, contributions can be made to the Robert West Reel Engagement Fund.*

Footnotes

[1] See seminar description for: *Solid Evidence: New Transparency Tools Offer Proof Against Product Greenwashing*, Tuesday June 11, 2013 @ 2:30 PM
Available at: <http://www.neocon.com/Neocon/index.cfm/education/seminars/seminar-descriptions/>

© Copyright 2012, Healthy Building Network. All Rights Reserved.