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ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM [ESP]

WHAT IS THE KCMA ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM?

The Environmental Stewardship Program [ESP] is a voluntary certification program to encourage cabinet industry policies and practices that benefit and sustain the environment. Administered by the Kitchen Cabinet Manufacturers Association [KCMA], the program is designed to encourage environmental improvement by recognizing manufacturers that employ the use of environmentally responsible materials and manufacturing processes. The program also rewards those companies that seek to minimize the environmental impact on their local communities by recycling wastes and using low emission coatings.

WHICH MASTERBRAND CABINETS (MBCI) BRANDS ARE ESP CERTIFIED?

The following brands manufactured by MBCI are certified: Aristokraft, Diamond, Diamond Reflections, Decorá, Schrock, Kemper, Omega/Dynasty, Thomasville, Kitchen Classics, Somersby, and HomeCrest.

HOW DO MANUFACTURERS QUALIFY FOR CERTIFICATION?

Companies are rated annually on 18 different criteria in categories including air quality, product resource management, process resource management, environmental stewardship, and community relations. To be certified, companies must attain 80 points out of a possible 105 points on these various criteria.

HOW ARE QUALIFIED MANUFACTURERS RECOGNIZED?

Recognition comes in the form of ESP certification. Certified manufacturers can use this ESP designation as part of their sales and marketing initiatives.

WHEN WAS THIS PROGRAM INTRODUCED?

The KCMA ESP version – specific to cabinets – was introduced in 2006. National Association of Home Builders [NAHB] Green Home Building Guidelines, adopted January 2005, provided the model for the KCMA Environmental Stewardship Program. The Guidelines are the first national program of residential green building standards.



WHY DEVELOP A NATIONAL "GREEN" PROGRAM?

The past decade witnessed a growing interest in environmentally friendly products for use in new home construction and remodeling projects. However, as various industries, government and other associations responded by creating their own certifications and standards, the task of specifying "green" products became increasingly more complex and confusing for both contractors and consumers. For example, to label a wooden cabinet as "environmentally friendly" required knowing the source(s) of wood, the design mix of materials, the manufacturing processes and their yield, and the geographic location of the application.

NAHB and KCMA were concerned that dozens of local municipal and state "green" programs were emerging, often with different standards and conflicting objectives. They were equally concerned that not all builders and consumers would have access to the same products and technology, which would limit participation.

Therefore, to help reduce the complexity and ensure highest level of participation nationally, the ESP program was designed to establish a high level of environmental responsibility that would be available to everyone, not just a small percentage of the market. As such, the program is based on the use of acceptable products and technology generally available to builders and remodelers at all levels.

WHY WERE THE KCMA STANDARDS DEVELOPED?

While cabinets are a relatively small part in the determination of whether a home meets NAHB Green Guidelines, there are still some important aspects of cabinet construction that can contribute to the overall rating.

HOW WERE THE KCMA STANDARDS DEVELOPED?

This KCMA Environmental Stewardship Program is modeled on the NAHB Green Home Guidelines program. It not only looks at the product and its construction but the activities in the manufacturing facility and its involvement in the community. The KCMA staff and ESP taskforce reviewed established and emerging "green" home standards as well as available materials and technologies to define traits of environmentally friendly products.

ARE THERE OTHER GREEN HOME CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS?

There are existing "green" certification programs primarily for commercial building at the municipal and state levels. Probably the most prominent residential standard other than the NAHB guidelines will be the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design [LEED] for Homes Program, currently being developed by the US Green Building Council. This is a good program except that it is expected to be very limited in impact, affecting probably only about the upper 20% of new homes. The KCMA program is intended to target all builders and homes, and help meet the goal of affordability.