

Keeping business green

Collins Products' FreeForm named one of the nation's 10 best green building products

By MEGAN DOYLE

H&N Staff Writer

Sunday, December 2, 2007

Collins Products' newest particleboard product was named one of the top 10 green building products in the country.

The product, a particleboard called FreeForm, was named one of the top 10 green building products by BuildingGreen, publisher of the GreenSpec Directory. The products are judged on whether they save energy, save water, are made from recycled or recovered materials, avoid hazardous manufacturing or disposal of materials or aid in the siting of solar energy systems.



H&N photo by Andrew Mariman

Chris Bailey, sales manager of Collins Pine Particleboard, found out Nov. 8 a product his plant produces, FreeForm, won an award for complying with strict environmental requirements at a Greenbuild Conference in Chicago.

FreeForm particleboard

FreeForm was launched in December and is just beginning to be distributed, said Chris Bailey, sales manager of Collins Pine Particleboard, based in Klamath Falls.

It is a particleboard made from wood waste and melamine-based resin. It has

no added urea-formaldehyde, which is the common binding agent for particleboard.

Particleboard is used in cabinetry, store fixtures and in desks, Bailey said.

"It's really a ubiquitous product," he said. "People don't think about it because they don't see it."

Public demand

Thermo Pressed Laminates, also based in Klamath Falls, buys the particleboard from Collins and is a value-added distributor. The new melamine-resin product is great for thermo-fused melamine laminates, said Pat McNeal, TPL president.

"That's certainly being demanded by the public," he said.

He expects the new product to be just as high a quality as the other products TPL purchases from Collins.

"I think Collins consistently makes the highest quality particle board in the western United States," McNeal said.

The products can be used for projects looking for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design credits. Credit is earned if the project is within 500 miles of the manufacturer.

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FreeForm is not kept in the particleboard plant for long before it is shipped.

Collins produces the product about every two weeks.

"It's still a small part of our product," Bailey said, but he hopes to see it grow.

A bit more pricey

The new particleboard is more expensive than industry-graded particleboard also produced at the plant. It costs about an additional 30 cents per square foot, or an estimated \$12 per square foot for a normal kitchen remodel.

Bailey expects other particleboard manufacturers to catch on, especially since more requirements are being imposed on the industry, including a California law that takes effect Jan. 1, 2009.

Collins also is undergoing tests to produce a formaldehyde-free particleboard and products with low volatile organic compounds.

Tests on soy-based glue products can be produced, but not at the same rate as the other products, and phenolic-based glues were not up to the same quality standards as FreeForm and industry-graded products.

"The technology is not there yet," Bailey said.

That's not to say they will stop trying to find new environmental-friendly products.

"One of the things we talk about is lessening our footprint," Bailey said.