

## Resumen 137

### Environmental Opportunities to market Ceramic Tile

Author: Patti Fasan, Professional Attention to Tile Installations, Canada  
[pattif@shaw.ca](mailto:pattif@shaw.ca)

Keyword: Environment / ceramic / marketing / design

Environmental issues have never been as front and center in the US consumer's conscientiousness as they have been throughout 2007. Al Gore's "Inconvenient Truth" and its Oscar winning status is testimony to this. In fact according to Richard Fedrizzi, the CEO of the United States Green Building Council (USGBC) responsible for the LEED program, growth in sustainable concepts and architecture has moved far beyond the fringes and is one of the leading prime directives of the development industry. Fedrizzi stated in a recent seminar the "smoking gun which will propel Green Building initiatives is an overwhelming demand by users for healthy, safe and productive schools, hospitals, offices and homes". Material selection and alternatives can play a significant role in achieving this goal.

Previously, sustainable concepts have been focused on energy and water conservation and stewardship. Past emphasis has been placed on locally produced material and products with re-cycled industrial and post consumer content. Neither of these directives is especially favorable to assessing ceramic tile as a "green material". The new consumer driven focus on improved air quality and reduction of toxic by-products could substantially benefit the ceramic tile industry and bring a strong spotlight on the health and safety benefits inherent in natural clay tile. These aspects have to date been over-shadowed or rejected due to alleged high-embodied energy claims due to overseas transport and unacknowledged recycled industrial content.

The ceramic industry has not mounted a substantial argument to the lack of comprehensive life cycle analysis which should take into account the durability of tile compared to other non-durable surface materials. Comparison of energy expenditure not to mention resource extraction is currently being analyzed based on one-time production expenditures of each product even though many competitive products have a much higher replacement frequency.

The ceramic tile industry needs to be pro-active in communicating their environmental story. It is a major marketing strategy being employed by every other competing industry. Environmental information on the World Wide Web is prolific. Much of it is misleading and at times inaccurate regarding tile. It is up to the tile industry to present the sustainable, durable and health aspects of ceramic tile and educate the consumer and design professional.

This paper will illuminate the various environmental aspects of ceramic tile production, installation, maintenance and livability of ceramic installations. It will also suggest strategies for implementing a focused marketing plan to inform users regarding the environmental opportunities and value propositions ceramic tile offers.