

AWNINGS AND ENERGY REDUCTION



The Professional Awning Manufacturers Association and the European Solar Shading Organization have different challenges but the same shady goals ...

In Europe, where the buildings sector accounts for 41 percent of the EU's energy requirements, it also offers the largest single potential for energy efficiency. The EU's directive on energy performance of buildings, issued in January 2003, provided the right platform for the European Solar Shading Organization (ES-SO) to show the benefits of solar shading as a building technology rather than as just an accessory, notes ES-SO Secretary General Dick Dolmans, a speaker at the IFAI Expo "Going Beyond Green" symposium.

The ES-SO is an umbrella organization for solar shading companies and trade organizations in 14 European countries. "Our industry is extremely epitomized, made up of small to medium companies, so it's difficult to get a concentrated effort to authorities," says Dolmans. "We have to prove that solar shading makes a contribution to the comfort and energy savings of the building."

The group commissioned a scientific feasibility study, which concluded that solar shading can lead to substantial energy savings in buildings, and therefore reduce CO₂ emissions. The study and the organization's involvement in trade conferences and EU-commissioned projects, has helped ES-SO to be part of the energy debate and work on initiatives such as establishing a ratings system for buildings' energy efficiency, which would include the energy-saving contributions of solar shading.

The Professional Awning Manufacturers Organization (PAMA), a division of IFAI, is spearheading a similar effort

in the United States, where buildings account for 40 percent of primary energy consumption. PAMA is working to get awnings rated through the National Fenestration Rating Council (NFRC), similar to the Energy Star rating of appliances. An NFRC rating would give credibility to awning manufacturers whose products are rated high for energy efficiency, help drive more residential and commercial sales, and give consumers an energy tax credit, says PAMA manager Michelle Sahlin.

John Gant of Glen Raven Custom Fabrics LLC in Burlington, N.C., is heading up the PAMA initiative. He notes that the NFRC has been rating windows for years and has revolutionized the window market in the U.S. "Windows today are incredibly better performers than they were 15 years ago," he says. "It's been so successful that the NFRC is broadening their scope and adding storm windows and garage doors, and is looking at solar shading attachments."

The NFRC process takes five years, but with that official rating, organizations that write building codes could include awnings as contributors to energy efficiency.

PAMA and the ES-SO are forging a relationship to leverage each other's knowledge and progress. "They are ahead of us in developing product standards," says Gant, "but NFRC is ahead of them in creating product rating."

While the two groups have different challenges, he adds, the real opportunity here in the U.S. is to develop a rating system that can be recognized globally, and that will help a lot of manufacturers who operate in global markets.

- > Education handouts offered in CDs and on the Web site, rather than printed;
- > New signage fabrics can be re-used;
- > Evaluation forms have been reduced, available electronically or using minimal paper; and
- > New education notebooks are printed on recyclable paper.

The IFAI Expo CyberCafe, sponsored by Eastman Machine, has also been upgraded, allowing users to download new lists of exhibitors and show sponsors, retrieve the Daily Expo E-News for show highlights, do their own "carbon footprint" testing, take the IFAI Expo 2008 Visitor Survey and review the IFAI Expo 2009 early Web site edition.

IFAI's conference management company, Brede Inc., has implemented more sustainable practices, including:

- > Non-oil-based carpets that break down faster and can be recycled;
- > Eco-friendly vinyl for decorating table tops; and
- > Reusable fabrics incorporated into designs and public spaces.

— Jill Rutledge, director,
IFAI Conference Management