

NAHB Research Center

Five Companies Recognized for Innovation in Housing Technology

New and innovative building technologies are everywhere. But with so many product innovations for the homebuilding industry, it's often difficult to distinguish the wheat from the chaff. That is why the NAHB Research Center has partnered with Popular Science magazine this year to recognize companies that are having a positive impact on the residential construction industry.

The Innovative Housing Technology Awards were presented for the first time in Atlanta at the International Builders' Show. The Awards were created to spotlight companies that have made major breakthroughs in housing products and systems, which will significantly improve the performance and/or lower the cost of housing.



CHARLIE RUMA, NAHB
PAST PRESIDENT,
ANNOUNCES AWARD
WINNERS DURING THE
IHTA CEREMONY

Charlie Ruma, NAHB past president, explained why he thinks an award like this is significant to the industry. "I am concerned that housing innovations generally take too long to get accepted into practice," said Ruma. "I think builders are willing to try out new technologies, but they often don't know about them or how well they will work. This Innovative Housing Technology Awards program helps in two ways: First, independent judges from the industry who are recognized as leaders by their peers evaluate innovative products. Second, Popular Science magazine communicates information on these breakthrough technologies to consumers. Let's face it, we builders have a much easier time selling our customers on a new product or material, if they are already familiar with it and are asking for it."

This year's award categories and winners are as follows:

Tech Transfer Award: Denver-based Oshen Brothers Homes captured this prize for their use of a specialized production facility that is built on site for their large residential projects. With this innovation the assembly line approach, modeled after other types of manufacturing, is used to reduce cycle time, limit transportation

needs, decrease labor and improve the bottom line.

Problem Solved Award: J.M. Huber of in Charlotte, NC, produces a moisture-resistant, engineered wood panel that eliminates edge swell and the need for sanding. The company's product innovation creates squeak-free floors. Builders on the judging panel identified this as the most important innovation they've seen in years.



Wow That Was Easy Award: This award went to Owens Corning of Toledo, OH, for its basement wall finishing system consisting of PVC trim, fiberglass panels and decorative coverings. The system snaps into place allowing basements to be remodeled in a much shorter time.

WINNERS OF THE 2001 AWARDS: (TOP ROW, L TO R) TRACI ALOI, OWENS CORNING; MEL ZIMMERMAN, SUPERIOR WALLS; DAVID AND ROGER COHEN, COHEN BROTHERS HOMES; LARRY ISELY, HOME DIRECTOR, INC.; (BOTTOM ROW L TO R) MARK SMITH, OWNES CORNING; AL LANDERS, J. M. HUBER; AND DOUG WHITE, CUSTOM HOMES GROUP

Cool Home Award: Home Director of Morrisville, NC, gets the "cool" award for all the "hot" technologies the company incorporated into a home in Plano, TX. Built by the Dallas-based Custom Homes Group, the home is loaded with the latest digital wiring and components. In addition to its structured wiring network connection center, it features the "intelligent home" networking systems for Internet, entertainment and communications.

Coming of Age Award: This award was given to Superior Walls of New Holland, PA, for their precast, concrete wall system. It's been around for a while, but has really caught on since 1998. The system resists moisture, is well insulated and allows builders to complete foundations in minimal time and in almost any weather condition.

Ruma noted how impressed he was with the breadth of the innovations displayed by the winners. In its first year, the competition garnered about 20 applications from building product manufacturers. Judges for the competition see this as a great start for the program and are optimistic that it will become a meaningful source of industry recognition. The judging panel included: Ted Koebel, Virginia Tech Center for Housing Research; Randy Luther, Centex Homes; Ben Phillips, Builders First Source; Bill Phillips, Popular Science magazine; and Alan Scott, the NRP Group.

To find out more about this year's winners visit the NAHB Research Center web site at www.nahbrc.org.

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