



# Environmental Components

## Nine Ways Components Are Already "Green"

Structural building components:  
green since 1952!

by Libby Maurer

**W**e're all hearing a lot about building "green" these days. It might have you wondering if the products you supply are considered green, and how to advance your company's image among the increasingly green-focused building community. Here's some good news: while the pursuit of green building certification may be a logical business decision for you, also keep in mind that there's no need to chase a pricey green building certification (like FSC) just to prove your commitment to supplying environmentally-sound products.

Here are some talking points to use when communicating with customers and prospects about what makes you green. You can market the eco-friendliness of your products without lifting a finger (or spending a dime)!

**Wood is a renewable resource.** There's no getting around it. Whether it comes from a certified or uncertified forest, the wood you purchase comes from one of the Earth's most renewable resources—trees.

**Steel is a recyclable resource.** You've probably heard that steel is the most recyclable material that exists. (That means it is the material that is most able to be made into a different material at the end of its life cycle.) No matter what, the steel you purchase for nails, hangers/connectors, steel chords and webs, banding comes from one of earth's most recyclable resources—steel.

**Components minimize the amount of material use and jobsite waste created.** This is a no brainer, but it's a good point to reinforce with builders and general contractors. And there's data to prove it! The 1996 WTCA *Framing the American Dream*® project reported a more than 25 percent material savings (and labor savings of more than 60 percent!) when components were used to frame a 2600-sq.ft. home. The study is somewhat dated, but if anything, we're saving even more material waste nowadays thanks to better framing techniques and more optimizing options in the design process. Visit [www.sbcindustry.com/pubs/fad-d](http://www.sbcindustry.com/pubs/fad-d) to view a pdf or to order copies of *Framing the American Dream*® for distribution.

**Components are designed to utilize materials most efficiently.** Don't forget that material efficiency is inherent to the process of component design. Modern design software allows the designer or technician to value engineer and optimize virtually any component design. This means material is not used when it isn't needed. Many green building rating systems recognize this benefit of components and award points based on their use. The National Resource Defense Council realized this fact in 1998 when they placed trusses high on their list of great products due to optimum value engineering. View their detailed report at [www.nrdc.org/cities/building/rwoodus.asp](http://www.nrdc.org/cities/building/rwoodus.asp).

**The use of components tightens a building's envelope.** More precision is built into components with the technology available today and also because they're built under controlled conditions. When a good foundation is in place, component construction provides for more precise construction that fosters a tighter building envelope. This means that the consumer—whether homeowner or business owner—will conserve energy while enjoying less draft and heat loss.

**Metal connector plates are made from highly recycled steel.** You may have

never considered it, but galvanized steel truss plates are green too! Depending on your plate vendor, your steel truss plates could contain up to 80 percent recycled content, and a minimum of 25 percent recycled content, as required by EPA standards.

**EWPs are green.** If part of your business is engineered wood product (EWP) distribution, you're in luck. From beams to I-joists to glue-laminated products, most EWPs are considered green. This is due to both the materials and the processes used to manufacture them. For instance, compared to the dimensional lumber you use to build trusses, these products are typically made from smaller, fast-growing species. They may also contain chipped and flaked wood or strands and wood particles that comes from waste created from other wood processing operations. And EWPs are known for their durability and strength characteristics, which means it takes less material to achieve the same result as an alternative building material. For specifics, ask your EWP supplier(s).

**Cold-formed steel trusses are made from highly recycled steel.** Remember the bit about metal connector plates? Same goes for cold-formed steel trusses and wall panels! In fact, cold-formed steel originates from the same steel material as truss plates—galvanized sheet steel. So by definition, cold-formed steel is a highly recycled material. It's also a highly recyclable material, meaning that any post-construction scrap (or trusses at the end of a building's life cycle) can be melted down and used to make new steel (think life cycle again). It is because of these properties that cold-formed steel components are recognized in green building programs as products that contribute to sustainable building design.

**Your office is paperless.** Many of us have abandoned paper systems in the office because it's far easier and more efficient to rely on computers. But don't forget that you're saving a ton of paper, and therefore reducing your footprint on the environment!

You see? Hopefully this information about building components' green nature helps to demystify how your products fit into the complex green building picture. Use these nine marketing tips about the products you already have in your inventory to help to satisfy your builders' desires to build green. **SBC**



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### at a glance

- ❑ You can use a few simple talking points to explain the inherent "green" qualities of building components.
- ❑ The wood you purchase comes from one of the Earth's most renewable resources—trees.
- ❑ Steel is the most recyclable material that exists; this includes everything from nails to connectors to cold-formed steel trusses to connector plates.



**structural building components: green since 1952**

WTCA's website now contains web pages devoted to green building concepts as they relate to the structural building components industry. The goal of the new pages is to educate those involved with the industry on the facts regarding green building and to aid in the interpretation of confusing language and concepts. Visit:

**[www.sbcindustry.com/green/greenbuild.php](http://www.sbcindustry.com/green/greenbuild.php)**

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