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New 5th Edition of *GreenSpec* Reflects Significant Changes in Criteria

Brattleboro, VT—The just-released 5th edition of the widely used *GreenSpec® Directory* of environmentally preferable building products and materials reflects significant changes. “As the green building industry evolves, we evolve with it,” said *GreenSpec* coeditor Alex Wilson. The criteria used by BuildingGreen staff to screen products for *GreenSpec* are regularly examined and the benchmarks raised.

The 5th edition of *GreenSpec* includes more than 1,850 product listings that designers, builders, and building owners can use in identifying products that can improve the environmental performance of their buildings. More than 200 product listings have been added since the 4th edition came out, while about 100 were dropped. Products may be dropped because they have been discontinued, because the manufacturing has changed (reduced recycled content, for example), or because the *GreenSpec* criteria have

been tightened so the lowest-performing products are removed. “Our goal is to constantly push the envelope,” notes Wilson. “Increasingly, we get calls from manufacturers wanting to know how they would need to modify their products to satisfy *GreenSpec* criteria.”

One of the big changes with the 5th edition of *GreenSpec* deals with toilets. “It has long been recognized that not all low-flush toilets perform well,” said Wilson. In 2004 a new testing protocol was developed for toilets that accurately measures flush performance. This “Maximum Performance” (or MaP) testing protocol was jointly developed by water conservation agencies in Canada and the United States and has become one of the criteria used for evaluating toilets for *GreenSpec*. To be listed in *GreenSpec*, toilets must evacuate at least 65 grams of solid waste per liter of flush water, as tested under the MaP protocol. This performance standard, rounded to the nearest 50-gram increment, amounts to a minimum of 400 grams for 6-liter (1.6 gallon-per-flush) toilets and 250 grams for 4-liter (1 gpf) toilets. Special calculations are used for dual-flush toilets.

In some *GreenSpec* categories, thresholds for volatile organic compound (VOC) levels have been significantly tightened. An interior paint, for example, can have a VOC level no higher than 50 grams per liter to be listed in *GreenSpec*—significantly lower than the tightest air pollution regulations, even in California.

GreenSpec criteria for a number of appliances have also been tightened for the 5th edition. “As these products become more efficient across the board, we want to recognize the real leaders,” said Wilson.

The criteria used for screening products for *GreenSpec* have been refined over more than ten years by the editors of *Environmental Building News*, the oldest and most respected publication serving the green-building industry. These criteria are published in the new 5th edition, and they can be downloaded from the BuildingGreen.com website in the periodically updated article “What Makes a Product Green. “Unlike other directories, *GreenSpec* does not charge for listings or for the review process,” said Wilson. “We don't

even accept ads.” As a user-supported resource, the listings are the result of total editorial independence and integrity—information that can be trusted.

The 464-page *GreenSpec Directory* also includes “Guideline Specification,” language in the CSI MasterFormat™ structure that can help architects and specifiers develop green project specifications. The directory costs \$89, plus \$5 shipping and handling.

GreenSpec-listed products can also be found in the online *BuildingGreen Suite*, a subscription-based information service available for \$199 per year.

For more information on *GreenSpec* or other resources produced by BuildingGreen, Inc., visit www.GreenSpec.com, e-mail info@BuildingGreen.com, or call 800-861-0954 (outside the U.S. and Canada, call 802-257-7300). BuildingGreen is an independent, 13-person company based in Brattleboro, Vermont. The company celebrates its 20th anniversary in 2005.

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