Three Basic Steps to High Performance Product Selection

Many people do not realize that they can have a significant, powerful impact on the health of their family and the planet through the materials and products they select for their home. According to a study by the Worldwatch Institute\(^1\), 40% of the world's materials and energy are used by buildings and 30% of newly-built or -renovated buildings suffer from "sick building syndrome," exposing occupants to potentially unhealthy air. Your home can be different.

Choosing Products

Selecting high performance materials and products for your home can go a long way to achieving a healthier house, but it can also feel intimidating and overwhelming. Therefore when choosing a product for your new or existing home, it is important that you consider four key questions:

1. Why you are using a product?
2. What do you want the product to do?
3. What are the most important selection qualities and requirements?
4. What will be the product’s use in the home?

Here are some basic steps that you can follow to assist you in making a decision:

Step 1: Create a QR List

Create a list of **Qualities and/or Requirements (QR)** that a product may need to meet. Then, prioritize the list from most important to least important, allowing the most important characteristics to guide you in your **Research** for potential products.

*Remember: In a NC HealthyBuilt Home, consider people and the environment as well as economics.*

Potential considerations for QR that a product may need to meet:

- Created locally
- Recyclable
- Made of recycled/easily grown materials
- Durable
- Visible/Invisible
- Aesthetics
- Non- or low-toxic
- Weather resistant
Selecting “Green” Products

Step 2: Research

Gather all potential products technical information that may meet your requirements and that you are willing to consider. Some of this technical information may include:

- Manufacturers’ information such as Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS)
- Product Certification or Labeling
- Product warranties
- Recycled content data
- Environmental statements
- Durability information

Step 3: Selection

- Ask Supplier for references to those who have used the product
- Understand warranty and support services for the product
- Confirm availability and support network for a product in your area
- Confirm cost of material
- Confirm installation requirements and costs
- If you are a builder and using new “green” products, add products gradually to your arsenal
- If you are a homeowner or buyer, make sure that your builder is willing to install the product

Healthier products and materials are available on the market today!

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2 Graph courtesy of ACCENT online magazine, http://www.atmosphere.mpg.de/enid/0.55a304092d09/Nr2June05_Context_4pu.html

For more information about North Carolina Solar Center programs, go to www.ncsc.ncsu.edu

For more information about green products and residential building, visit: www.healthybuilthomes.org