

Research Demonstration House Update

June 2004

Research House Expects Busy Year

Visitors to FPL's Research Demonstration House are running 30 percent ahead of last year as of early June, reports House Coordinator Sue Paulson. As of June 9, 296 people had toured the house since the first of the year; at the same time last year, only 260 had toured it. Total visitors in 2003 were 573. This was down significantly from 1,096 in 2002 and 1,184 in 2001; the 2001 figure includes some 550 people during the lab's Open House event in the fall.

Because the house is closed for research purposes during the winter except for special-invitation groups, most of the visitors so far this year have been with such groups. Among the special guests to the house this year were: U.S. Representative John Peterson of Pennsylvania and an aide on March 23, and a new aide to U.S. Representative Tammy Baldwin of Wisconsin. (Rep. Peterson serves on the House Appropriations Committee and is vice chairman of the House Resources Committee's subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health.) Other noteworthy groups have included the two Evergreen tours totaling 20 people, 27 people from the Forest Service Region 9 headquarters in Milwaukee, the Society for American Foresters (15), the Wisconsin Truss Manufacturers (32) and the Southwest Wisconsin Building Inspectors (22).

In mid-June, Lane Ralph, state coordinator for U.S. Senator Richard Lugar of Indiana, is scheduled to visit the lab. Sen. Lugar is on the Senate's Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee.



Joe Balczewski installs "old" floor.

In the works

A number of improvements or additions to the house are on the drawing board. A wheelchair ramp to the front porch is scheduled to be installed this summer. The ramp, designed by FPL's Ron Wolfe, will incorporate round wood, wood-plastic composite decking, durable black locust lumber, as well as a variety of fasteners.

Also planned for this summer is the installation of a system to harvest rainwater. The experimental system would collect water from the house's gutters, filter it and store it for use in landscape irrigation or for some household applications such as flushing toilets, washing clothing or showering. Researchers believe that collecting rainwater can reduce a household's dependence on municipal water supplies by as much as 50 percent. The system is being designed by the University of Arizona's Environmental Research Laboratory, which is a member of the Coalition for Advanced Housing and Forest Products Research.

Negotiations are also underway to install a BioMax electrical generator, which uses wood chips as fuel.

New window shades

In April, Springs Window Fashions joined the list of participating partners in the house and installed new energy-efficient all-wood and composite venetian-blind style window treatments. All-wood blinds were installed downstairs. One bedroom and a bathroom received composite blinds made of 25 percent wood pulp and 75 percent polyester. The other three bedrooms received blinds containing 15 to 20 percent wood flour.

Old flooring

Last summer, FPL carpenters Bob Foss and Joe Balczewski installed a wood floor in one of the house's upstairs bedrooms using boards that had served for some 60 years as exterior siding on a WW II-era barracks building on the Army's Ft. Ord base in California. According to FPL research engineer Bob Falk, the floor demonstrates one answer to the question of what to do with the millions of board feet of high-quality lumber that could be recovered from military bases around the country.

Making news

The Research Demonstration House figured prominently in feature articles in the December 2003 issue of *Wisconsin Natural Resources* magazine and in the January 2004 issue of *Eco-Structure* magazine. The house also was an important element in press releases dealing with myths about home moisture and reusing 60-year-old lumber for flooring.

The Research Demonstration House was built in 2001 as a cooperative project with APA—The Engineered Wood Association and the Southern Pine Council. The house is open to the general public during regularly scheduled tours at 2 p.m., Monday through Thursday, from April 1 to October 1. To schedule a group tour, phone Forest Products Laboratory at (608) 231-9200.



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