



“Health House” comes to a Neighborhood Near You

Britco Structures of Surrey, British Columbia has delivered a factory-built home to Clatskanie, Oregon that is healthy for the occupants and for the environment. The home has been tagged as a Health House, by the American Lung Association, and complies with the stringent requirements of the Portland General Electric Earth Advantage Program. The 3,000 square ft., two-level, custom home, which is built in the American Colonial style, arrived as five separate modules at the Northwest Oregon building site in mid November.

After completing the requirements as set out by the American Lung Association, Britco is entitled to provide registered Health Houses,, which include features and components such as: air sealing and advanced insulation techniques; energy efficient, high performance windows; energy efficient and sealed combustion appliances; high efficiency air filtration and ventilation systems; humidity control; and carefully selected interior finishings.

Homes that are certified by the Earth Advantage program are designed to be at least 15 per cent more energy efficient than homes built to the Oregon Building Code requirements. They are also designed to improve indoor air quality and protect the environment, while allowing occupants to maintain the amenities associated with conventional homes.

The Clatskanie home is also Energy Star compliant. Energy Star was introduced by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 1992 as a voluntary labeling program designed to identify and promote energy-efficient products, in order to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. EPA partnered with the US Department of Energy in 1996 to promote the Energy Star label, with each agency taking responsibility for particular product categories. Energy Star has expanded to cover new homes, most of the buildings sector, residential heating and cooling equipment, major appliances, office equipment, lighting, and consumer electronics.

Two of the main features that help the Clatskanie home meet the criteria of the American Lung Association, and the Earth Advantage and Energy Star programs are the Icynene insulation system and the Venmar High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) purification system, both of which are incorporated into the home design. The Icynene Insulation system, which was developed in Canada, offers the ability to completely seal the building, eliminating random air leakage. This can significantly reduce the penetration of dust, allergens and pollutants, and allows for a controlled indoor environment with heating and cooling systems designed to maximize air quality. This can provide the occupants with more control over humidity in the house, eliminating health concerns related to mold and mildew.

Icynene is recommended for individuals who are sensitive to chemicals as it does not contain formaldehyde and does not emit any detectable emissions. The insulation is sprayed into the walls, floors and ceilings as a liquid and expands within seconds to create a sealed environment. In terms of energy efficiency, homes insulated with Icynene will perform 30 to 50 per cent better than homes insulated with traditional methods. The Icynene insulation for the walls is applied at the factory during the construction process. The same type of insulation is applied on site underneath the floors.

The Venmar HEPA system, which was also developed in Canada, provides continuous air circulation in the home, 24 hours a day. The system works by drawing pollutants through an air inlet duct located near the ceiling. Fresh, outdoor air and re-circulated indoor air are combined and then the combination of the two undergoes HEPA filtration, prior to clean, filtered air being distributed throughout the entire home. HEPA filters capture 99.97 per cent of all particles, even those as small as 0.3 microns (one human hair is 150 microns). This helps people reduce allergy symptoms, asthma, recurring colds and persistent coughs. Because of their effectiveness, HEPA filters are used in many hospital operating rooms. For the HEPA system to achieve optimal results, proper ventilation is also required. This allows for a constant source of fresh, filtered outdoor air to flow through the home, and for pollutants that have been eliminated by the filtration system to escape the home. These pollutants include volatile organic compounds (VOC), carbon dioxide and other harmful gases.

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In addition to the Icynene insulation system and the Venmar air purification system, the Clatskanie home was built with low VOC materials including floor coverings, paints and structural components. Flooring in the home's upstairs is primarily carpet, while the downstairs floor coverings include a mix of tile, wood and vinyl. All floor coverings offer low off gassing. The exterior walls are constructed with plywood, rather than oriented strand board and the exterior siding is James Hardie Hardiplank horizontal lap siding, which is a wood fiber cement material featuring the look of traditional cedar. The sale of the Clatskanie home and the on-site coordination of the finishing were completed by the Construction Resource Group (CRG) of Redmond, Washington.

Britco is the only factory built home producer in the Northwest that offers the American Lung Association Health House, designation.

"We are thrilled to be able to offer buildings that meet the requirements of the American Lung Association, and the Earth First and Energy Star programs," explains David Taft, one of Britco's Managing Partners. "This provides us with a unique opportunity in the marketplace and we are looking forward to offering the same technology to clients who are purchasing schools and commercial buildings."

Britco, an award winning designer and builder of factory built structures, is celebrating their 25th anniversary this year. Their commercial, institutional, and residential buildings include fast food restaurants, gas station/convenience store combinations, hotels, schools, single-family homes, and condominium and apartment complexes. Britco also produces bank kiosks and electronic equipment shelters for the aviation and cellular phone industries.

In addition to their corporate office in Surrey, BC, Britco operates two satellite offices; one in Nanaimo, BC and one in Edmonton, Alberta. The company has up to 100 full time employees at their 92,000 square foot factory in Agassiz, BC. An additional 25 sales, design, project management, and administration professionals are employed at both the manufacturing facility and the company's offices. Britco's products are sold around the world.

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