

Air Guard strikes 'Silver' in green construction project

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ARLINGTON, Va., (3/17/10) – A green building certification process that is the industry standard recently recognized the Air National Guard with its highest Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating to date.

The Arkansas ANG's aircraft hanger project at the 188th Fighter Wing in Fort Smith was awarded a LEED Silver certification by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC).

"It was a very long and arduous process that involved many individuals, not just from the 188th, but from the construction and contracting side as well," said Col. Tom Anderson, the 188th FW commander. "Just to secure a LEED Silver certification alone is an incredible achievement ... but to be the first in the Air National Guard to attain such a feat for a maintenance facility speaks volumes of our civil engineering squadron's professionalism and dedication to executing a very difficult plan."

According to the USGBC, LEED certification includes "energy savings, water efficiency, CO2 emissions reduction, improved indoor environmental quality, and stewardship of resources and sensitivity to their impacts."

Officials said the Air Guard has more than 100-such construction projects in the LEED certification pipeline, but this is their first building to achieve a Silver rating, the second highest rating the USGBC awards. The USGBC has four certification ratings with "Certified" being its lowest, then Silver, Gold and Platinum.

"Being the first of the projects for the Air Guard makes it particularly significant," said Douglas Rowand, who works in the civil engineering division of the Air Guard Readiness Center at Joint Base Andrews, Md.

The aircraft hangar is in line with the hundreds, if not thousands, of other DoD, federal and private sustainable building projects that are transforming to meet stringent energy and environmental demands.

"It was a challenging endeavor, but very rewarding," Anderson said. "What began as a lofty goal came to fruition, and we're very proud of this accomplishment."

Rowand said sustainable design is important to the Air Guard as well as to the nation.

According to the USGBC, buildings consume 39 percent of the nation's energy, including 71 percent of its electricity. They also contribute 39 percent to the nation's greenhouse gas emissions, 30 percent to its waste output and use 12 percent its potable water.

"These are very high numbers, and they are unsustainable," said Rowand. "We don't have the natural resources to continue building buildings that use up resources like that in the future."

In 2007, President George W. Bush signed an executive order that set policy and goals for federal agency environmental-, transportation- and energy-related activities. The Strengthening Federal Environmental, Energy, and Transportation Management executive order included energy management goals for federal buildings.

Officials said other acts, including the Energy Policy Act of 2005 and the Energy Independence Act of 2007, contributed to the DoD's sustainable design story.

"It's part of a much broader policy," said Rowand about the Air Guard's sustainable building projects.

He added that the Air Guard has challenged itself to meet and attain even higher standards than dictated by federal, DoD and Air Force policies.



A validation test of the high expansion foam system is performed at the 188th Fighter Wing's new consolidated maintenance facility. It recently received a LEED Silver certification by the U.S. Green Building Council. (U. S. Air Force photo by TSgt. Stephen Hornsey).

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"Starting this year ... all of our projects will go for Silver recognition," he said.

The Air Guard started sustainable design pilot projects through LEED back in 2002, with a complex built in Reno, Nev.

Rowand said their current Silver achievement highlights a lengthy certification process, and the hard work accomplished at the ANGRC and at the states and territories toward DoD and Air Guard goals. And they have many more projects in the USGBC pipeline.

Ben Lawless, chief of the Operations Division for the Air Guard's Installations and Mission Support directorate, said he is often asked why the Air Guard is involved in green buildings and what they get out of it.

"We get opinions that it might cost more to do this or it's just another program that we have to worry about," said Lawless. "What we're going to get out of this are facilities that are lower cost to operate, lower cost to maintain and provide a better work environment for the folks who have to do the day-to-day work in them."

Lawless said they are building better facilities than have ever been built, which they estimate at 2002 construction costs, when adjusted for inflation.

"We're getting a better product, we're setting ourselves up for the future of the Air Guard in future missions, future taskings, and green building is a very important part of where we are going."