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It's not easy being green

Foam-injected panel design yields environmentally friendly, energy efficient buildings



KERI RASMUSSEN / DAILY COMMERCIAL Alex Shaw plugs a wall panel after the polyurethane foam injection process at Insulated Component Structures in Eustis on Wednesday. The foam will expand to fill the panel restricting air movement within the wall. Finished panels are set in a channel that is secured to the foundation and locked together using a cam-lock system.

David Donald
Staff Writer

Fort Jefferson is in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. You can't eat the lobsters (they're protected) and the closest store is 70 miles east in Key West.

But for the last six months or so, Insulated Component Structures of Florida, Inc, a Eustis-based company, had to surmount the problems offered by this unique environment as it renovated the park rangers station at the military fort at the Dry Tortugas National Park.

"There were some very unique challenges," said Tony McKeon, project manager. "We built a building inside a building."

Even in an inhospitable ocean environment, the project was the perfect test for the company's patented polyurethane foam-injected panel design. The panels are environmentally friendly, energy efficient and resistant to 155 mph hurricane wind.

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"We're getting a lot of interest from the federal government," said Ron Davis, the company's vice president.

Because the panels are lightweight, energy efficient and easy to install, affordable housing authorities in the U.S. Territories of Bermuda, Grenada, and Trinidad are negotiating deals with ICS.

"2008 is looking very good for us," Davis said.

The company's Web site is getting more than 8,000 hits a day from people searching for greenbuilding construction, he said.

The company and its 12 employees can produce two 1,100 square-foot homes a day from its 40,000 square-foot factory in Eustis.

Foam injected panels are light, durable and easy to transport. The shell of the house is built in the factory and packaged for transport.

When the panels arrive on the construction sight, laborers lower the panels into a metal trough securely attached the concrete foundation. The panels are then locked into one another, creating a seamless connection.

Assembly takes very little labor, Davis said.

"We cut the manpower down," he said. "It saves builders money."

Davis said the company's method shouldn't be confused with

modular housing; rather, it's just another way to construct a wall and build a house.

The governor of Louisiana is courting the company to start a plant in the state to build houses to replace those lost during Hurricane Katrina, Davis said.

"We've proven to ourselves that we have a product that is green built," he added.

Habitat for Humanity of Lake County is using the company's panels to build a house for Tynna Harris and her sons Devon, 10, and Jonathan, 6.

Harris said electric bill in their current home averages \$300 to \$400. Davis said the panels could save the family about 30 to 50 percent on its electric bill.

"It's nice, it's amazing," Tynna Harris said.

Kelly Pisciotta, development director for Lake County Habitat for Humanity, said the house is the first to use the company's panels.

"This is going to be great for the homeowner," she said "This kind of thing is the wave of the future."

Davis said he's tried to develop a relationship with the Lake County School District to build energy efficient green schools, but they've shown no interest.

"We're here to make a difference in energy savings and structural strength in storms," said Davis. "We're here to help put money back in people's pockets."

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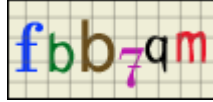
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