

## United States Federal Agencies Sign Green Building Agreement

On January 31, 2006, at the White House Summit on Federal Sustainable Buildings, the USDA, 15 other federal agencies, and the White House Council on Environmental Quality agreed to a joint commitment to designing and constructing sustainable buildings that achieve high energy performance. The agencies signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) saying they would strive to adopt a standard set of guiding principles for sustainable buildings by employing integrated design principles; optimizing energy performance, protecting and conserving water, enhancing indoor environmental quality, and reducing the environmental impact of the building materials. The agencies will aim to achieve the Energy Star targets for new construction and renovation and will also employ daylighting and incorporate biobased materials into their buildings.

The federal government owns approximately 445,000 buildings with a total floor space of over 3 billion square feet, in addition to leasing 57,000 buildings comprising 374 million square feet of floor space. If federal buildings reduce energy by 10 percent, in 10 years taxpayers would save \$420 million dollars and reduce greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to those from more than 625,000 cars.

The MOU specifically addresses, as part of its guiding principles toward reducing the environmental impact of materials, using biobased products made from rapidly renewable resources and certified sustainable wood products. However, the MOU is not legally enforceable and does not create any legal obligation on the part of any of the signatories to follow the guidelines. With regards to the use of certified sustainable wood products, the MOU is consistent with U.S. commitments toward sustainability and timber certification in other fora such as the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO). As a member of the ITTO, the United States has agreed to the principle that international organizations should not endorse, create or adopt, or be perceived to endorse, any particular certification approach or scheme, including any accompanying standards developed for the purpose of certification.

For a copy of the Federal Leadership in High Performance and Sustainable Buildings Memorandum of Understanding, see:  
[http://www.energystar.gov/ia/business/Guiding\\_Principles.pdf](http://www.energystar.gov/ia/business/Guiding_Principles.pdf)

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