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EPA Waives Blower Door Test for SIP Homes to Meet ENERGY STAR Requirements

December 13, 2006 – Builders using structural insulated panels (SIPs) will find it easier to achieve an ENERGY STAR rating with EPA's release of the SIP Visual Inspection Form. The Visual Inspection Form replaces the blower door test and energy modeling calculations normally required to meet ENERGY STAR qualifications for homes built with SIP walls and a SIP roof.

Structural insulated panels (SIPs) provide highly efficient and continuous insulation for walls and roofs in residential buildings. When used with proper sealants, SIPs make an extremely airtight home, cutting the amount of heating or cooling energy lost through air leakage.

According to Sam Rashkin, the National Director of ENERGY STAR for Homes, "A SIP house has fewer joints, less complicated interfaces between conditioned and unconditioned spaces, and it is dramatically easier to make it tight."

Conventional wood frame construction does not have this advantage and requires a pressurized blower door test to check the airtightness of the home. The airtight qualities inherent in SIP construction allow the leakage of the home to be verified by a visual inspection from a certified Home Energy Rating System (HERS) inspector. By eliminating the blower door test, the new SIP Visual Inspection form means less work for HERS raters and savings for SIP builders.

"Because hundreds of tests have documented the airtightness of SIP homes, the Energy Star program has the waived the blower door requirement," said Bill Wachtler, Executive Director for the Structural Insulated Panel Association (SIPA). "Proper sealing is essential to building performance so SIPA strongly supports the visual inspection process."

In addition to the required inspection a certified HERS rater, a SIP manufacturer field representative will need to check the sealing details between panels to ensure airtight construction. The SIP Visual Inspection Form is available at www.energystar.gov/homes.

For more information on energy efficient structural insulated panels, visit www.sips.org.

About SIPA

The Structural Insulated Panel Association (SIPA) is a non-profit association representing manufacturers, suppliers, fabricators/distributors, design professionals, and builders committed to providing quality structural insulated panels for all segments of the construction industry.

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