

News Release - 2/9/2006

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Contact:

Chris Schwind
chris@sips.org
253.858.7472

A recent report issued by the John C. Stennis Institute of Government proposes the large scale construction of Structural Insulated Panel (SIP) homes to meet Mississippi's low-income housing and Katrina rebuilding needs. The state of Mississippi has the second highest unemployment rate in the nation, with 19.9% of its population living in poverty. Rising energy costs affect these lower income residents more severely. A nationwide survey reveals that while energy costs account for an average of only 4.6% of household income for middle-income households, they account for 19.5% of income in low-income households.

The disproportionate amount of income spent on energy reflects the inverse relationship between household income and residential energy consumption. Lower income groups consume more energy per square foot than higher income groups. Although "affordability" includes both mortgage and utility costs, energy efficiency and the disproportionate burden of utility costs on low-income families is often compromised in favor of reductions in construction costs. Ineffectively insulated homes contribute to the growing necessity of Federal and State programs to provide financial assistance to low-income households for energy costs. The Energy Policy Act of 2005 increased the budget of Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program to \$5.1 billion per year through 2007.

The Stennis Institute advocates the wide spread use of structural insulated panels as a strategy to decrease the burden of energy costs on low-income families. SIPs provide superior thermal resistivity of the building envelope for up to a 50% reduction in energy costs. Not only will SIP built homes aide families with energy costs, but they will also reduce the necessity of federal energy aide and benefit local economies by eliminating the need to import energy.

In addition to reducing energy costs, structural insulated panels offer a structurally superior and hurricane resistant product for residents of Mississippi's hard hit gulf coast. In order to avoid the massive devastation witnessed during Katrina, the Stennis Institute recommends SIP homes capable of withstanding hurricane force winds. Both in laboratory tests and during hurricane Charley, SIP homes have proven themselves capable of surviving the most aggressive storm conditions.

The ease and speed of construction using prefabricated SIPs lends itself to the large-scale operation of rebuilding entirely devastated Mississippi communities. Homes built with SIPs can be assembled in a matter of hours with less skilled labor required than conventional framing methods. In addition, SIP homes allow for design flexibility to be introduced into low-income housing. The basic "footprint" home design furnished by the Stennis Institute for a cost of \$70,000 permits for easy customization of the façade and interior floor plan due to the comprehensive structural integrity of the structural insulated panel exterior.

The adoption of structural insulated panels into Mississippi's low income housing and Katrina rebuild projects will provide a superior, energy efficient, and structurally sound product for low-income families that need it most. Judith Phillips of the Stennis Institute will speak on the use of SIPs for low-income housing at the SIPA Annual Meeting and Conference, April 11-13 at the Hilton Hotel, in Austin, Texas.

For a copy of the proposal by Judith Phillips, go to 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