

Press Contact:
Jessica Appलगren
Blue Practice
jappelgren@bluepractice.com
(415)-871-1662

Perkins+Will Launches Transparency Site, Offering Groundbreaking Insight into Precautionary Built Environment Materials

Site features free access to Precautionary Materials List, Asthma List, Flame Retardant List and research on fly ash

NEW YORK, NY- November 17, 2011 – Today, leading design firm Perkins+Will launched the built environment’s first free, universally accessible database aimed at creating greater transparency into building materials containing substances that are publically known or suspected to be associated with an adverse finding in relation to human and environmental health. The database can be accessed at www.transparency.perkinswill.com.

The database is the result of over two years of review of governmentally published scientific papers, which identify “precautionary”- substances that are known or suspected to cause harm to humans and the environment. This research is based on the Precautionary Principle, the idea that in the absence of scientific consensus, an action merits precautionary treatment if it has a suspected risk of causing harm to humans or to the environment. The intent of the list is to encourage the building product marketplace to become more transparent from extraction to end of life for all points of contact, from manufacturers to de-constructors, so that people are further empowered make informed decisions about specifying, maintaining and disposing of the products in their buildings.

A truncated list was originally offered by Perkins+Will in 2009; however, the new site includes further publications which delve into topics pertinent to the industry. These publications are targeted towards enhancing the design profession’s knowledge of how material selection has the potential to impact human health by focusing on areas where publically available information is presently limited.

Included in the site is an “asthma list”, a list of substances which are known or suspected to be common asthma triggers and asthmagens sourced from governmental lists. The firm hopes that this asthma list will raise awareness of the pervasiveness of substances with suspected links to asthma and the need for research on this topic. Additionally, a “flame retardants list” has been added to the site, featuring original research by the Green Research Policy Institute. The list addresses the historical lack of research on the substances which, make up some or all of the content of flame retardants by cataloging these substances and their known or suspected health and environmental impacts. A white paper entitled “Fly

Ash in Concrete” is also available for download in the resources section of the site. This publication is a primer, and a consolidation of many of the diverse opinions regarding the safety and ecological implications of using this controversial building material. All of these publications are provided as a resource to aid the design professional, the end user, and the public in their individual review of published sources so that they can continue their research and form their own opinions.

“Many of the materials we address in the Transparency Site have been opaque to the industry,” said Peter Syrett, Associate Principal at Perkins+Will. “As architects, we should thoughtfully consider the social and environmental impact of our professional activities, and while there are no perfect building materials, we hope this Transparency Site will aid the building product marketplace in making choices that support the highest ethical intentions.”

The Transparency Site is designed so that as additional resources become available, they can be continually added, building an invaluable asset for those concerned with how our time in buildings from homes, hospitals, and schools, to the workplace may affect our health.

“The Precautionary List is a living document, intended to provoke critical thinking related to the materials we use in the design industry,” said Chris Youssef, Healthy Materials Expert at Perkins+Will. “Ultimately it is our hope that our newly updated site will be a catalyst for change and enhance transparency in the building market product marketplace.”

Perkins+Will’s site is part of a larger, multi-industry progression towards voluntary product ingredient transparency that includes building materials to household cleaners and personal care products. The grassroots movement for ingredient transparency has led to changes by large corporations as well as updated FDA guidelines for food and product labeling. Perkins+Will also launched the built environment sector’s first on-product ingredient label for building materials at October’s Greenbuild conference in Toronto, Canada in partnership with architectural products leader Construction Specialties.

“To design holistically, human and environmental health are top priorities,” said Peter Busby, Managing Director of the Vancouver office of Perkins+Will. “Promoting education and disseminating information about the makeup of construction materials is the right thing to do. By making this research publically available we empower ourselves, our clients and the industry to make informed decisions about the health of our buildings.”

For more information on the Perkins+Will Transparency site, please visit www.transparency.perkinswill.com.

About Perkins+Will

Established in 1935, Perkins+Will (www.perkinswill.com) is an integrated design

firm serving clients from offices in Atlanta, Boston, Charlotte, Chicago, Dallas, Dubai, Dundas, Houston, London, Los Angeles, Miami, Minneapolis, New York, Orlando, Ottawa, Philadelphia, Research Triangle Park, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, Shanghai, Toronto, Vancouver, and Washington, DC. The firm practices Architecture, Interiors, Branded Environments, Planning + Strategies, Preservation + Adaptive Reuse, and Urban Design for clients in the Aviation + Transit, Corporate + Commercial + Civic, Healthcare, Higher Education, K-12 Education, Science + Technology, and Sports + Recreation markets. Perkins+Will routinely ranks among the world's top design firms and has received hundreds of awards, including the prestigious American Institute of Architects' "Firm of the Year Award." Social responsibility has been a driving philosophy at Perkins+Will since the firm's beginnings in 1935. The firm has committed to the 1% Solution through Public Architecture, promising to donate time pro bono to non-profit organizations in need of design services. With more LEED® Accredited Professionals than any design firm in North America, Perkins+Will is recognized as one of the preeminent sustainable design firms in the country. Perkins+Will was the first multi-office company to commit to the 2030 Challenge, in which the firm has pledged that all of their projects be designed to carbon neutrality by the year 2030.