



Sustainable by Design

AHFA CERTIFIED

THE AMERICAN HOME FURNISHINGS ALLIANCE BELIEVES THE HOME FURNISHINGS INDUSTRY HAS A RESPONSIBILITY TO HELP MANAGE OUR WORLD'S NATURAL RESOURCES FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS. AHFA IS EQUIPPED TO PROVIDE ITS MEMBER COMPANIES WITH THE EDUCATION AND RESOURCES NECESSARY FOR DEVELOPING SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS PRACTICES CONSISTENT WITH THAT RESPONSIBILITY.



SUSTAINABLE BY DESIGN MISSION

Sustainable by Design will provide a roadmap for home furnishings companies to create a corporate culture of conservation and environmental stewardship by integrating socio-economic policies and sustainable business practices into their manufacturing operations and sourcing strategies.



SMALL STEPS MAKE A BIG IMPACT.

No matter where you are in your sustainability commitment, AHFA has the educational resources and guidance documents your company needs to **make measurable improvement**.

WHAT YOU NEED TO GET STARTED

AHFA Membership. Sustainable by Design was created for AHFA-member companies.

Management Commitment. Entry to the program requires a corporate commitment to continual environmental improvement, evidenced by a signed letter of intent to meet the requirements of the SBD program.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM AHFA

A Guidance Document. The Guidance Document will provide your company with a systematic approach to reviewing and assessing current operations in four key areas:

- ✓ Environmental impact of domestic facilities
- ✓ Environmental impact of your supply chain
- ✓ Global climate impact
- ✓ Overall corporate environmental footprint

The Guidance Document will provide instruction in developing written goals for improvement in each area, action plans for accomplishing those goals and tools for measuring and monitoring progress.

A Tool Kit. A comprehensive Tool Kit will include sample documents, technical worksheets and case studies. All Tool Kit resources will be accessible online.

Webinars and Educational Forums. An annual two-day workshop is planned for companies interested in entering the SBD program. Workshop attendees will receive a complete overview of the program's requirements. An ongoing series of webinars will provide guidance on specific aspects of SBD certification, including the nuts and bolts of the EFEC registration process, an overview of lumber certification programs and insights into focus areas such as social responsibility and calculating carbon footprint. Specific dates and times are available on the SBD website, <http://sustainablebydesign.us>. An annual Sustainability Summit in November will be the premier environmental event of the year for the home furnishings industry, featuring high-level presentations by environmental experts and influential industry leaders.

Certification Controls. Any organization attempting to recognize companies for their environmental accomplishments must be concerned about the potential for misrepresentation. AHFA plans rigorous controls to ensure the veracity of company declarations within the SBD certification process. As in AHFA's EFEC program, a Board of Examiners will serve as the focal point for administrative and authoritative oversight. A comprehensive audit will be part of the initial certification process, and an annual maintenance audit will be required to maintain certification. AHFA also will randomly select companies each year for a third-party compliance audit.

Consumer Communications. One of the unique strengths AHFA brings to the SBD program is its unparalleled relationship with the consumer media and the resulting ability to communicate the attributes of SBD certification to consumers. This will be essential as the number of "eco labels" inevitably grows in future years. A broad-based media outreach is planned in 2008 for the purpose of generating editorial coverage that will help consumers understand and look for the SBD logo. AHFA's award-winning consumer website, www.findyourfurniture.com, will provide further support for the program, displaying the logo on its home page and explaining the program's significance for consumers. Eventually, the AHFA consumer website will list all companies with SBD certification and will link interested consumers to their corporate websites.



SOMETIMES THE SIMPLEST IDEAS ARE THE SMARTEST.

Start with a successful program, then take it to the next level. That's a simple idea. Smart, too. Sustainable by Design begins with EFEC, AHFA's successful environmental management system, then provides a roadmap for taking your corporate environmental commitment to the next level.

CERTIFICATION BEGINS WITH EFEC

AHFA led the industry in promoting sound environmental practices when it developed EFEC in 1999. EFEC – “Enhancing Furniture’s Environmental Culture” – is an environmental management system designed to take furniture manufacturers beyond environmental compliance to true environmental stewardship. Becoming EFEC-registered requires a company to analyze and better understand the environmental impact of its operations, raw materials and finished products. As a result of this process, EFEC-registered companies experience measurable benefits, including:

- ✓ Improved regulatory compliance and better relationships with regulatory agencies;
- ✓ Better management of resources and raw materials;
- ✓ Reduced energy and water consumption;
- ✓ Reduced waste disposal and associated costs; and,
- ✓ Improved overall operational performance and efficiency.

At the heart of EFEC is a corporate culture of conservation and environmental stewardship. Therefore, it makes sense that the first item on the SBD checklist for certification is EFEC registration for all domestic facilities.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Following EFEC registration, there are three additional focus areas on the SBD checklist:

Environmental impact of your supply chain. This area requires:

- ❑ A plan to assist suppliers worldwide in the development and implementation of sustainability programs. The plan will be evaluated each year for continual progress.
- ❑ A chain-of-custody program. Chain of custody is the path from the forest to the mill, through the transformation into final product, through any additional distribution points and on to the end consumer. A secure chain of custody requires that certified products are identified, segregated and accompanied by documentation at all stages.

Overall corporate environmental footprint. Key areas for minimizing your company’s overall environmental footprint include:

- ❑ A plan for energy conservation, water conservation, recycling and solid/hazardous waste minimization. SBD does not establish the performance goals. Each company must develop its own attainable numerical goals. An annual status report details achievements and sets performance goals for the coming year.
- ❑ Use of low VOC/low HAP coatings, renewable fuels, certified lumber, low-emitting UF resins, ATCM-compliant MDF, particleboard and plywood. Again, companies must assign numerical goals for all areas, report annual achievement and continually establish new goals.

Global climate impact. Finally, SBD companies must:

- ❑ Develop a baseline inventory for Greenhouse Gas Emissions and demonstrate annual improvements.
- ❑ Calculate a baseline carbon footprint inventory and demonstrate annual improvements.

Social responsibility. Finally, program participants must provide evidence of the following elements of social performance:

- ❑ A policy defining the company’s commitment to human rights.
- ❑ A program that identifies the company’s potential impacts on the communities in which it operates and describes how possible risks are managed.
- ❑ A policy defining the company’s commitment to internationally recognized labor standards.
- ❑ A program that addresses any aspects of the company’s products that might directly affect the customer’s health and safety.



YOU CAN TAKE CARE OF THE PLANET WHILE YOU DO BUSINESS.

Sound environmental programs are typically touted as promoting a “triple bottom line” – meaning they benefit people and business at the same time they benefit the environment.

AHFA'S TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE:

Benefiting the environment. AHFA endorses all credible approaches to recognizing environmental improvements within the home furnishings industry. Multiple certification programs are inevitable within such a diverse industry and will help quicken the movement toward “greener” home furnishings and a more sustainable industry overall. AHFA's SBD program intentionally offers a broad entry point and criteria that are focused on implementing sustainable business practices. SBD fills the industry's need for a practical and attainable certification program that can move sustainability to a front burner issue for the industry's top CEO's – and guide as many companies as possible to measurable environmental improvements.

Benefiting people. SBD first benefits the employees of participating companies. Environmental awareness training is a key first step toward certification, and some of the most dramatic environmental improvements at companies already enrolled in SBD have resulted from ideas forwarded by front-line employees.

SBD also benefits residents of local communities where member companies are based. As companies focus on energy and water conservation, along with improving recycling and reducing landfill waste, they become better stewards of their local resources.

In addition to furniture employees and the local communities in which they reside, furniture consumers nationwide also will benefit from the SBD program. AHFA's broad focus ensures more environmentally-friendly furnishings in a wide range of styles and price points will become available to consumers.

AHFA does not anticipate that SBD will be the only certification program in the marketplace. As in other sectors, consumers will benefit as healthy competition is allowed to drive both the development of certification programs and improvements to those programs. If certification options are stifled, costs will escalate, consumers will be robbed of choice and the people component in the “triple bottom line” will be diminished.

Benefiting business. AHFA has a proven track record of developing effective industry initiatives that drive fundamental change while still meeting the needs of business. For example, the voluntary Upholstered Furniture Action Council was founded by AHFA in 1978 to make upholstered furniture more resistant to ignition from smoldering cigarettes, which are the leading cause of upholstery fires in the home. Household fires from smoldering ignition have been reduced 79% since that time. The EFEC environmental management system is another example. EFEC is part of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Performance Track, which recognizes the nation's top environmental programs.

AHFA intends to marshal its resources to ensure the greatest number of home furnishings companies benefit from the SBD program. There is no cost to enter the program. The Guidance Document and resources in the Tool Kit will be offered to members at no charge. Whenever possible, the webinar format will be used for no-cost education and training. A cost-effective auditing system ensures the focus stays on environmental improvements and not on driving the audit business.

This does not mean certification comes easy. Sustainable by Design criteria are rigorous and will involve a substantial investment of time and energy by a dedicated management team. Environmental improvements often save money in the long run but also frequently involve expenditures up front. AHFA will work to free your company's resources for these improvements.