

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Considers Biobased in Construction-Related Specifications

The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Office of Construction & Facilities Management (CFM) reviews hundreds of construction-related specifications each year. This review is done on a rotational basis, with all specifications being reviewed approximately once every three or four years. The work is conducted by engineers and architects in the Facilities Standards Service (FSS), which is within CFM's Office of Facilities Planning (OFP).

To comply with federal mandates, and as part of the master specification review process, requirements for the mandatory purchasing of biobased products were included as a priority in the review process for the last several years. Under the leadership of James Symanski, Sustainable Design Program Manager, and with the support and expertise of Architects Jeet Kumar and Ronald Johnson, FSS reviewed construction specifications to ensure that biobased criteria were incorporated into applicable specifications and to remove barriers to the purchase of biobased products within the reviewed specifications. Mr. Symanski believes this review process resulted in raised awareness and thus promoted the use of biobased products in VA construction projects.

For their efforts, the FSS Team earned a 2014 VA Sustainability Achievement Award in the category of Green Purchasing, as well as a commendation from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) on the OMB Sustainability/Energy Scorecard.

According to Mr. Symanski, CFM is now in the process of further enhancing the biobased specification reviews and conducting them via a separate process on a four-year cycle. During this review process, CFM will look for additional opportunities to incorporate biobased criteria into VA's construction specifications. All of VA's construction specifications can be found on VA's [Technical Information Library](#) (TIL).

