Updates for Technical Committee Work

May 28, 2019  Jeff Rezin

The Wallcovering Technical Committee is filled with very talented individuals from key Wallcovering Association membership companies. Last month’s meeting included representatives from these companies: J Josephson; York Wallcoverings; Len-Tex Wallcoverings; Omni WA Inc.; Roysons; Saint Gobain; Koroseal; and Versads; The work completed by this group is substantial. They contribute their insight and expertise on various topics that come in front of the Committee. Mark Rain provides his leadership as chairman, Mary O’Neil as Vice-chair. The topics are usually complicated and require vision and foresight to determine appropriate detailed direction. All Wallcovering Association members receive benefits from the work completed within this active committee. We encourage all members to have representation.

Creating opportunity for alternative wallcovering constructions in NSF 342

A W 102 standard was created by the committee to respond to an Issue Paper presented to the Joint Committee for the NSF 342 standard. This Issue Paper asked to add durability standards for alternative wallcovering constructions.

The NSF standard regarding durability was based primarily on vinyl products. While not all wallcoverings are vinyl, a large percentage of commercial wallcovering has had a vinyl component for a while. Other materials are out there that also want to get credit for durability points in Section 7 of the standard. However, durability standards for other materials are not readily available, so we had to figure out a way to review alternative material constructions.

Specifiers and designers are familiar with the W 101 standard with Types I, II and III performance characteristics. The purpose of this W 102 document is to establish nationally recognized quality standards for alternative constructions other than vinyl wallcovering for institutional and commercial use, and to provide producers, distributors and users with a basis for a common understanding of the characteristics of the product. The W 102 uses the W 101 as a starting point for alternative constructions. Because of the familiarity that already exists within the wallcovering market with vinyl durability, this was determined to be a basis for evaluating alternative constructions. This provides an opportunity for the alternative constructions to start with this level of testing and offer explanations for results observed.

An example is the Physical Test Requirement for Weight. Because of the specific gravity of vinyl, weight can be determined in ounces per square yard. A material with a lower specific gravity might be a viable material as a wallcovering product, but cannot meet this weight requirement.
The W 102 is used to document each Physical Test Requirement just like a vinyl product, but are asked to provide explanations why their result varies from a vinyl product (Section 6.2 of the W 102 Standard). Additionally, other specifications and corresponding results can be provided in Section 6.3 of the W 102.

This information is presented in a way that a specifier or designer can review the product with their existing familiarity for vinyl wallcovering and make their own determination if this alternative construction material is suitable to their particular application. This also provides an opportunity to look at the physical characteristics of new alternative constructions. We do not want to miss new materials that have a chance for great success in the future.

**Transparency Documentation for Certified NSF 342 Products**

Transparency is taking on a significant role in environmental excellence achievement for product manufacturing. By understanding the most complicated parts of the manufacturing and distribution of these products, it is possible to show that these complexities are understood and are being carefully reviewed. By knowing this information, it is possible to determine where efforts are best applied to make environmental improvements in processes being tracked.

The NSF 342 standard is divided into key sections addressing different environmental parameters. The points a company receives is based on their particular achievements. Transparency documentation shows that the certified company understands the details of improving environmental performance. The scorecard shows how many points were achieved in each environmental parameter. Transparency is intended to demonstrate an organization’s expertise in environmental performance. By showing where points were achieved, the environmental story of the product creation can be explained.

Scorecards are available from NSF for Certified NSF 342 Products. These scorecards are intended as Transparency Documentation for Certified NSF 342 Products. Along with EPDs and HPDs, these “scorecards” show the areas each company has excelled to create their certified products.

**Marketing NSF 342 Certified Products**

Marketing the NSF 342 certified products was identified as a key issue. The use of this standard certainly provides a line in the sand of where the industry is today with environmental issues. It is critical that specifiers and designers understand the importance of these certifications as a way to establish criteria for material selection in projects. Significant standards already call out and credit NSF 342 certified products within the GSA P100, USGBC LEED projects and others.

In order to establish the importance of certification, the technical committee requested a marketing effort to raise awareness of this sustainability effort. Companies need to be able to see that their efforts are recognized and that having certified products offers a way to demonstrate the industry’s
commitment to making products better by understanding environmental goals too. Discussions have begun with the WA Marketing team. Your company’s participation in this effort is critical.

We have certified products in the marketplace. We need to make sure that this added value is documented and this story is being told.