

Hickory Chair achieves sustainable status

Company is fifth to meet AHFA standard

By Heath E. Combs -- Furniture Today, April 30, 2010

HICKORY, N.C. — Manufacturer Hickory Chair has achieved the American Home Furnishings Alliance's Sustainable by Design certification.

In 2008, the company entered the AHFA's voluntary environmental management program called EFEC, for Enhancing Furniture's Environmental Culture.

The company had to show improvements in its management of resources and raw materials, reduction in energy and water use and reductions in waste disposal. It improved machine utilization and eliminated non-value-added operations, which improved productivity and reduced energy and materials usage.

Later, Hickory Chair won the AHFA's first Sage Award recognizing sustainable business practices, social responsibility and profitable growth.

Then it began Sustainable by Design certification, which required it further evaluate its environmental footprint. The company established goals and a system for measuring achievement in areas including supply chain management, energy conservation, use of more sustainable and eco-friendly materials, greenhouse gas emission and carbon footprint.

Among its improvements have been reducing landfill waste by 178 tons in 2007 and another 125 tons in 2008. Those reductions continued in 2009. A wood grinder purchased in 2008 improved use of wood scrap as boiler fuel.

In addition to Hickory Chair, C.R. Laine, Kincaid Furniture, American Drew and Lea Inds. have achieved SBD certification.

Hickory Chair has been repurposing waste materials since 1997 when it instituted its EDGE program, which stands for Employees Dedicated to Growth and Excellence.

"As we made great progress in our recycling and repurposing efforts, we realized that we needed to design the waste out of the process from the beginning," said Hickory Chair President Jay Reardon.