

INPUT OUTPUT

Seeing Green

Reminder to attendees heading to the ASME International Mechanical Engineering Congress & Exposition this month: don't miss the roof.

There are plenty of spots around the Vancouver Convention and Exhibition Centre, where Congress kicks off Nov. 12, to view the new

for Canadian climates, construction practices, and regulations, and is administered by the Canada Green Building Council.

For the center, the decision to seek LEED certification began with designs for the new building back in 2004, Wong said.

"When we started discussions, we

say they haven't seen here in a long time," Wong said.

» The building is heated and cooled by seawater. It also contains desalination and black-water treatment plants on site, Wong said. Used water from restrooms and the shower facilities is cleaned and purified within the building and circulated for nonpotable use. "We're still hooked up to the municipal water supply for consumption purposes," Wong said.

» A system turns lights on and off automatically to manage energy consumption. Light shades are also automatically deployed on sunny days and are tied via sensors to the heating and air conditioning system.

Wong asks visitors to be on the lookout for the organics-only recycling bins located around the facility.

This is the place for banana peels and dinner scraps that can be composted.

Peels may be more prevalent than at other conference locations, because the Vancouver Centre cooks almost everything from scratch. "We make our meals from locally sourced products to minimize our use of packaged goods," she said.

"A lot of the food is made fresh from scratch so there isn't a lot of disposables generated from the kitchen."

In keeping with green efforts, food vendors also deliver in bulk and in reusable containers. They will take back their containers after transferring the contents to the convention center's kitchen, Wong said.

She discouraged those at the conference from drinking from bottled water containers, which add to the plastic waste and recycling stream.

"Vancouver is fortunate to have clean drinking water," she said.

So attendees should feel free to drink directly from water fountains, to gaze out at the field of green or the inlet waters during breaks, and to take in all green aspects of the center.

JEAN THILMANY



A roof garden crowns the Vancouver Convention and Exhibition Centre.

building's roof garden, said Catherine Wong, the convention center's vice president of operations. The six-acre roof is filled with more than 400,000 indigenous plants and grasses and helps keep the building cool, she said.

The center's West Building, which opened in April 2009, received platinum LEED certification, the highest level of Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certification.

Kevin Krueger, Canadian Minister of Tourism, Culture, and the Arts, called the center "a model of sustainability that will set a new standard."

The building and construction industry formalized green building methods in the late 1990s. The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, or LEED, green building rating system was developed in 1998 by the U.S. Green Building Council in Washington, D.C., to set standards for environmentally sustainable construction. The program certifies buildings based on benchmarks for designing, building, and operating environmentally friendly buildings.

The Canadian rating system followed in Vancouver is an adaptation of the United States system, tailored



The Convention Centre's naturally lit hallways are good for watching the outdoors.

knew we had an opportunity to build a building that functioned as a convention center but also used the latest in technology and knowledge and construction know-how for a highly environmentally sustainable building," Wong said.

Here are some of those environmentally sustainable practices of the center:

» Forty percent of the West Building juts over the ocean and is built on an ocean inlet. The building's designers proposed a cleanup of the waterfront, now enacted, and included in their building plans what's called a habitat skirt—a series of concrete steps that runs from building's edge to the water—that acts as a marine rehabilitation program. "We have a lot of marine life coming back to this site that experts