Thinking Sustainability from the "Get-go"

Sara Sweeney

Fizzano Brothers industry takes environmental performance and social responsibility seriously

THE U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION Agency dealt a potential blow to concrete products this year. In May 2009, proposed amendments to the national emission standard for hazardous air pollutants (NESHAP) were announced for the Portland cement manufacturing industry. At a time when building more sustainably is paramount, one of the most sustainable and durable materials known to humankind, concrete, and its family of products, is potentially in danger.

Let's be clear: concrete products are green and the cement industry takes environmental performance and social responsibility seriously. Is the industry perfect? No. But it continues to strive for better performance every day. In addition, this tenet of social and environmental responsibility is taken seriously by all in the concrete products industry, including a company celebrating its 75th anniversary in 2010, Fizzano Brothers Concrete Products, Inc.

Fizzano Brothers opened its doors in 1935, the brain child of four brothers who purchased a used "Hobbs" block machine. From the get-go, Fizzano was thinking sustainability. At the time, concrete block products were known as cinder block. Cinders, a by product of the coal burning process, were the aggregates of choice for their fledgling business. The Fizzano Brothers got their cinders from the Baldwin Locomotive Works in Eddystone, PA. "Although highly popular today, thinking green and using recycled material is nothing new to Fizzano," according to Tony Fizzano the son of one of the original founders and President of the company. Fizzano Brothers works diligently with clients pursuing LEED Certification, ensuring their high-quality concrete products meet the recycled content requirements of the LEED Rating System.

As Fizzano Brothers grew in size, the company continued to think sustainably. They strategically located their three manufacturing facilities south, north and west of Philadelphia, in Crum Lynne, Trevose, and Exton, Pennsylvania, respectively. This enables the company to easily serve customers in the Mid-Atlantic region, cutting down on transportation and associated emissions, as well as offering solid employment opportunities to citizens of these communities.

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The original "Hobbs" block machine, fully restored, in its place of honor at Fizzano's main office

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Mixing operation: Raw aggregates are blended with cement and special additives to create the desired mix design

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Mixed concrete delivered to the block molding machines

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A newly formed pallet of 8x16 hollow being conveyed to the rotoclave curing chamber

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Cured block from the rotoclave curing chamber being conveyed to the packaging operation

-6-
Cured block in storage yard ready for delivery

The plants and their respective buildings also have small overall carbon footprints. Built of masonry, they were designed to be compact, efficient and adaptable facilities for the growing company. As a result, each facility also requires little energy to heat and cool. "All of our buildings were designed with sustainability, durability, fire safety and energy efficiency in mind", added Rocky Fizzano Vice President of the company and manager of the Exton plant which manufactures all of the colored architectural products for the company. Fizzano Brothers is also working towards the National Concrete Masonry Association's (NCMA) Green Plant Certification for each facility, further evidence of their continuing commitment to environmental and social responsibility. Fizzano Brothers also participated in, and completed, NCMA's product life cycles study "*Environmental Life Cycle Inventory of Concrete Masonry and Concrete Hardscape Products*".

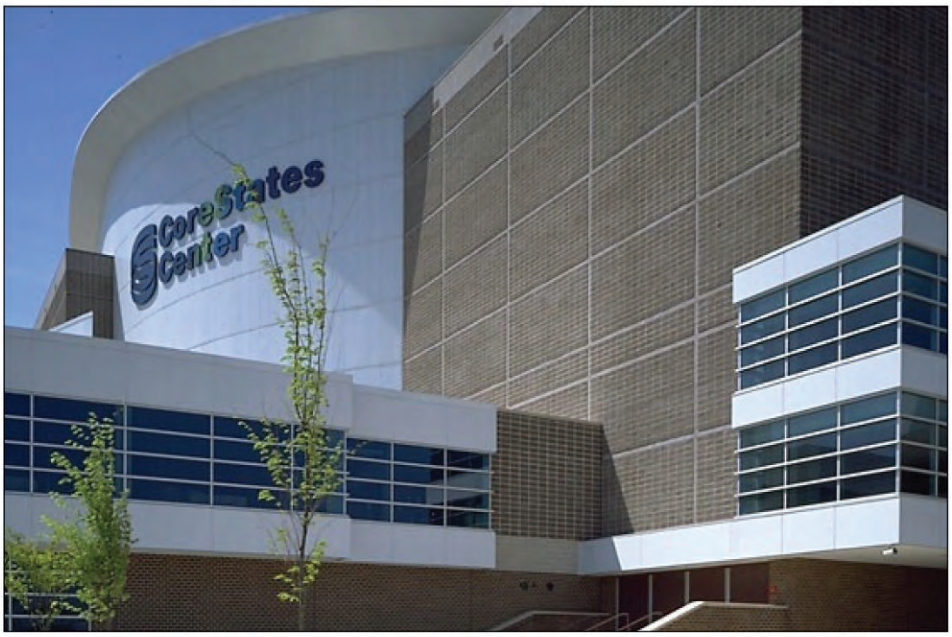
Fizzano has built their company- and their reputation one block at a time.

Fizzano Brothers has also been mindful of their overall energy use when it comes to making their high-quality concrete products as well. Fizzano utilizes giant underground curing chambers, to cure their concrete products. These rotoaclaves are incredibly energy efficient and provide the optimum cure for the product.

Aside from these green attributes, Fizzano Brothers also takes the craft of making block seriously. If you look at the block machine today, it is still an art form all its own, similar to pottery making. Except in this case, it is not human hands shaping and forming the material, but a highly efficient machine which molds concrete products from the finest of ingredients, meticulously selected and evaluated by Fizzano Brothers. Frank Lloyd Wright said about concrete block: "What about the concrete block? It (is) the cheapest and ugliest thing in the building world. It (lives) mostly in the architectural gutter as an imitation of rock-faced stone. Why not see what (can) be done with the gutter rat...why would it not be fit for a new phase of...our ...architecture? It (will) be permanent, noble, beautiful."

This statement is just as true now as it was when Mr. Wright made it. Fizzano Brothers Concrete works each day, making sure their concrete products are indeed permanent, noble, and beautiful, helping to build a built environment which is lasting, all the while holding true to being an environmentally and socially responsible company; they think and act sustainably and have so since their founding. So happy early anniversary to Fizzano Brothers Concrete Products, and may they continue to provide inspiration and guidance to the concrete products industry.■

Sara Sweeney, RA, CSI, CDT, LEED AP, HERS Rater CIP, GreenFaith Fellow, is Founder and Principal of EcoVision Green Solutions Services LLC, a solutions based sustainable building research and consulting firm. She has been practicing and teaching sustainable design tenets the whole of her 20 year architectural career.



Wachovia: Home of the Sixers and Flyers.
This project was specified with Fizzano colored architectural products.

Fizzano Bros. Main Office in Crum Lynne, Pennsylvania

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