

Central Vacuum Systems Earn National Green Building Points ANSI, NAHB Cite Indoor Environment Enhancement

WASHINGTON, D.C. –The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) has given final approval to a national green building certification system that awards five points toward new indoor environmental quality standards for a home equipped with a central vacuum system and three points for homes with MERV 8 or greater air filtration.

The new standards developed by the National Association of Homebuilders (NAHB) and ratified by ANSI on Jan. 29 offer architects, builders and consumers a consistent slate of specifications to design, build and purchase the most energy efficient, resource efficient and healthiest homes in their communities.

The standards set up four levels of green certification: Bronze, Silver, Gold and Emerald and set minimum point thresholds for each. Points can be earned for a wide variety of building practices and the use of green building products. The standards also set minimum point thresholds for each of six green building categories:

- Lot Design, Preparation and Development;
- Resource Efficiency;
- Energy Efficiency;
- Water Efficiency;
- Indoor Environmental Quality; and
- Operation, Maintenance and Building Owner Education.

Section 902.5 of the new standards list a central vacuum system vented to the outside as an option that will earn five points toward meeting the Indoor Environmental Quality thresholds, which range from 36 points for Bronze Level certification to 140 points for Emerald Level certification. The five points allocated for central vacuums are more than any other optional indoor environmental quality improvement to a home. Section 902.2.3 of the standards allocate three points if "MERV filters 8 or greater are installed on central air systems. Designer or installer is to verify that the HVAC equipment is able to accommodate the greater pressure drop of MERV 8 filters."

Inclusion of central vacuum systems in the National Green Building Standards caps efforts that began in 2001 when the manufacturer of Beam Central Vacuum Systems commissioned a clinical study proving that use of a central vacuum system improves indoor air quality. The study of allergy patients by the University of California, Davis, School of Medicine found that patients' symptoms improved 40- to 61 percent when they switched from cleaning their homes with a conventional upright vacuum to cleaning with a Beam Central Vacuum System.

Beam HEPA Air Filtration Systems and are 99.97 percent efficient at removing airborne particulate 0.3 microns and larger. They deliver the equivalent of MERV 16 filtration, the highest level of filtration available.

"The National Green Building Standards reflect the rapidly growing demand of home buyers for healthy living environments that can be sustained for the lifetime of the home," says Larry Hartley, vice president of sales and marketing for Electrolux Central Vacuum Systems.

Hartley notes that another leading green building program, the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED for Homes, requires a minimum of MERV 8 air filtration and awards an additional 2 certification points for filtration of MERV 13 or greater. LEED for homes also awards a certification point for a home equipped with a central vacuum system vented outdoors.

He predicts the endorsements will accelerate the penetration of central vacuums and HEPA Air Filtration Systems in both new and existing homes. A recent survey of builders by the National Association of Homebuilders study found that nearly one-third of new luxury homes and 15 percent of "move-up" homes were equipped with central vacuum systems.

A complete copy of the new National Green Building Standards may be purchased from the National Association of Homebuilders at http://store.builderbooks.com/cgi-bin/builderbooks/874?id=ZdqRc4vZ&mv_pc=23

The NAHB also offers a free online home scoring tool on www.NAHBGreen.org that allows users to score specific building and remodeling projects to the Standard.

For more information about the National Green Building Standards, and Beam Central Vacuum and HEPA Air Filtration Systems, or to locate a Beam Dealer, visit www.beam.com.