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BSU building gets blue coat

Use of permeable air barrier shows way for uses in other Idaho projects

By Dani Grigg
IDAHO CONSTRUCTION REVIEW

Climbing from one level of Boise State's new Center for Environmental Science and Economic Development, layers of its progress peel away.

On the first floor, the interior is starting to take shape: drywall is up and finishing touches are being applied to mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems.

Gradually, drywall then insulation and technical systems disappear, leaving the fifth floor largely skeletal.

The building is scheduled for a late 2010 finish with contractual turnover on March 23, 2011, and crews led by general contractor ESI of Meridian are working at a brisk pace to get it done.

One recent exterior step was the spray-on application by Nampa-based Cascade Sealants of a bright blue permeable air barrier. The Carlisle product serves to direct the air flow to certain areas of the building while protecting it from pollutants, odors and moisture.

The added insulation from the barrier contributes to a building's energy efficiency and can chalk up from one to four points in the U.S. Green Building Council's green rating system, said Matt Stenshoel of Mountain West Products, a local Carlisle representative.

The CESED building is not aiming for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certification from the USGBC, though its energy efficiency is expected to be 30 percent better than standard, and its design incorporates

sustainability principles in site development, water efficiency, materials, resources and indoor air quality.

Use of the permeable air barrier is rare in Idaho – its popularity is strongest on the East and West coasts. The product was specified by the project's Los Angeles architect.

Stenshoel said an important factor in Idaho's lag behind the coasts in adoption of green building products and techniques is the Gem State's cheap energy. That makes the perceived need for energy efficiency less urgent.

Project Superintendent Jamal Nelson of ESI said working with the permeable air barrier requires special care.

"It's sensitive to temperature and precipitation, so there are narrow bands of time when the product can be applied," he said.

A few area architects have visited the CESED site to look at the product's use. Nelson said he thinks it will soon start to catch on more broadly in the Treasure Valley.

Application of the permeable air barrier is not the only thing going on in the 97,000-square-foot building – at any given moment there are between 100 and 120 workmen on site. There are close to 30 subcontractors involved in the project.

They're hanging drywall, polishing concrete, roughing in mechanical and electrical systems, installing fire sprinklers, and more.

But Nelson said the number of workers is not the most important factor in pulling off a



The exterior spray-on application by Nampa-based Cascade Sealants coats the BSU building in a bright blue permeable air barrier.

GRIGG/ICR

project on deadline.

"The key to executing a contract on time is having a clearly defined game plan from the start of the job," he said. "It's not necessarily how many bodies you have on site as how productive those bodies are."

He said it's important to hold everyone accountable and have them commit to the deadlines.

Many of the materials are being fabricated in plants throughout the Treasure Valley. For example, the curtain-wall panels for the building's exterior were manufactured by D & A Glass in Meridian, and the HVAC is being done by Hobson Fabricating Inc. of

Boise.

Other notable subcontractors on the project include Boise-based TMC Inc., which handled the brick and precast work, and Tri-State Electric, also of Boise.

ESI's bid of \$18.6 million was selected in early 2009 from 11 general contractor bids. The architect, RBB Architects Inc., of Los Angeles, was selected about 18 months earlier.

The building will house the departments of geosciences, civil engineering, public policy and administration, and political science. It is the first building devoted to research the university has ever built.

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