The Building America Solution Center is a web tool connecting users to thousands of pieces of building science information developed by the U.S. Department of Energy’s Building America program and its research partners.

DOE’s Building America program has funded decades of research by some of the brightest minds in the field of building science. However, the practical application of this knowledge by builders, contractors, and homeowners in the field has been somewhat hampered by lack of accessibility. The information has been slow to get published, located in disparate locations, not often recognizable as sponsored by DOE, difficult to search for, inconsistently formatted, and written in technical language, rather than understandable instructions.

The Building America Solution Center, developed by the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory for DOE, brings this information together in a single web-based tool that is easily accessible and understandable by a multitude of users. By increasing accessibility, the Solution Center is getting information into the hands of more builders, renovators, inspectors, code officials, and other building professionals. Increasing the speed and ease with which builders can find this information makes them more likely to put the information into practice.

The accessibility and search capabilities encourage builders and installers to use this resource. A mobile field kit feature allows users to store guides and drawings on their mobile devices for use in the field. The visual nature of the content, which includes illustrated how-to steps, right and wrong photos, CAD drawings, and video, encourages use of the Solution Center for training. Several organizations have mentioned they will be using the Solution Center for code implementation support.

The Solution Center provides a vital link between building science research, market transformation programs, and the builders and installers who create and re-create homes for the marketplace. The BASC conveys the latest research results to help builders meet partnering program goals. For example, homes built to the ENERGY STAR Version 3 checklist are approximately 20% more efficient than homes built...
to the 2009 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC), and information supporting this program was the first priority in launching the Solution Center. The DOE Challenge Home objective is at least 30% more efficient than IECC 2009 and will result in homes that are zero net-energy ready. Future work will also include technical support for existing homes.

While the Solution Center has only been publicly available since January 2013, it has received over 45,500 unique visitors. The site is too new to make broad statements, but the average amount of time users are staying on the pages generally continues to climb, indicating users are finding value in the content. The average time a user spent on each page was about 2.4 minutes in May and about 2.1 minutes in June, up from 1.1 minutes in January.

Another way to quantify results is to evaluate how partnering programs are using the Solution Center. ENERGY STAR for New Homes has dropped its support of field guides and now links to the Solution Center as its source for technical information for participating builders. A regional ENERGY STAR program for new homes in the Pacific Northwest has followed suit and, in addition, has developed a template for raters to download information directly from the Solution Center and package it for builders. At least three code agencies and the DOE Building Energy Codes Program have linked to the Solution Center.

The Building America Solution Center makes world-class research accessible to builders and contractors everywhere.

SOLUTION CENTER WEBSITE
STATISTICS JAN – AUG 2013

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REFERENCES


