

PROGRESS ENERGY FIRST UTILITY IN NATION TO RECYCLE OLD CEILING TILES RATHER THAN DUMPING THEM IN LANDFILLS

North Carolina Utility Fuels Its Commitment to Environment By Reclaiming Nearly 35 Tons of Suspended Ceiling Panels from Office Renovation Project

Being an environmentally responsible corporate citizen is a major objective of Progress Energy (formerly known as Carolina Power & Light), a regional utility that serves more than 1.2 million customers in North Carolina and South Carolina.

So, when it decided to overhaul its downtown Raleigh, NC headquarters, it came as no surprise that the utility was quick to take advantage of a ceiling recycling program recently introduced by Armstrong World Industries, the country's largest manufacturer of acoustical ceilings.

According to Armstrong officials, Progress Energy is the first utility in the nation to participate in the program. And, they hope the pioneering recycling effort will have an impact on other utilities around the country.

The program, which is the first of its kind, enables commercial building owners to ship old suspended ceilings from renovation projects to an Armstrong ceiling plant as an alternative to landfill disposal. As part of the program, Armstrong even pays freight costs for shipping the old ceilings, which it uses as raw materials in the manufacture of new high-performance acoustical ceilings.

"Our goal is to help reduce the generation of solid waste," explains Michael Hardy, Progress Energy's construction site manager. "Armstrong's recycling program provides us with that opportunity to be environmentally responsible."

Participation in Program Involves Three Steps

To participate in the Armstrong program, a building owner must first verify that the old acoustical ceiling panels can be recycled. Neither the old nor the new ceilings need to be Armstrong products to qualify.

Following verification, owners must then stack their old ceiling tiles on pallets and wrap them for pick-up. Once there is a full trailer load of old ceilings, the owner simply contacts Armstrong. The company will then arrange for a truck to pick up the material anywhere in the continental United States and transfer it to its nearest manufacturing facility.

In a recent time analysis, the process for recycling old ceilings proved to be nearly as fast as dumping them, so the program has little, if any, adverse impact on larger demolition schedules. It can also be less expensive than the cost of local handling and transport, and dumpster and landfill fees.

70,000 Square Feet of Ceiling Tiles Recycled

Progress Energy is currently in the midst of a \$1.1 million overhaul of its Raleigh facilities. Thus far, the utility has refurbished three buildings, replacing old furniture as well as existing carpeting, walls and ceilings.

In the process, Progress has removed and recycled 70,000 square feet, or nearly 35 tons, of old ceiling tiles and replaced them with new Cortega ceiling panels from Armstrong. By the time the refurbishing effort is complete, Hardy estimates that an additional 45,000 square feet of old ceiling tiles will be replaced.

Hardy learned of the unique ceiling recycling program from Southeastern Acoustical, a North Carolina contracting firm that has supplied and installed the bulk of the utility's acoustical product requirements for the past four years.

Under the terms of its agreement with Progress, after Southeastern delivers new ceiling panels to the job site, it palletizes and shrink wraps the old tiles and hauls them back to its Buies Creek, NC warehouse. Armstrong, in turn, then dispatches a truck to Southeastern's warehouse, where the old Progress tiles are re-loaded and hauled to the Armstrong manufacturing plant in Pensacola, FL.



case study

To date, Southeastern has delivered four trailer loads of new Armstrong ceiling tiles to Progress Energy's facilities, while retrieving four truckloads of old tiles for use in the recycling program.

For its efforts, Southeastern charges Progress a fee that approximates what the utility would pay to dispose of the old tiles at local landfills. However, as Progress Energy's Hardy points out, the expenditure is not an issue. "The combination of the low cost and the opportunity to demonstrate environmental stewardship is what makes this program so attractive to us," he states.

"In this part of North Carolina, we're witnessing a construction boom that has overwhelmed our landfills," he adds. "As a result, we're committed to finding alternative ways to dispose of construction waste." The Armstrong program helps him address the problem in an environmentally prudent way.

To obtain additional information on the Ceiling Recycling Program, call 1-877-ARMSTRONG (1-877-276-7876), or visit armstrong.com/recycling on the Internet for complete product information.