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RPM International helps lead reconstruction efforts in Greensburg, Kansas, US

Greensburg rising

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Greensburg, Kansas prepares to reemerge from a devastating tornado as the greenest town in America. RPM International is helping lead the reconstruction.

THE TORNADO that ripped through **Greensburg, Kansas, US** on the night of May 4, 2007, left **total devastation** in its wake. A record 1.7 miles wide (versus an average width of 75 yards), the Category 5 tornado destroyed 95% of the town, including all churches, schools and downtown businesses. Eleven of its 1,200 residents were killed and most left homeless, as 961 homes were destroyed.

The people decided to rebuild, but how do you put the pieces back together to bring back residents and businesses? The answer was to rebuild the town - bigger, stronger and Greener.

Greensburg is now poised to reemerge as a revitalized town befitting its name. The town is rebuilding itself as a "model green community," according to Daniel Wallach, executive director of **Greensburg GreenTown**, a nonprofit organization dedicated to help rebuild the town sustainably.



GREENSBURG

RPM'S MATERIALS AND EXPERTISE

Helping lead the massive reconstruction effort is Medina, Ohio, US-based coatings and sealants company **RPM International**, which has provided building materials as well as expertise in sustainable construction.

"We were touched by the magnitude of the tragedy. Plus the exciting vision for the town coincided with our interest in advancing sustainable design and our ability to support such a project," Randy Korach, president and chief operating officer of RPM Building Solutions, told *ICIS Chemical Business*.

RPM started talking with town officials within months of the disaster and decided to lend support. The company has made contributions of over 1,000 man hours and \$250,000 in labor and material donations and discounts.

"People say building sustainably takes time - until disaster strikes," said RPM chairman and CEO Frank Sullivan, at its annual meeting with the financial community at the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) this past July. "We were uniquely positioned to respond, and now we are helping Greensburg build an eco-town."

At the event, RPM also invited local officials from Greensburg to speak about the rebuilding efforts.

"We needed to do something different to attract businesses and families," said Darin Headrick, superintendent of schools at Greensburg. "Sustainability is providing new hope."

The goal: to have all city structures built to top-level **Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)** certification standards.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

The key component to making buildings more energy efficient involves eliminating gaps and weak areas in the building envelope - this includes the foundation, roof, wall, doors and windows.

RPM subsidiaries **Tremco Commercial Sealants and Waterproofing Division**, Tremco Roofing and Building Maintenance Division, **Stonhard** (flooring systems), **Euclid Chemical** (concrete and admixtures), **DAP** (patch and repair products) and **Dryvit** (exterior insulation and finish systems) are all involved in the rebuilding efforts.

Greensburg has over 30 commercial and public building projects reaching for at least LEED-certified or 30% energy savings, according to the US Department of Energy's **National Renewable Energy Laboratory**. And the town will have the highest density of LEED Platinum projects in the US, with 40-50% energy savings.

RPM is involved in the reconstruction of the courthouse, county jail, hospital, school, business incubator, county commons, visitor center, city hall and the model eco-homes which feature cutting-edge sustainable designs - but can also withstand another Category-5 storm.

"We're involved on a variety of levels - from design review, providing support on sustainable design practices, to the supply of materials and providing onsite support and installation," says Korach. "It's been pretty well embraced by community members."

The construction of the first LEED Platinum critical access hospital is well under way in Greensburg, notes Mary Sweet, administrator at the **Kiowa County Memorial Hospital**.

"We just didn't know how to rebuild sustainably. That's where RPM stepped in, with a focus on the building envelope design and construction to maximize energy efficiency and sustainability," she said at the NYSE event.

The hospital will aim to achieve 40% energy cost savings compared to a typical hospital through a well-insulated building envelope, allowing for more daylight in patient rooms and nurse's stations, and installing a 50 kilowatt wind turbine, among other measures.

RPM subsidiary **Stonhard**, which produces seamless floor, wall and lining systems, completed the first phase of installing floors in the



RPM's eco-home can withstand a Category-5 storm
RPM

hospital in October 2009.

The company installed its Stonshield UTS textured epoxy floor system in the hospital's kitchen/dietary area. The system cures to a durable and impact, temperature and chemical-resistant floor. The Tremco division is providing the sealants used to make the building more energy efficient.

"Products we make, whether they're air barriers, sealants, coatings or joint treatments, essentially stop the movement of air through substrates where they're not intended to flow," notes Korach. "If you have a drafty window, door or wall or roof-to-wall joint, you want to make sure you seal that up."

"The vision is to create a new future "

Randy Korach, president and chief operating officer, RPM Building Solutions

Next up will be the installation of 1,600 square feet of Stonres RTZ urethane floors in the hospital's trauma area. The material reduces sound, resists staining from blood and is easy to clean, notes RPM. The Kiowa County Memorial Hospital is set to open early this year.

The kindergarten-to-12th-grade school is also being rebuilt to LEED for Schools Platinum status, and will cut energy use by around 50% versus traditional schools. It features RPM's single-ply reflective roofing system, and will also be powered by a 50 KW wind turbine. The school is slated to open in 2010.

A NEW VISION TO DRAW BUSINESSES

Much of the reconstruction is expected to be completed by the end of 2011, says Korach.

"The vision is to create a new future - a vibrant and growing town in middle America, versus a slowly dying one," he says. "A truly sustainable community carries a great competitive advantage in drawing people and businesses. The fate of Greensburg was pretty well cast before this tragedy - it was another dying American outpost. Now, I think its future is on a different trajectory."

Greensburg could draw in corporations that are focused on providing sustainable products, says Korach. "It wouldn't surprise me if an automotive company focused on sustainable products or manufacturing operation decided that this would be a great location for its next site. It's an interesting model and time will tell."

So far, many residents have returned and new ones have settled in. "We have 900 residents now," says Sweet. "Before the storm, we had 1,200. It's a good sign."

Read the ICIS Green Chemicals blog

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