Taking the Lead On LEED

Rey Castro speaks to an international conference about the Center's impressive sustainability achievements.

Rey Castro, the Convention Center's Chief Building Engineer, at the GreenBuild San Francisco conference in November.

Photos courtesy Convention Center, and from Alive! archives

Last November, Rey Castro, Chief Building Engineer, Convention Center, co-presented a study on the Center's impressive success in sustainability. He was part of a presentation by equipment manufacturer Siemens at the GreenBuild San Francisco conference, speaking on how the Convention Center became the largest in the United States to achieve LEED gold status for existing buildings.

Back in 2008, the Convention Center's team of engineers and administrators created the world's first convention center to achieve LEED silver status for existing buildings. They took their game up a notch in 2010, achieving gold status. They intend to take their efforts all the way to platinum status, although that project has not been formally approved yet.

And now, through presentations like the in San Francisco in November, the Convention Center green team is sharing its knowledge with the rest of the world on how to retrofit existing buildings to make them more sustainable.

LEED – Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design – is an internationally recognized green building certification system, providing third-party verification that a building or community was designed and built using strategies aimed at improving performance across all the metrics that matter most. "When comparing new construction projects to existing buildings (EB), EB facilities don't have the luxury of incorporating pre-planned green measures. This makes it all the more challenging and costly to achieve LEED-EB status at any level for any facility," Rey Castro says.

Going Gold

In November 2010, the Convention Center announced that it had achieved LEED gold status for existing buildings.

"While our primary goal, albeit challenging, was to achieve the LEED-EB silver level, surpassing that goal by achieving LEED-EB Re-Certification at the gold level defines the culture of excellence at LACC. We LEED by example," said Pouria Abbassi, P.E., CEO and General Manager of LACC, when the Convention Center achieved gold status in 2010.

The Convention Center was the only and largest existing building in the City of Los Angeles building / facility portfolio to become LEED-EB certified back in September 2008. The Convention Center attained the LEED-EB gold level for 4.1 million square feet of built on a 54-acre property that was opened back in 1971 with the newest portion completed in 1993. With its gold status, the Convention Center became the largest convention center in the nation to achieve this milestone.

Good going, Convention Center!

"The LEED process was one of the hardest projects I've ever dealt with before."
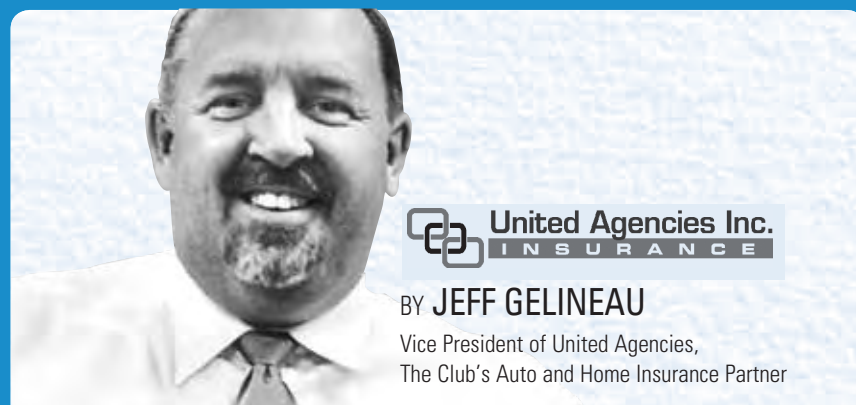
— Rey Castro, Chief Building Engineer, Convention Center, from April 2009 *Alive!*

Taking Stock

If you are like most people, you received some shiny new things for Christmas. Maybe a new TV? A new computer? Some new jewelry?

Now is an ideal time to update or create a home inventory. You never know when a disaster will strike, but you can be prepared by having a home inventory.

Replacing your home after a loss is very important, but replacing your contents is one of the most important aspects of picking up the pieces and putting your life back together.

Having an up-to-date inventory will help you:

- Purchase enough insurance
- Get your insurance claim settled faster
- Substantiate losses for your income tax return.

Making a list of your belongings, taking some photos and saving receipts is fairly easy. But the important part is saving this information somewhere else besides in your house. It won't do you any good if your inventory list burns up with all of your stuff.

This is where the Internet provides some great solutions. With the advent of digital cameras and camera phones, it's easy to upload your photos. You can also upload your list to a free online storage site, like Google Drive or X-Drive.

A great solution is the free Website and service provided by the Insurance Information Institute – www.knowyourstuff.org is a fun and simple solution to this important issue. With a click of your mouse, you can update your list as you buy something new.

Getting Started

There are many ways to create a home inventory. It may seem hard at first to record information about everything you have in your house, but don't let that put you off. First, decide on a way to make an inventory that works for you. You can do it room by room, category by category (furniture, electronics, etc.), from newest items to oldest or from most expensive purchases to less expensive ones.

Taking Inventory

There are different ways to making your list. You can write everything down in a notebook, for example. Or you can take pictures, writing information on the back of the photos or putting information on your computer. If you have a video camera, you can walk through your house filming and describing the contents at the same time. If you have a personal computer, you can sign up for free online software that makes creating and keeping a home inventory easy at: www.knowyourstuff.org

That site also has iPhone and Android apps to make it even easier!

Keep receipts when they are available and note the cost for the item, when you bought it and other information about the make and model.

Expensive items including jewelry and artwork may need to be insured separately. Ask your insurance agent whether you need a floater for your homeowner's policy.

Store a copy of your inventory in a safe place outside of you home — with a friend or in a safe deposit box. (If your inventory is electronic, store it on a disk.) That way you'll be sure to have something to give your insurance representative if your home is damaged. Also, whenever you make a significant purchase, remember to add the information to your inventory while the details are fresh in your mind.

Big-Ticket Items

Make note of expensive items, including jewelry, furs and collectibles. Valuable items may need separate insurance. But don't forget more common-place items including toys, CDs and clothing.

Taking Photographs

Along with the written information, consider adding photographs of your possessions, which can be done easily with a digital camera. Those with film cameras can scan printed photographs or have their film developer save the images to a disk. You can always simply store your print photographs with a copy of your inventory.

Videotape It

Walk through your house or apartment videotaping the contents. Remember to open drawers and closets. One advantage of videotape is that you can narrate what you are filming.

Many homeowners' insurance companies have pamphlets to help you organize an inventory. Feel free to call our agency if you would like us to order you a copy, have any questions about what we can do for you, would like to know what it would cost to buy your insurance through us, or would like a question answered on any type of insurance.

Be safe and have fun!