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TrailBlazer

RVing and Hiking the
Blue Ridge Parkway

Going Green
Evergreen RVs

GOING GREEN

By Steve Froese



green [grēn], adjective

1. beneficial to the environment, using processes and/or technologies that are "environmentally friendly." see also "eco-friendly."

Since the dawn of industrialization, society has largely taken the environment for granted, and has consumed vast amounts of energy and materials unnecessarily. During the past few years, many industries have realized the importance of going green and the positive impact it can have on the environment. This has occurred mainly in the technology sector, but increasingly more traditional businesses are moving in this direction. The RV industry has taken notice of the importance of being environmentally friendly and this trend was promoted at the annual national RV trade show in Louisville in December. Some of the RV companies have demonstrated their interest and are now producing green coaches.

TRA Certification™¹ is a company committed to assisting and identifying RV manufacturers that are choosing to implement green initiatives. Recently, they have been targeting the RV industry since they recognize that environmental concerns and the RV lifestyle go hand in hand. Using ANSI (American National Standards Institute) consensus standards for new construction, they have developed a set of criteria for green RV certification.

But what does "certified green" really mean? What goes into the designation and further more, why should RV consumers even care?

Becoming green is not easy. Over the years society has become so complacent about environmental waste that it is difficult for industry to recognize when they are not being eco-friendly, and even harder to identify ways to actually reverse the trend. TRA gets involved at this level by assisting companies in identifying environmental waste while optimizing and streamlining their processes to prevent it. Further, they help identify and implement green initiatives. An RV manufacturer cannot be TRA certified to produce green products unless it can meet the stringent environmentally friendly production processes.

Once a company has been certified by TRA, any product line is eligible for one of four different levels of certification for recreational vehicles. These levels are Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Emerald. In order to attain one of the levels of certification, a product must acquire a minimum number of points in each of five categories. These are Resource Efficiency, Energy Efficiency, Water Efficiency, Indoor Air Quality, and Operation & Maintenance. Additionally, a product can earn points in a sixth category, Innovative Practices. To date, TRA has recognized six RV trailer and park models from various manufacturers as being "Green Certified."

Evergreen RV (www.goevergreenrv.com) was the first, and to date, the only manufacturer to produce a top rated Emerald certified green model, and is also the only one to include an Energy Star rated roof. What's more, Evergreen was awarded Innovative Practices points because they plant a tree for each certified unit they sell. To emphasize the significance of the high rating achieved by Evergreen RV, TRA did not expect that any manufacturer would be able to meet the stringent requirements of the Emerald rating. Other models awarded the "Certified Green" distinction are the popular—

Jayco Jay Flight

(www.jayco.com)

Starcraft Autumn Ridge

(www.starcraftv.com)

Surveyor and R-Pod

from **Forest River**

(www.forestriverinc.com)



Woodland Park's park model series (www.woodland-park.com) have also received the certification.

Some of the initiatives undertaken by coach manufacturers in an attempt to be environmentally friendly are of enormous benefit to the owner. The floor, walls, and roof of most recreational vehicles are constructed using a substantial amount of wood and wood composites. The lauan used in wall and ceiling panels is also known as "Brazilian mahogany" because it is a hardwood that comes from rain forests ranging from South American to Indonesia. Because of the manufacturing process, this material actually emits trace amounts of gasses such as formaldehyde. Although it is important to note that the doses involved are so minute as to not really be dangerous, this out-gassing is not exactly enviro-friendly. In addition, as many coach owners are aware, wood is subject to dry rot, mildew, and delamination, and it is very difficult to keep older coaches properly sealed against the elements to prevent these conditions. Evergreen RV has replaced all of the wood in their certified green trailers and replaced it with composite materials. They have eliminated approximately fifty sheets of lauan, as well as three to four sheets of plywood, per trailer. These materials are lighter and stronger than wood, and there is no out-gassing involved. Perhaps more importantly, to the consumer this means there can be no dry rot or delamination since the material is waterproof as well as mildew resistant. Because composite materials are a direct replacement for wood, green coaches that utilize this construction technique are awarded points in the Resource Efficiency category. Also, since these materials do not result in any out-gassing, points are also gained in the Indoor Air Quality category.

In order for a certified company to earn an actual certified green rating on a unit, they have to earn a minimum number of points in each of the five categories. As discussed,

Resource Efficiency points are awarded whenever the use of natural resources such as wood and metal are reduced or eliminated. Window awnings are an example of Energy Efficiency points. Window awnings not only reduce the heat load inside the RV, resulting in reduced cycle time for the air conditioner, but they also assist in keeping the occupants cool. Water Efficiency points are easily acquired by installing low-flow fixtures and minimizing the lengths of water lines. With indoor air quality requirements, owners can be sure they are not being exposed to the same levels of unhealthy particulates inside their coach. Finally, there are the Operation & Maintenance points. This mainly has to do with the owner's manual & customer training, or walk-through. Manufacturers receive points in this area if their owner's manual addresses issues such as how to control humidity, organic pest control, organic cleaners, the importance of maintaining the RV, maintenance checklist, and practices to conserve energy and water.



Forest River R-Pod

Some of the green manufacturing processes that may be considered part of the certification process range from simple changes to complex production line alterations. Process improvements that can be undertaken include cutting wire to exact lengths to eliminate waste, using separate recycling facilities, using eco-friendly insulation that is formaldehyde-free and contains recycled glass and sand, efficient insulation practices, and recycling vinyl siding. There are also initiatives such as reclaiming water used to test plumbing systems in new coaches.

There are some manufacturers who have decided to be more environmentally friendly in the production of their products, but are not yet TRA certified. Lance Industries, a manufacturer of campers and travel trailers, is one such company. They no longer use any wood framing in their products having replaced it with aluminum. They have improved the insulation allowing them to use smaller air conditioners and their smaller campers have provisions for small portable generators, which use less fuel. They use radial tires on trailers thereby improving fuel economy. Additionally, they use wood imported from Spain, which has no formaldehyde, for the cabinetry. The latter is constructed using screws only, which eliminates staples and glue. Lance no longer uses plastic "gimp" in their products, have reduced the amount of carpet, and will soon be eliminating the use

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SURROUNDED BY GREEN

A Review of Evergreen RVs

By
Steve Froese

The preeminent buzzword these days is "sustainability." As an engineer who has spent much of his career working in the high-tech sector, I am a strong supporter of sustainability. It's all about green initiatives and trying to leave the planet intact for those that will come after us. Sustainability is truly gaining momentum in many areas, including the RV industry in part due to Evergreen RV, a company that is on the cutting edge of manufacturing for sustainability.

Evergreen produces the very first eco-friendly, all-composite travel trailers and fifth wheels. Evergreen calls their manufacturing process "Compositek"™ construction, and it's long overdue. Not only is green manufacturing good for the environment, but in the case of recreational vehicles, it also addresses some problems that have plagued owners over the years.

The company has replaced traditional building materials with "Compositek"™ engineered green composite materials commonly used in other industries. These materials are lighter and stronger, meet the stringent RV standards, and are completely environmentally friendly, being recyclable and formaldehyde-free. Instead of the traditional wood substrate, Evergreen uses a composite material to build the floor, walls, and roof. One of the biggest benefits of this technology to the consumer is that, since the material is waterproof and mildew-resistant, there can be no dry rot in the case of water leaks.

Of course, most consumers are mainly concerned with the appearance, usability, and quality of the RV they are interested in purchasing. I had the opportunity to visit Fraserway RV Centre in Abbotsford, British Columbia,

which is Canada's largest Evergreen dealer. I was pleasantly surprised when it came to the 29RK model that I reviewed. This is without a doubt one of the most attractive travel trailers I have seen, with a high gloss gel coat sage exterior. This is a stark and welcome contrast to the usual white.

The often under-designed cargo doors are a solidly designed composite material with robust latches. They are also solid black, offering a pleasing look. According to company literature, "They cannot rot, dent, mold, or mildew." Also present is a 20-foot power awning, typically limited to high-end motorized units. This model sports a single curbside slideout.

The Evergreen line is sleek, right down to the modernistic hook-up lights, black composite tank cover, and diamond plate. All models include a unique entertainment center mounting system, allowing the consumer to temporarily mount the television on an externally mounted bracket without the use of tools. On the demonstration model, there was plenty of storage in the lit, oversized, pass-through compartment, as well as high quality aluminum wheels and suspension.

The interior is equally pleasing, with a large two-door refrigerator and fully functional kitchen and bedroom. All cabinet construction is both glued and screwed and features solid wood mortised doors. The drawers are plywood with ball-bearing glides.

The galley, bathroom, and bedroom resemble that of other travel trailers and fifth wheels, but the manufacturer ups the ante by using higher quality components. For instance, most low and mid-range coaches include a molded plastic toilet, but the Evergreen models all include porcelain commodes with foot flush pedals.





Options for the travel trailer include a larger 15,000 Btu ducted air conditioner, oversized LCD TV, gas oven, high output bathroom exhaust fan, power tongue jack, and dual pane windows. The most unique option available is the translucent composite 20-pound liquid propane (LP) tanks. Imagine being able to view the propane level in the tank. This is conclusive proof that this company is on the cutting edge of technology.

Some of the fifth wheel options are a free standing table and chairs, hide-a-bed air mattress, solar battery charger, ten blade power bathroom fan, 90 degree turn hitch, tankless water heater, and slide-out bike rack.

Perhaps the most appealing feature of all is that Evergreen plants a tree for every warranty registration. This is most certainly a company that is not only dedicated to the environment and the future of the planet, but is also committed to customer satisfaction.

For more information visit www.goevergreenrv.com

