

Perlite and LEED, a Primer

What is LEED?

LEED is a Registered Trademark and an acronym for “Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design.” The trademark owner is the United States Green Building Council (USGBC). LEED rating systems are available for new construction and major renovations, existing buildings, commercial interiors, core and shell, homes, and neighborhood development. Specific rating systems for multiple buildings (campuses), schools, health care facilities, retail, and laboratories are also available.

Why is there a need for LEED?

Buildings have a large impact on people’s lives, health, and the environment. In the United States, buildings use one-third of our total energy, two-thirds of our electricity, one-eighth of our water, and transform land. The LEED Green Building Rating System recognizes the work of professionals who improve the quality of buildings and their impact on the environment.

How does innovative construction get recognized?

The standards include a checklist, with each item worth a set number of points or a range of points. For new construction, the project checklist allows 69 total points in the following categories: Sustainable Sites, Water Efficiency, Energy and Atmosphere, Materials and Resources, Indoor Environmental Quality, and Innovation and Design Process.

The following achievements are recognized:

Certified: 26 -32 points
Silver: 33 -38 points
Gold: 39 – 51 points
Platinum: 52 – 69 points

What about perlite?

LEED does not mention any specific raw material or even any specific intermediate material. The rating system is about results, not how to achieve the results.

Having said this, in what categories could an architect or project manager expect to gain points by including perlite or perlite-containing products?

- Stormwater Design
- Heat Island Effect (Roof and Non-Roof)
- Water Efficient Landscaping
- Water Use Reduction
- Energy Performance Enhancement (Insulation)
- Recycled Materials (post-industrial valued at ½ the points as post-consumer)
- Regional Content (manufactured within 500 miles using ingredients extracted locally)
- Low Emitting Materials (perlite does not outgas)
- Thermal Comfort (Insulation)
- Unspecified Innovation in Design

For more information, go to: <http://www.usgbc.org/>