

## The Power of Three

### Here's a synopsis of the three levels:

**LEED Green Associate:** The first step for a professional. Attests to the candidate's knowledge of good environmental practice and skills and reflects understanding and support of green design, construction and operations.

Likely candidates would be college students, lawyers, real estate agents and employees of construction firms who don't work directly on projects. Candidates take one test to receive the designation.

**LEED AP+:** Signifies an advanced knowledge of green building practices. These professionals earn their credentials in one of more of five specialties: building design and construction; operations and maintenance; interior design and construction; homes; and neighborhood development. Candidates take a two-part exam. The first one is the same as the LEED Green Associate, but the second test covers the area of specialization.

**LEED AP Fellow:** An elite class of leading professionals. Fellows contribute to the standards of practice and body of knowledge for achieving continuous improvement in the green building field. Qualifications for this designation are still under development and could be completed later this year, Toller says. All levels also must agree to a disciplinary policy, and each has a continuing-education requirement. Cindy Finstad, construction executive in Milwaukee of Minneapolis-based contractor M.A. Mortenson Co., says the biggest change for the company will be tracking continuing education for its staff. "What's important is that they continue their education, that they keep up to date on the newest things going on out there," Finstad adds.

The LEED Green Associate exam will be launched in May, although a beta test was offered in February. The exams for areas of specialization for the LEED AP+ will begin in spring and summer, with the last one – neighborhood development – planned for 2010.

Those who already have the LEED AP credentials will not lose them, Toller says. At some point, however, there will be a distinction in the U.S Green Building Council's database between LEED AP and LEED AP+. There will likely be an incentive to pursue specialization. "That's out expectation that the marketplace will make the distinction, and more people will want to migrate over and upgrade," Toller adds. LEED APs who want to upgrade have the option of taking the second part of the LEED AP+ exam or completing a prescribed education plan by 2011. Associated General Contractors of Greater Milwaukee, says it's difficult to predict how many professionals will seek the new designations, and the market will determine that. She says the new system is just now being publicized, so she has not yet received a lot of questions. It's always a good idea for professionals to stay on top of industry developments, Stair says. "LEED is only to get bigger," and companies that don't buy into it are not going to be able to compete as well as they'd like, she adds.

The new requirements will affect how Hunzinger Construction Co. of Brookfield, Wis., introduces new employees to LEED, says John Hunzinger, president. The company encourages all of its employees to become LEED-accredited professionals. Hunzinger has just started talking about the impact the new system will have on its educational programs. "We're going to continue to encourage our people to pursue the accreditation," Hunzinger adds. "It's a different process now."

All employees in Hunzinger's project management and preconstruction departments have LEED credentials because "They need to understand what affect sustainable construction has and what LEED certification may have on the delivery process," Hunzinger says. All of the employees in the firm's Sustainable Building Solutions consulting arm also have credentials, he adds. LEED credentialed employees at both companies total about 40. - Midwest Construction 5/2009