

## The latest cost of going green: your health

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Certifications ensuring that new homes and buildings are more environmentally-friendly and energy efficient do little in considering the health of their occupants, [says a new report](#) [1] from Environment and Human Health, Inc. (EHHI), a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting human health. Focusing on the U.S. Green Building Society's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program, which awards buildings with certificates ensuring they are "green", the group says the program is implementing standards that "are clearly insufficient to protect human health," yet are being adopted by lawmakers across the U.S. and other developed countries.

The result is that lawmakers are rushing through "green" legislation—some of which is based on the LEED standard—and putting the health of their citizens at risk, all in an effort to promote an appearance of environmentalism.

Put more simply, they may be attempting to solve an abstract environmental harm—global warming—for a real one, human health.

The group contends that the LEED program ensures tighter buildings, resulting in less of an exchange between indoor and outdoor air. Indoor air, the group says, is often more contaminated than outdoor air—and this may intensify the chemical exposures of residents in a building, increasing the likelihood of unintended health consequences.

The LEED program, as it is currently designed, shows almost a complete disregard for this phenomenon. And because, as EHHI highlights, many of the materials being used in LEED buildings contain known contaminants, residents may be facing an increased exposure to indoor chemical mixtures.

Worse still, developers can obtain the highest LEED standard, platinum, without receiving any points (the certificate is awarded on a points basis, 110 in total) in the human health category. In fact, out of the potential 110 points—80 are needed for platinum status—only 7 have the primary intent to limit hazardous chemicals within a building.

The organization behind the LEED certificate, the U.S. Green Building Society, is private—made up, predominantly, of engineers, architects, building product manufacturers, real estate and construction companies. But governments have been helping to promote this "green" building certificate by adopting new laws that reward LEED certification, including loan guarantees, lower-interest loans, mortgage interest rate reductions, income tax credits, property tax reductions and other public subsidies.

The Green Building Council does not make public its evaluation of individual building components and performance. It is also not beholden to the public, as it does not adhere to the Administrative Procedures Act or the Freedom of Information Act.

"The Green Building Council's award...conveys the false impression of a healthy and safe building environment, even when well-recognized hazardous chemicals exist in building products," the authors of the EHHI report say.

**Source URL:** <http://energy.probeinternational.org/the-latest-cost-going-green-your-health>

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