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Posted By: Jim Gunshinan

[Dispatches from Greenbuild 2009 in Phoenix, Arizona, Part 2](#)

Years ago I discussed with Jan Kozny of Oak Ridge National Laboratory his research at the lab into phase change materials for use in walls. At the time it seemed like the mature technology might just be around the corner. Lots of promising technology remains just around the corner forever, but phase change material is making a comeback.

This morning I had an interesting discussion with Mundise Mortimer, Manager, Technical Marketing at National Gypsum.

National Gypsum is working with BASF to create a new drywall panel that helps moderate indoor temperatures using phase change technology. National Gypsum can make these panels using nearly the same manufacturing process that they use to create the standard gypsum wall board that we are all familiar with. Tiny encapsulated parafin particules make up about 25% of the volume in the phase change panels, with the rest being gypsum. When the panels absorb heat, the encapsulated paricles melt. When the temperature on the panel surface cools, the phase change material hardens. In effect, the walls absorb heat when it is hot and expell heat when it is cool. When the panels are installed in a home, wherever drywall is normally installed, the phase changing product saves on heating and cooling energy.

This has the potential to save energy in every home that uses drywall. It may be more expensive than normal drywall, but as the technology becomes more common, the price will drop. And it's all made in the United States. On Veterans Day, I think it's okay to be a little protectionist and a little proud of what we can accomplish, given the freedom and the resources to take some risks in developing energy saving technology. Vice Pesident Gore talked last evening in his plenary address about avoiding the next war through energy independence. Taking risks in developing the technology that moves us towards energy security can make it less risky for our men and women who serve us in the military.

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