

LCA Tools in Residential Building – Assessing Their Applicability

Richard S. Dooley

NAHB Research Center, rdooley@nahbrc.org

On April 20, 2001, a group of international experts met in Baltimore for a full-day workshop to discuss life cycle assessment (LCA) issues and the current state of LCA tools. In particular, the discussion focused on the ways in which LCA tools affect and concern the home building industry. The tools thus far have been used primarily by architects, designers, product manufacturers, builders and engineers in the commercial building industry; the workshop was an opportunity to examine their usefulness for the residential building sector.

The workshop included a mix of participants of varied backgrounds. The goal was to have in the same room, not only LCA tool developers and LCA experts, but also professionals who are well versed in the environmental indicators (impact categories) that LCA tools attempt to profile via their algorithms. The general conclusions from the workshop indicated that the current tools are in constant flux and the science is evolving. More work remains to be done in order to make LCA useful and applicable to the home building industry.