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Vermont Tubbs goes lean and green

Angela Heck -- *Furniture Today*, 6/10/2008 12:32:00 PM

Cutting out wasteful practices

BRANDON, Vt. — The words “reducing environmental impact” probably would have had little meaning for the hardwood ski and snowshoe business that started here more than 160 years ago and eventually became [Vermont Tubbs](#).

Yet the domestic case goods producer has recently implemented several strategies to do just that.

Each piece of its ash and birch hardwood furniture is bench-made by one artisan from start to finish. According to the company, both wood species are harvested from sustainably managed forests within a 150-mile radius, which cuts down on gas and emissions caused by longer transport.

These forests are not clear-cut and, for every tree harvested, another is planted.

Inside Vermont Tubbs’ 132,000-square-foot manufacturing facility, further green strategies have been put into practice.

The company has adopted “lean



Vermont Tubbs’ finishes are so environmentally friendly that its finishers do not have to wear safety gear.

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manufacturing” practices to cut down on waste and lower electricity usage. Vermont Tubbs now only makes the furniture it has orders for rather than continuously making excess product that then needs to be warehoused.



Each piece of Vermont Tubbs furniture is bench-made by one craftsperson.

The company uses water-based glue as well as paints and stains free from formaldehyde and metal. In the past, paints and stains had high VOC (Volatile Organic Compounds) emissions and the sprayer filters had to be disposed of as toxic waste.

Now, furniture finishers are not required to wear masks, and sprayer filters can decompose in a regular landfill.

The company has reduced VOC emissions to levels low enough for it to have some furniture certified by the Greenguard Environmental Institute.

Denise Ogurkis, vice president of sales and marketing for Vermont Tubbs, said that all of its furniture is made in exactly the same way as the certified pieces and that the company may consider certifying its entire line at some point in the future.

When each furniture piece is completed, the maker signs and dates it—ensuring accountability for product quality. The furniture also goes through a five-point check system designed to keep quality high and returns to a minimum—which in turn saves trees, electricity and fuel.

As the furniture leaves the factory, further green-conscious procedures help keep Vermont Tubbs’ carbon footprint small. For example, the company’s corrugated cardboard packaging is renewable and biodegradable.

And Vermont Tubbs’ partner trucking companies only pick up furniture on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. Running full trucks cuts down on fuel usage as well as damage caused by loose packing.

“We believe that the future of our children and grandchildren and their children and grandchildren are the most important reasons to be conscious of the environment,” said Ogurkis.

“It is important that, regardless of the work we do here at Tubbs to make furniture, what we don’t do is leave a path of destruction behind us—and that we do leave a clean environment for those who follow.”

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