

STAMATS **BACK** and **BETTER**



with LEED® CI

Stamats experiences green rebirth after natural disaster



On June 11-13, 2008, a town was swallowed by record-breaking flood waters and a building was given an opportunity to be reborn. Water ravaged the Cedar Rapids, Iowa, downtown business community and left over 4,000 people homeless when the Cedar River – overcome by the heavy winter snowfalls and spring rain deluge – broke through the banks in record crests to consume most everything in its expanded path. Five months later, a downtown business is taking time to honor all that was lost, while moving forward into a greener, more sustainable future.

Stamats Communications Inc., a business that focuses on higher education marketing and, ironically, commercial building publications and green meetings, is converting the harrowing destruction into a greener opportunity. Stamats' downtown headquarters building is being rebuilt to LEED Silver certification, under the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED for Commercial Interiors rating system.

Almost as swiftly as the waters came in to lay the city's businesses to waste, Stamats' leaders began planning their reconstruction. Exhibiting a level of determination and a large dose of Midwestern work ethic, Stamats' management took those few days of destruction and used them to energize a long-term positive change by rebuilding its headquarters into a facility that embraces sustainability and minimizes the impact of the building on the environment. Within weeks of the historic flood, it was decided to remake Stamats green.



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THE FLOODS OF 2008

Environmental changes



ABOVE: After sustaining damage in the June floods, Stamats Communications is rebuilding its corporate headquarters, making environmentally friendly improvements, including the use of soy-based insulating foam.



BELOW: Ron Heggebo of Sage Cos. insulates a masonry wall at Stamats Communications, 615 Fifth St. SE, with a one-inch layer of insulating biofoam Sept. 25. The foam uses a soy-based ingredient.

Improvements to Stamats Communications corporate headquarters at 615 Fifth St. SE include allowing natural light to shine through glass windows and doorways to help illuminate offices and cubicles.

Stamats invests in green message while rebuilding

By Dave DeWitta
The Gazette

CEAR RAPIDS — After the June flood in Cedar Rapids forced Stamats Communications Inc. out of its 75-year-old headquarters at 615 Fifth St. SE, deciding how to come back better was the big question.

One of the winning answers: Go green. Stamats is preparing to seek green certification from the U.S. Green Building Council under the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design program, company CEO Guy Wendler said.

While green certification has been moving into the mainstream, most businesses that seek green certification apply in the LEED new construction category. Stamats could not apply for that category because it wanted to stay in its 75-year home. It also could not apply under another category — LEED Existing Buildings — because Stamats was not occupying the building at the time.

The solution was to apply under the LEED Commercial Interiors category. "LEED CI suited us to a 'T' because the part of the building that was damaged was the interior," Wendler said.

Gutting the building provided many opportunities to make it greener. The ivy-colored brick exterior walls had virtually no insulation because of their age.

"In the winter, people put space heaters by the wall," Wendler said. "That's how energy inefficient it was."

Stamats contracted with Sage Cos. of Cedar Rapids to insulate the walls with soy-based biofoam.

The foam uses no petroleum products and has less impact on indoor air quality

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Mother Nature was stronger than Stamats could combat those few days in June 2008, but the company is using the environmental properties of Mother Nature to help grow back a stronger – and better – facility for future generations to enjoy and prosper within.

Stamats/Clients appreciate sustainable practices

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than conventional spray foams, said Tom Podzimek, one of the owners of Sage Cos. He said the foam also worked well because it could be applied without requiring any new framing or other costly improvements to the outside walls.

Another big step will be the replacement of the conventional recessed canister-type ceiling light fixtures with more efficient lighting.

Wendler said the lighting not only wasted energy but also required frequent bulb replacement that will not be necessary with the new lighting.

The lighting and the wall insulation will be money-savers for the company over the long run. But Wendler said there will be green strategies for which paybacks will be less obvious.

Stamats plans to use bio-based paints and install recyclable carpets from Interface in the 30,000-square-foot building, where about 100 Stamats employees work daily. The carpets cost more than conventional carpeting but won't wind up in a landfill.

The restoration also will bring more sunlight into the interior of the building. One method will be the installation of glass-panel doors leading to private offices on the exterior of the building. The glass in the doors will permit light from the building's exterior windows into the central office spaces.

The renovation also exposed some glass block construction on an exterior wall that had been covered up in a previous building project, bringing in more daylight.

Wendler expects the green strategies to add 10 percent to 15 percent to the overall cost of restoring the building. Stamats isn't overly concerned

about quantifying the direct financial benefits of the green restoration, believing it's simply the right thing to do.

Sustainable practices are increasingly valued by the higher-education client base of Stamats, Wendler said the green rebuild will set Stamats apart from its competitors.

Stamats also serves a role in educating the readers of its business-to-business publications — Buildings, Interiors & Sources and Archi-Tech — about green building practices.

One interesting client: The U.S. Green Building Council. Stamats holds educational webcasts for the council that have attracted audiences of 900.

"We understand LEED and why it is useful," Wendler said. "It's a lot more convincing when we do it ourselves."

Stamats will be making some improvements outside of the LEED process. It is replacing a whiteboard used for presentations in a conference room with a video screen that will be used to share Microsoft PowerPoint presentations with conference participants at remote locations.

"With travel as expensive as it is, we're doing more and

more conferencing," Wendler said.

Stamats also is adding six-to-eight-seat "collaborative work spaces," and more "hot seats" at which a visiting client or vendor can plug in and work at their laptop computer.

The June floods brought about 4 feet of water into the Stamats building. The company quickly transferred its switchboard operations to its San Francisco office and moved the data servers it uses to host Web sites for its clients to a data center in Altoona.

Customers were without service for only about four nighttime hours, Wendler said.

Many of the employees temporarily relocated to the Theatre Cedar Rapids building, where Stamats also has office space. Others have worked from home.

Because of the perseverance and flexibility of Stamats' employees, Wendler said the company's business didn't suffer. Sales are forecast to rise again this year.

"This year was certainly the most challenging one for us, but one that is allowing us to show our true mettle and



Amenda LaRue Larkin/The Gazette

Guy Wendler, CEO of Stamats Communications in Cedar Rapids, explains how his company is rebuilding its headquarters at 615 Fifth St. SE and making environmentally conscious improvements. "Once we decided to come back, we decided we'd come back better," Wendler said.

overcome," Wendler said. Flood insurance proceeds covered only part of the restoration. Stamats received no government assistance.

Ironically, one of the most commonly asked questions of Stamats is whether the flood claimed its art collection. Creativity is a key part of the company's culture, Wendler

said, and displays of original art were one of the things visitors noticed first.

Fortunately, all of the art was saved. The return of employees to the building is expected to begin in mid-December and be complete in early January. ■ Contact the writer: (319) 306-6317 or david.dewitta@gacomm.com

Stamats is gathering attention from the architectural community for its post-flood leadership role. Heather Lynxwiler, LEED Accredited Professional and architect for OPN Architects, is assisting several flood-impacted

"I am very impressed with how Stamats has embraced sustainability through its company philosophy and through its self-imposed mandate to become LEED certified,"

businesses with their green rebuilding efforts. "I am very impressed with how Stamats has embraced sustainability through its company philosophy and through its self-imposed mandate to become LEED certified," says Lynxwiler. "Stamats is a leader in stepping ahead of the norm for rebuilding in the post-flood region. Its determination to adhere to LEED standards is admirable and sets them apart. Stamats is using raw, sustainable materials to rejuvenate office furniture damaged in the flood. They are replacing plumbing fixtures, faucets and appliances with the highest water and energy efficiency criteria. Natural

lighting is being used more efficiently. And soy-based insulation is being used to help maintain cooling and heating, while presenting less risk to workers during the installation phase."



STAMATS
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Stamats Communications Inc. is a diversified, national communications company with interests in higher education marketing and consulting, business-to-business media and special interest video production. Stamats Communications Inc. operates out of multiple offices throughout the United States and is headquartered in Cedar Rapids, IA.