

Green Building Rules will be Ready by January

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DUBAI - The city's green building regulations are nearly complete but the plethora of potential systems will require years of training of the property industry, according to green building experts.

Dubai Municipality Planning Department Senior Environmental Planner Adi Zuhair Afaneh said the green building regulations, being drawn up by the municipality and the Dubai Electricity and Water Authority, would be prescriptive in their initial stages to counter a lack of awareness of green building requirements.

"We feel there is a need for a transitional period. There will be continuous improvements and we will be increasing the scope as we go," he said

The regulations, due to be completed by January 1, 2009, will then go before the Dubai Executive Council for approval and legislation.

Afaneh said the regulations would then be phased in "to shock the market" and serve as the minimum requirements with future phases requiring higher performance.

However, a range of green building systems can also be applied for which offer a project a performance rating.

The Emirates Green Building Council has adapted the US system LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) for the UAE environment by requiring features such as stricter water efficiency. The UAE LEED model is expected to be approved by the US council this year.

The British green building scheme, BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method), launched its Gulf model system at the MEED Green Buildings 2008 event last night.

The Abu Dhabi Urban Planning Council has also introduced its own "Estidama" regulations while Masdar has drawn up Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for sustainable development.

Design consultants WS Atkins CEO Keith Clarke said the systems should ultimately include reduction of carbon emissions as one of the main components of design.

However, he said, the current green building systems needed to adapt better to reduce carbon emissions.

"It's (LEED) tolerances and parameters for carbon is akin to Stone Age accounting. No KPI system is perfect, BREEAM, I think, is even further off."

Clarke pointed out that the learning cycles of implementing green building systems, measuring the buildings' performance and further adapting the systems took several years.

Design firm Perkins and Will principal Peter Busby said the systems needed to be flexible to each environment and countered criticism that LEED was not an effective model for Dubai.

"It has to be modified for the environment," he said.

"However, these standards get power and strength in numbers. Educating a market on one system is a challenge but issues will crop up with different systems."

Busby said his organisation had been involved in the training of 7,000 LEED accredited practitioners in Canada which took four years. He estimated there were 10,000 designers, engineers and consultants who potentially needed green building training in Dubai.

"There is little or no green building awareness here to date. When the regulations come in by January 1, it will be a mad scramble."

However, Martin Townsend, director of BREEAM, said multiple systems encouraged green building development.

"If we are going to make change happen, it is good to have more than one code for market transformation. We need competition to make us constantly learn and improve. The number is irrelevant as long as we start to measure carbon in the same way across them all."

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