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HOME BUILDER TRYING NEW APPROACH TO INSTALLING BASEMENTS; DOW PRODUCT FEATURED

By By Tony Lascari for the Daily News | 07.30.2010

A local home builder hopes to reduce the amount of time it takes to build houses while improving energy efficiency by using a pre-manufactured foundation system.

Kelly Wall, owner of [Greystone Homes](#), said the Superior Wall System from Great Lakes Superior Walls will reduce energy bills and is easier to install than poured concrete basement walls.

A system was installed at 5612 Powder Horn Trail in Midland on Thursday, the first in a Greystone home. The walls are pre-cast with concrete and The Dow Chemical Co.'s Styrofoam Brand Insulation at Great

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Lakes Superior Wall's facility in Hamilton, which provides a controlled environment for standard results.

Large trucks haul the wall components to building sites, where a crane lifts them and sets them into place. In Midland, two men worked to place the walls in their exact location, secured them into place and sealed the edges.

A layer of continuous Styrofoam is visible on the interior walls, which are pre-built with wood studs and ready for further insulation and drywall to be installed. Installation takes one day for most projects.

Wall said the system helps Greystone meet Energy Star requirements for its homes.

"We can really limit what everybody's going to pay on their energy bill," he said.

As a builder, he likes that it saves time, allowing his crews to start work the same day the basement walls are installed.

Greystone already has another buyer signed up to use the system. Wall said the overall building market has changed, with people interested in smaller homes but with more personalized features such as built-in cabinetry.

Dave Van Baren, owner of Great Lakes Superior Walls, said the company is just beginning to install the wall systems in mid-Michigan. ProBuild of Saginaw will act as a local dealer.

"It's a unique product," he said. "It offers the green (features) and all the aspects people are looking for in this day and age."

William Edginton, with Dow, said customers are becoming more aware of energy efficient features in homes.

"I've seen more change in construction in the past three years than the last 33 years," he said.

Standard tests for efficiency have allowed manufacturers and builders to prove to home buyers that a feature in a home will save on energy costs.

A key advantage to using Styrofoam in the wall system is that it resists moisture while insulating, providing a continuous protective barrier from the outside elements, Edginton said. He said homeowners are starting to expect more from their basements, which have become a part of the living space.

"They don't have to smell, they don't have to be wet and they don't have to be uncomfortable," he said. "They can be dry and well-insulated."

Roger Gritters, project manager with Great Lakes Superior Walls, said the wall systems can be custom designed to include windows or walk-out basement designs, such as the one created for the home in Midland.