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SAVINGS FROM THE GROUND UP: SUPERIOR WALL

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MIDLAND — A crane lifted concrete walls off of a flat bed truck, swinging them around a group of builders, contractors and interested spectators and onto a gravel foundation as [Greystone Homes](#) installed its first Superior Wall basement system Thursday afternoon.

The walls were manufactured offsite by Great Lakes Superior Walls in Hamilton, Mich., using half the concrete of traditional poured basement walls and are lined with Dow STYROFOAM as insulation. Superior Wall is the only foundation system that has been green approved by the National Home Builders Association.

That accolade attracted recognized Energy Star partner Greystone Homes to the system.

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science into our homes,” said Kelly Wall, owner of Greystone Homes. “Dow has put a lot of work into that science.”

Roger Gritters, project manager for Great Lakes Superior Walls, explained that the controlled manufacturing environment allows Great Lakes to produce concrete with a higher PSI, which makes the walls more water-repellent.

“We have a higher strength wall than traditional poured concrete,” he said. “Superior Walls have about 5,000 PSI as opposed to 3,000 PSI. Most concrete walls wick water, which is why you get damp and musty basements. Our walls are watertight by industry standards.”

The Dow STYROFOAM insulation is also water-resistant, and helps prevent heating loss through basement walls.

“You walk into most basements and it’s cooler and more humid,” said Bill Edington, account manager for Dow Building Solutions. “That’s why people use dehumidifiers in their basements. You don’t have that in homes (built with Superior Walls) in part because they’re properly insulated. You walk in and it’s just like another room in the house.”

Although energy savings vary from home to home, the system is estimated to save the average homeowner 30 percent on their heating and cooling costs. The savings don’t end there, however.

Thanks to the Superior Walls’ offsite construction, Wall said he could complete the basement in a day. Traditionally poured basements

can take over a week to install and cure before they can be built on.

“This system goes up in a single day,” Wall said. “That is a huge deal.”

The walls also come installed with wooden studs, another time-saver. For homeowners looking for a finished basement, Wall would have to install a wood stud wall inside a poured concrete basement; with Superior Walls, he merely has to hang the drywall.

Gritters pointed out one final financial benefit to the Superior Wall system: access to credit. He said that because the system has been green approved, homes built with Superior Walls are eligible for an energy-efficient mortgage, which can extend the borrower’s credit limit.

“I’ve had customers who thought they were going to have to cut back on what they wanted because they couldn’t get the financing until they looked into our system,” he said. “Banks and credit unions will lend more money because of the anticipated energy savings.”