

Window treatment keeps houses cooler

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LONG BEACH - Before installing solar window films three years ago, Christine Davies couldn't stand within 2 feet of her windows without feeling the heat.

The heat, especially during the summer, sometimes made it unbearable to live in her multi-story Naples home, where one side of her house top to bottom is outfitted almost entirely of windows.

"My bedroom was like an inferno," she said. "It was insane and my air conditioning was running night and day because we couldn't keep the house cool enough."

Today, Davies rarely turns on the air-conditioning system. The clear solar film - installed by Signal Hill-based Metropolitan West - has helped reduce the heat in her home by at least 25 to 30 percent and cut her heating and air-conditioning bill by 25 percent.

"I turned on the AC three times last year," she said. "I could be 2 or 3 inches from the window and feel virtually no heat coming in at all. It was such an insane difference."

In recent years, consumers such as Davies have been looking to solar window films to reap energy savings.

Kelly Taylor, founder and CEO of Metropolitan West, has been seeing a steady rise in this segment of her business, which also provides decorative glass films and interior graphics.

Buildings generate about 39 percent of the total carbon dioxide emissions in the country, according to the U.S. Green Building Council. Solar films are said to help buildings lower these emissions by decreasing energy use by up to 30 percent.

"I think it's an amazing product," said Taylor, who started her firm 20 years ago providing anti-graffiti window coatings to businesses in the downtown area. "If you're going to try and save money and save energy, one of the cheapest, fastest things you can put on is window film. It pays for itself in a couple of years. It's carbon negative from its lifespan."

Though it's a small part of her business, its potential has made her an advocate.

Earlier this month, Taylor gave a talk about its virtues at the Build Expo, a trade show that draws more than 1,500 contractors, architects, engineers and other industry leaders.

"Companies that do what Metropolitan West does is especially a big deal in California and it's gaining

momentum all over the country with solar energy and things like that," said Build Expo marketing director Tyler Bryant, who booked Taylor for the seminar. "We thought it would be a good fit with our attendees coming to look for products involving solar energy."

Bryant said he has seen an increase in green building in the last few years.

"People are becoming more aware of construction practices and what it does to our environment," he said. "There's a lot of government and state incentives for using green products and energy-efficient products. And I think products, like Kelly's with her window films, really help companies move into the new age."

Taylor said she plans to focus on the solar film part of her business in the next 18 months.

"I'm seeing how important it is, especially when we're seeing these buildings torn down and redone when something could have been done to make it more energy efficient," she said. "Property managers want to have energy-efficient buildings because that's where people want to be.

"They're buying hybrid cars, riding their bikes to work, and they also want to help the environment. And property managers are really stepping up in making their buildings more energy efficient."

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