

State requires good insulation

the percentage of glazing to gross floor area from 16 to 20.

It is difficult to assess the extent of damage to the construction industry in the Escondido area caused by SB277. It went into effect when the recession had put building starts at an all-time low anyway and in a season when constant rains brought what building was in progress to frequent halts. It also put a stop to the manufacture of adobe bricks, a process that requires sun for baking.

Moreover, as with any new legislation, building permits previously issued could be carried out. And subsequent to Feb. 22 there was a huge lag in building permits.

But Goodbody said the passage of the legislation cost the adobe industry at least \$1 million (the average adobe house costs \$100,000 unless the owner builds it himself, in which case it can be cheaper to build than a conventional stucco house, Goodbody said).

And Bill O'Donnell of Escondido Glass, which supplies glass to the small contractor, said it cut business back 10 to 12 per cent and "had small contractors running scared. It's OK for the big custom home," he said.

The Escondido building department said the "ban" on adobe was not even felt at City Hall, since, although Escondido is the center of the adobe country, only one adobe home has been built within the city limits in the past five years. The county building department in Vista said several applications for permits were returned without approval after SB277 went into effect, because they did not meet insulation and glass ratio standards, but that at least half of them were quickly corrected.

Part of the problem appeared to be that, although the industry ought to have had plenty of warning that SB 277 was coming, not enough people had copies of the detailed requirements of the bill, and lack of information fanned a general panic. Adobe builders were saying they were going to be bankrupt and complaining at the lack of understanding of their material.

There is no doubt that SB 277 will increase the already burgeoning cost of building, but the resultant saving on energy bills from the improved in-

sulation will result in a homeowner recouping his money in three years or so.

The developer, faced with additional costs, will tack them on to the price of the house, but the purchaser will recoup them from utility bills, if he stays in the house long enough. And we all stand to profit because houses will consume less of our vanishing stock of fossil fuel.

Moreover, the federal government is working on a set of minimum energy-saving standards that will affect residential and commercial buildings (the state law applies to homes, apartments and hotels) and is more stringent than SB 277.

While SB 277 left no loophole for alternate materials like adobe, it did leave a loophole for methods of heating and cooling that do not consume fossil fuels. If you build a home with solar heat, for instance, you can use as much glass and adobe as you like. The clause allows for "alternate systems" that do not deplete energy sources.

One thing SB 277 assures is that the cheaply-built house or apartment building with loosely-fitting doors and windows and no insulation is a vanishing species like the California condor. But unlike the condor, there will be no attempt to preserve this way of wasting fuel.



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