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Solar control window film takes a big step towards a low-carbon environment

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Retrofitting window film cuts cooling bills by up to 30 percent, helping to meet carbon reduction goals. There are mixed expectations across the UK on the Copenhagen Climate Change Summit's (Dec 7-18) attempt to reach a global agreement around climate change and how to reduce its effect. What is clear is that cleaner, greener technologies will be high on the agenda as politicians look at new ways to reduce their greenhouse emissions while using their natural resources more efficiently in the future.

While the issues being discussed might seem to be aimed at future generations, UK firms and households can take steps now to reduce their carbon footprint and, as a result, directly reduce their long-term energy bills. Obvious examples include energy-saving light bulbs and energy-efficient appliances which provide tangible benefits. However, a less well-known technology that has been around for more than three decades could help the UK take a major step towards cutting their carbon footprint. This technology is solar control window film that, when applied to windows, severely limits the impact of solar heat gain on, and the likely associated costs of, cooling the office, building or house.

Peter Reece, managing director of Bekaert Specialty Films, UK, explains: "With proven heat-rejection properties, solar control window film helps buildings consume less energy by keeping interior temperatures more controllable and stable. By rejecting up to 79 percent of solar energy, the room becomes cooler and more comfortable. This lowers the need for air conditioning, reducing extreme peaks in usage and allowing cooling systems to operate more efficiently and inexpensively." Saving energy and going green remains high on every UK corporate agenda. However, with UK meteorologists predicting annual temperature increases over the next few decades, the issue of cooling office buildings without increasing air conditioning is becoming an even greater challenge. To compound matters, impending EU legislation will soon require all businesses to disclose full details on their firm's carbon footprint.

For many UK firms the need to conserve energy, reduce a company's carbon footprint and conform to stricter environmental standards has never been greater. At the same time, the cost of energy continues to rise – and will continue to do so as supplies dwindle. Reece believes that solar control window film could be one of the easiest, quickest and most cost-effective ways for the majority of UK firms to address this problem. This position is supported by Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (LBNL), one of the world's top energy research centres, in Berkeley, California, which reported that, among others, "the most cost-effective options in terms of payback period are adding window films to existing windows."

With industry leading products recognized by organizations such as the Clinton Climate Initiative, Solar Gard window film can cut air conditioning bills by up to 30 percent. Aside from energy-related savings, the product also offers excellent value for money. LBNL recently found that window film tops the ROI list when compared to window replacements, blinds, awnings, shade trees and reflective roofs. Ian Penfold, Chairman for the Applied Window Film Group of the Glass and Glazing Federation, concludes: "The list of benefits from window film extends further than energy saving. It can offer UV protection to reduce the risk of skin cancer, stop sun-damage to interior furnishings, and when used as a safety film protect people from being injured from broken or falling glass from their properties. It also provides a barrier against burglary and storm damage."

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