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Film can play a bigger role

Window film could play a bigger role in protecting glass and changing its performance characteristics. Dominic Bentham discussed this with Ian Penfold and Peter Staelens of Bekaert



L-R: Ian Penfold and Peter Staelens of Bekaert Specialty Films

Window film has a bigger role to play in protecting glass and changing its performance characteristics, says Bekaert. Solar control and reducing air conditioning costs, protection from blasts and breakages, and anti-graffiti are some of the applications that specially designed films can be used for.

Recently I met with Ian Penfold of Bekaert Specialty Films UK Ltd and Peter Staelens, Bekaert's Regional

Manager for Europe, Middle East and Africa. Ian is Chairman of the GGF's Applied Window Film Group.

Although the environment has taken centre stage, it is still a big concern that glass installed is safety glass where specified. When Workplace (Health and Safety) Regulations came into effect in 1996, a lot of non-compliant glass was treated with window film, says Ian Penfold. Films generally have a lifetime of

10-12 years and a warranty of much less so building managers need to check the date of the last building survey and take appropriate action, he says.

Window films originated in North America in the 1970s as a response to the oil crisis. Here, a metallised film was developed for solar control to save on air conditioning costs. Window film is equally viable for commercial buildings in the UK, says Bekaert, and in the domestic market a major retailer uses window film on glass conservatory roofs.

Reducing building running costs is a good reason for fitting window film in commercial buildings, and not just on the Southern elevation. Long periods of sun on the West and East elevations can drive up air conditioning costs at times when the building is empty. The impact of schools and offices using portable air conditioning units and fans also makes a good case for solar control film, says Bekaert.

Bekaert's Green credentials seem to be very strong. Not

only do Solar Gard's architectural solar control window films help cut energy expenditures by up to 30 per cent, its Environmental Product Declaration (EPD) scientifically proves that Solar Gard solar control window films have a net positive environmental impact worldwide, says the company.

The saving on air conditioning quickly outweighs the carbon footprint of the film, says Bekaert. If it is a 'fit or replace' decision, the environmental impact of replacing a window or glazing element would be many times greater than treating it with a film that can deliver the desired performance.

"Films these days are virtually clear and give a very good performance", says Peter Staelens, who is keen to distance his product from the first generation metallised films. "We've always been a retrofit product and now we are looking at 'from new' applications", concludes Ian Penfold.

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