Retailer Finds Sustainable DCs Provide Positive ROI

Material Handling Industry of America

Crate & Barrel has found that operating a sustainable distribution center (DC) has financial benefits in addition to environmental ones.

John Ling, vice president of supply chain management for Crate & Barrel spoke on the "Business Case for Sustainable Distribution Centers" at the NA 2010 event in April. During the keynote, Ling detailed the savings realized from its 1.2 million square foot DC in Tracy, CA— the largest industrial facility in the country to achieve Gold designation from the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification program.

According to Ling, the Tracy DC was the least expensive of the retailer's four major DCs to build. "Very few of the things we did at the Tracy DC cost more money than a traditional approach," he said.

The Tracy DC achieved significant savings via reduced utility costs and rebates for energy-conservation efforts. In addition, 45 percent of the material the Crate & Barrel's DC came from recycled products and the DC currently recycles 100 percent of its operational waste. Skylights and translucent light panels were used to increase natural light in the buildings.

The Tracy DC has been so successful, that Crate & Barrel will take the same approach with all new DC's and has plans to retrofit other DCs using what it has learned from the Tracy facility.

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