

Monterey County
The Herald

PORTOLA EARNS DISTINCTION

The Portola Hotel & Spa at Monterey Bay has become the third existing hotel in California to earn a silver certification for LEED — Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design.

"It will help tremendously" in attracting business, said Janine Chicourrat, the hotel's general manager.

The LEED certification, done by the U.S. Green Building Council, is a lengthy process that looks at everything from water conservation to energy-saving TVs. Peter B's, a brew pub in the hotel, is growing its own hops.

Chicourrat said she pitched the idea of trying for a LEED certification shortly after she became general manager in October 2008.

"I wanted to find an identity" for the hotel, which had undergone several name changes, said Chicourrat. The 379-room hotel, built in 1979, was already working on green efforts.

The cost was more than Chicourrat anticipated — \$350,000 — but "we've more than made it back already" with rebates and increased business, she said.

Chicourrat said it was important the environmental certification come from an outside organization such as the Green Building Council.

When groups inquire about booking the hotel, Chicourrat said, they often have a long list of questions about the hotel's green efforts.

"I'm amazed how many people are in tune to it," said Chicourrat. She recalled a 7-year old girl visiting the hotel saying "The Portola is going to save the environment."

The Monterey Conference Center, adjacent to the hotel, has applied for a LEED certification and is going through the verification process.

The hotel's green measures include:

- The staff is trained to follow construction guidelines that limit volatile organic compounds in paints, adhesives and sealants. Workers take part in regular inspections of the air-conditioning system.
- The Lotus Professional Cleaning System, which uses ionized water to clean rooms, eliminates the use of harsh chemicals.
- Two natural gas-fired co-generation micro-turbines generate on-site electricity while simultaneously producing hot water.

- Water-conserving faucet aerators in all public restrooms reduce water consumption from 2.2 to .5 gallons per minute.
- Meters monitor water use in landscaping and help identify leaks.
- Up to 150 tons of waste is diverted to recycling.
- Biodegradable bath amenities are used in the rooms.
- The hotel participates in the Monterey Bay Aquarium's Seafood Watch program, which emphasizes "ocean friendly" food choices.
- The hotel purchased two years worth of carbon offsets, which it said offsets 100 percent of the property's carbon emissions, or 2,035 metric tons of carbon dioxide, equivalent to planting 36,440 fully mature trees, or not driving 9 million miles in a car.