



Standard Terminology for Sustainability Relative to the Performance of Buildings¹

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1. Scope

1.1 This terminology² consists of terms and definitions pertaining to sustainable development; and, in particular to sustainability relative to the performance of buildings.

1.2 The purpose of this terminology is to provide meanings and explanations of terms applicable to sustainable development. In the interest of common understanding and standardization, consistent word usage is encouraged to help eliminate the major barrier to effective technical communication.

1.3 It is recommended that terms used only within an individual standard, and having a meaning unique to that standard, be defined or explained in the terminology section of that individual standard.

1.4 Certain standard definitions herein are adopted from other sources. Each is an exact copy. The source is identified at the right margin following the definition, and is listed in Section 2.

1.5 Terms are listed in alphabetical sequence. Compound terms appear in the natural spoken order.

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 ASTM Standards:

D 1356 Terminology Relating to Atmospheric Sampling and Analysis³

E 631 Terminology of Building Construction⁴

E 833 Terminology of Building Economics⁴

E 943 Terminology Relating to Biological Effects and Environmental Fate⁵

2.2 ISO Standard:

14040 Life Cycle Assessment—Principles and Framework⁶

3. Terminology

3.1 Definitions:

¹ This terminology is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee E06 on Performance of Buildings and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee E06.71 on Sustainability.

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² Boldfaced terms are defined in this terminology.

³ *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Vol 11.03.

⁴ *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Vol 04.07.

⁵ *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Vol 11.05.

⁶ Available from American National Standards Institute, 11 W. 42nd St., 13th Floor, New York, NY 10036.

alternative agricultural products, *n*—bio-based industrial products (non-food, non-feed) manufactured from agricultural materials and animal by-products.

alternative energy, *n*—see **renewable energy**.

bioaccumulation, *n*—the net accumulation of a substance by an organism as a result of uptake from all environmental sources. (E 943)

biobased products, *n*—products fabricated from alternative agricultural materials and forestry materials, or both.

biodegradable, *adj*—capable of decomposing under natural conditions into elements found in nature.

biodiversity, *n*—the variability among living organisms from all sources including: terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are a part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems.

biological control agents, *n*—living organisms used to eliminate or regulate the population of other living organisms.

biological diversity, *n*—see **biodiversity**.

biomagnification, *n*—the increase in tissue concentration of poorly depurated materials in organisms along a series of predator-prey associations, primarily through the mechanism of dietary accumulation.

building, *n*—(1) a shelter comprising a partially or totally enclosed space(s), erected by means of planned forces of forming and combining materials. (2) the act or process of construction. (E 631)

building performance, *n*—the behavior in service of construction as a whole, or of the building components. (E 631)

building related illness (BRI), *n*—diagnosable illness of which cause and symptoms can be directly attributed to a specific pollutant source within a building (for example, Legionnaire's disease, hypersensitivity, pneumonitis). BRI differs from sick building syndrome (SBS) conditions because the symptoms of the disease persist after leaving the building, unlike SBS where the occupant experiences relief shortly after leaving the building.

carrying capacity, *n*—(1) in reference to a specific species, the maximum population of that species that an ecosystem can sustain indefinitely. (2) The planetary capacity for human population growth and impact.

DISCUSSION—While the existence of a carrying capacity for a given species in a given ecosystem is commonly recognized, the specific number or range established as the carrying capacity is often debated.

cogeneration, *n*—the simultaneous production of electrical or mechanical energy (power) and useful thermal energy from a single energy stream, such as oil, coal, natural or liquified gas, biomass, or solar.

compost, *n*—the stable humus material that is produced from a composting process.

composting, *v*—the controlled biological decomposition of organic material in the presence of air to form a humus.

contaminant, *n*—a physical, chemical, biological, or radiological substance or matter that has an adverse effect on air, water, or soil.

criterion, *n*—an established precedent, rule, measure, norm, or code upon which a decision may be based. (E 631)

ecological impact, *n*—the effect that an activity has on living organisms, their non-living (abiotic) environment, and the ecosystem.

ecological indicator, *n*—a characteristic of an ecosystem that is related to, or derived from, a measure of biotic or abiotic variable, that can provide quantitative information on ecological structure and function. An indicator can contribute to a measure of integrity and sustainability.

ecosystem, *n*—a community of plants, animals (including humans), and their physical environment, functioning together as an interdependent unit within a defined area.

electromagnetic spectrum, *n*—a continuum of electric and magnetic radiation, encompassing all wavelengths from electricity, radio and microwaves, at the low-frequency end to infrared, visible light, and ultraviolet light in the midrange, to X rays and gamma rays at the high frequency end of the spectrum. (As defined by the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers, Inc. (IEEE), the spectrum of electromagnetic radiation consists of gamma rays, wavelengths shorter than 0.0006 nm; X rays, 0.0006–5 nm; ultraviolet rays, 5 nm–0.4 μm; visible light, 0.4–0.7 μm; infrared, 0.7 μm–0.1 mm; radio, greater than 0.1 mm.).

embodied energy, *n*—the energy used through the life cycle of a material or product to extract, refine, process, fabricate, transport, install, commission, utilize, maintain, remove, and ultimately recycle or dispose of the substances comprising the item..

DISCUSSION—The total energy which a product may be said to “contain,” including all energy used in, inter alia, growing, extracting, transporting, and manufacturing. The embodied energy of a structure or system includes the embodied energy of its components plus the energy used in construction.

EMF, *n*—electric and magnetic fields, see **electromagnetic spectrum**.

endangered species, *n*—a species which is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its habitat range as determined by the governmental entity having jurisdiction.

end-of-the-pipe technologies, *n*—technologies (such as scrubbers on smokestacks) that reduce emissions of pollutants after they have formed.

energy recovery, *n*—obtaining usable energy by consuming waste through a variety of processes.

environmental indicator, *n*—a measurement, statistic or value that provides a proximate gauge or evidence of the effects of environmental management programs or of the state or condition of the environment in a given area.

exotic species, *n*—an introduced species not native or indigenous to the area where it is found.

exposure, *n*—contact with a physical, chemical, biological, or radiological agent.

flush out, *v*—the process of reducing or removing VOCs and other airborne contaminants from a building.

green building, *n*—a building that provides the specified building performance requirements while minimizing disturbance to and improving the functioning of local, regional, and global ecosystems both during and after its construction and specified service life.

DISCUSSION—A green building optimizes efficiencies in resource management and operational performance; and, minimizes risks to human health and the environment.

habitat, *n*—the place where a population of organisms lives and their surroundings, both living and non-living.

habitat indicator, *n*—a physical attribute of the environment measured to characterize conditions necessary to support an organism, population, or community.

hazard, *n*—the adverse effect(s) that may result from exposure(s). (E 943)

heat island effect, *n*—see **urban heat island**.

indicator, *n*—(1) in biology, any biological entity or process, or community whose characteristics show the presence of specific environmental conditions. (2) In chemistry, a substance that shows a visible or measurable change, at a desired point in a chemical reaction. (3) A device that indicates the result of a measurement; for example, a pressure gage or a moveable scale.

indigenous species, *n*—a species that is likely, due to historical presence, to occur at a specified site for some portion of its life span. (E 943)

DISCUSSION—An indigenous species is one having originated in and being produced, growing, living, or occurring naturally in a particular region or environment as opposed to cultivated, domesticated, or exotic.

indoor air pollution, *n*—the level of air pollution in an enclosed environment.

DISCUSSION—Based on the definition of air pollution in Terminology D 1356, indoor air pollution relates to the levels of unwanted material in the air.

indoor air quality (IAQ), *n*—the composition and characteristics of the air in an enclosed space that affect the occupants of that space.

DISCUSSION—The indoor air quality of a space refers to the relative quality of air in a building with respect to contaminants and hazards and is determined by the level of indoor air pollution and other characteristics of the air, including those that impact thermal comfort such as air temperature, relative humidity and air speed.