

SOUTH BERGENITE

Local sought by Obama for ingenious design

(by Michael Lamendola - July 15, 2009)

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Herb Jackson/The Record

David Rosenberg, president and CEO of Hycrete Inc., a Carlstadt company that has devised a chemical additive for concrete that waterproofs it, was invited to the White House two weeks ago along with seven other green company presidents around the nation to discuss with President Obama how they are succeeding in their field.

Process makes concrete last longer, roadways harder

Finding a niche in the emerging world of green technologies is not always the easiest task, but one Carlstadt company has found its niche and has locked it in as a worldwide breakthrough in greening public and private construction. It's even caught the attention of President Barack Obama.

The company is Hycrete, Inc., a seven-year-old innovator and specialist in altering the composition of concrete to waterproof it with a simple liquid chemical solution, enabling it to last longer and be more protective of

buildings and infrastructure. The process also uses less manpower and materials than manually waterproofing concrete. The process can be used for buildings, and in some cases on roads and bridges, giving them a much longer life span. To waterproof porous concrete now, membrane applications need to be applied manually, usually by separate contractors and with loads of additional materials. Even then, concrete is never fully waterproof or recyclable and usually has a short-term life span eventually ending up in landfills across the United States. It's estimated upwards of 13 percent of landfill space nationwide is filled with concrete. Hycrete's process would create recyclable concrete.

Two weeks ago, Hycrete CEO David Rosenberg was one of eight emerging green technology company presidents to join President Obama at the White House for a meeting on how their success can be used as an example or model for his own ambitions on driving the economy through the application of green technologies. Rosenberg said he's not sure how the White House found its way to his company, but he got a call Wednesday telling him the President wanted to see him Thursday. The meeting was to shine light on how job loss could be counteracted and came as an example on the same day the U.S. Department of Labor announced the U.S. lost 467,000 jobs in the month of June.

"When the President calls, you go," said Rosenberg. "There were CEOs from all over the country; some had to take red eyes to get there."

Other companies included LED lighting specialists Cree Lighting, the energy-efficient consulting firm Positive Energy and Standard Renewable Energy, a company that offers energy audits and equips homes and buildings with energy efficient equipment, such as solar window film, wind energy systems and solar water heating systems.

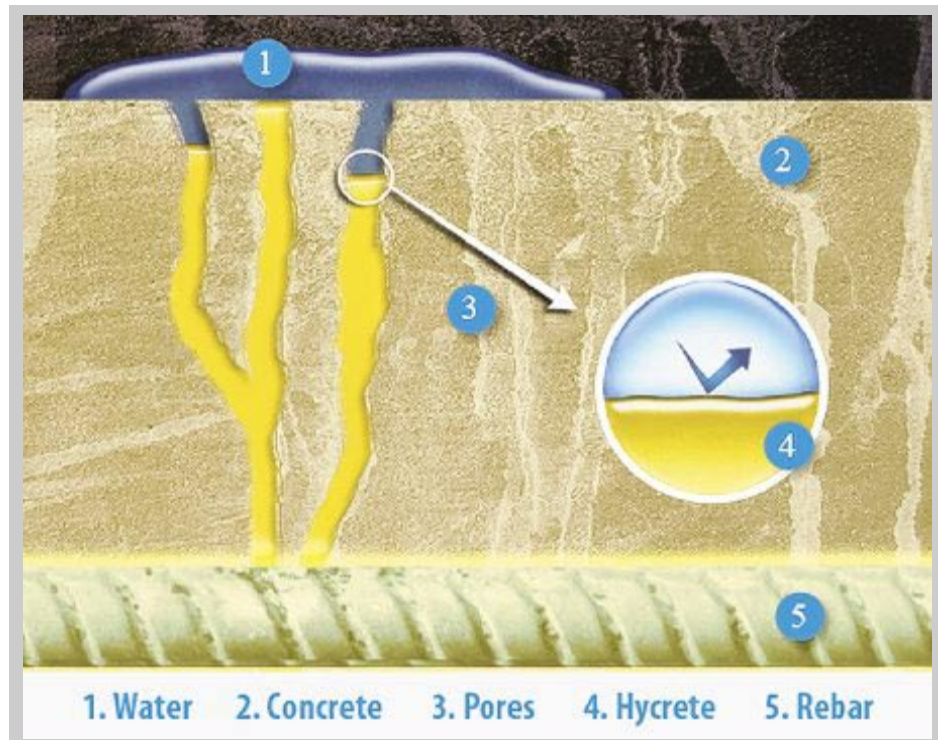
"These are folks whose companies are helping to lead the transformation towards a clean energy future," said President Obama in a press conference following the meeting. "Even as we face tough economic times, even as we continue to lose jobs, the CEOs here told me that they're looking to hire new people, in some cases to double or triple in size over the next few years. They are making money and they are helping their customers save money on the energy front."

Rosenberg wasn't always on a track to revolutionize the efficiency of one of the world's most widely used construction materials. A former fencing champ with ambitions of making it big on Wall Street, the now Jersey City resident grew up in New York City in a family that owned its own specialty chemical company. His grandfather Michael created a modified water molecule in 1995 that essentially takes on the properties of oil and repels water. It underwent rigorous testing for years and substantial evidence presented to him in 2002 showed it could not only protect the integrity of concrete, but make it recyclable. He died a week later.

David abandoned his plans to be a power broker and began Hycrete.

Rosenberg spoke of the meeting with President Obama as somewhat of a think tank session, which included hearing the President's views on an economy built on energy efficiency and Rosenberg and the other CEOs telling the President how they succeeded and how others could succeed in not only reducing their carbon footprint, but doing so while bolstering the job market.

"We talked about green tech being a factor for the U.S.," said Rosenberg. "One of the mantras of green construction is do more with less and we're doing that. ...you have the process of waterproofing now, it takes manpower and materials that slow up construction and cost money. We are eliminating that step."



Graphic Courtesy/Hycrete

Hycrete's chemical admixture, combined to concrete in mixing trucks before they head to projects, seals the porous capillaries of concrete, protecting the concrete from salt deposition and the steel rebar used to strengthen concrete from corrosion.

The technology, which ultimately closes the capillaries that exist in the sand, rock and water mixture that makes up concrete as a whole, has allowed Hycrete in only its six operating years of existence to move from two employees to 40 in nine locations in the U.S. and three internationally. Company representatives go to every job site, nearly 200 under their belt now, mixing their chemical into concrete trucks at the plant, overseeing its application at the site and educating contractors about it. Surprisingly however, Rosenberg said the majority of his clients exist in the corporate world and not in the public sector although he nearly guarantees infrastructure made with Hycrete concrete will last 20-30 more years than if it is built without it.

In New Jersey for example, he could be a saving grace for the Department of Transportation, particularly after a bridge survey was conducted after the I-35 Minneapolis collapse that said most are subpar. Although Rosenberg says the state thinks the way he does, there are too many obstacles to cross in public bidding to actually make a state project profitable for him now. The state is who first funded Hycrete, awarding the company a \$500,000 grant through the New Jersey Economic Development Authority.

"It takes a little more time in government for an idea to be adopted. It's been challenging. State agencies just move slowly, but we are making progress," said Rosenberg. "Most of our success is actually on the West Coast and it's frustrating, we want to be successful here. Here, things seem to work differently. They don't want to know what you did; they want to know what you did here."

Regardless of who his client base is now, Rosenberg's happy he is making a difference in not only the environment and efficiency locally, but globally as well. While conducting this interview, he opened an e-mail he had received that day from Saudi Arabia, requesting Hycrete sign on for a project there. In 10 years, he has hopes his product will have been used on every continent.

"I have a map in my office and can certainly see it being in every industrialized country on it," said Rosenberg. "I want us to continue to innovate the construction industry and be more of a piece of the puzzle that's important to us."