

EMBODIED CARBON ACTION PLAN

BY

PES STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS



APRIL 2024

SE2050 MEMBER YEAR - 2



TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|------------------------|----|
| INTRODUCTION..... | 3 |
| COMMITMENT LETTER..... | 4 |
| EDUCATION..... | 5 |
| REPORTING..... | 7 |
| REDUCTION..... | 8 |
| ADVOCACY..... | 10 |
| CLOSING REMARKS..... | 12 |

INTRODUCTION

In 2019, the Sustainability Committee of the Structural Engineering Institute developed the SE 2050 Commitment Program. The vision of this program is that: *All structural engineers shall understand, reduce, and ultimately eliminate embodied carbon in their projects by 2050.* Buildings and construction account for approximately 40% of energy-related CO₂ emissions¹, so there is considerable opportunity for structural engineers to make an impact on decarbonizing the built environment.

PES Structural Engineers is proud to publish our Embodied Carbon Action Plan, affirming our commitment to the vision of the SE 2050 program. Since submitting our commitment letter on December 20, 2022, we have been developing this plan to address the four focus areas identified by the SE 2050 governing body: Education, Reporting, Reduction, and Advocacy. Within this plan, we will detail our approach for completing the program requirements as well as several additional electives to further demonstrate our commitment to the program. We look forward to reviewing our Embodied Carbon Action Plan annually and refining our procedures based on lessons learned from the previous year.

¹ “How to Calculate Embodied Carbon” *The Institution of Structural Engineers*

PRINCIPALS

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December 20, 2022

Laura Champion
Structural Engineering Institute

RE: Letter of Commitment to the SE 2050 Program

Dear Laura:

PES Structural Engineers, a 54-person firm located in Atlanta, GA and Hartford, CT, is hereby signing on to the SE 2050 Commitment Program. We support the vision that structural engineers shall understand, reduce, and ultimately eliminate embodied carbon in their projects by 2050.

We are pleased to endorse the vision of the SE 2050 program, as it resonates clearly with our firm's core values. To achieve the goal of SE 2050, a collaborative approach is necessary, and at PES we are always striving to **win as a team**. We are committed to being an industry leader, seeking opportunities to **drive for improvement** through innovation. Most importantly, we recognize the severity and critical nature of the issue at hand and agree that it is time for our profession to **own it** – the work that we do as structural engineers can make a difference.

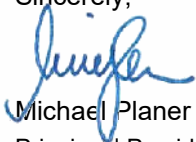
We therefore commit PES Structural Engineers to take the following steps which are part of the SE 2050 Commitment Program:

Within six months and annually henceforth, we commit to reporting an Embodied Carbon Action Plan (ECAP) and permit the ECAP document or form be made public on the SE 2050 website.

Within one year and annually henceforth, we commit to submit data to the SE 2050 project database in a collaborative effort to understand embodied carbon in structural engineering projects and to set attainable targets for future projects.

We look forward to joining this coalition and industry effort to achieve the goals of the SE 2050 Program.

Sincerely,



Michael Planer P.E., S.E.
Principal | President

EDUCATION

At PES Structural Engineers, we have always promoted knowledge sharing within the company and consider it to be a key practice for internal development. It will take a team effort to achieve the SE 2050 program goal, and as such we recognize the importance of providing all firm employees with the information and resources to be involved in the process. Below we have outlined the action items we will take to educate our employees on embodied carbon. We will continue reinforcing the embodied carbon fundamentals and take the next step to communicate more advanced information to the rest of the company.

Program Requirements

Provide a narrative of how the Embodied Carbon Reduction Champion will engage embodied carbon reduction at each office.

The embodied carbon reduction champion will serve as the chair for the sustainable design committee. This person will organize and lead committee meetings, where focused discussions can take place. While most of our firm is in Atlanta, we will ensure the New England office is represented at committee meetings to maintain consistency across the firm. Through this committee, knowledge will be shared with all firm employees to provide education around embodied carbon and communicate lessons learned and best practices for reducing embodied carbon in our projects.

Present at least (1) webinar focused on embodied carbon and make a recording available to employees. Include this resource in your orientation and on-boarding program.

This past year, we held a continuing education session for all technical employees where the webinar “Embodied Carbon 101: Structure” published by the Boston Society for Architecture in combination with the Carbon Leadership Forum was shown. It was a good introduction to the topic, and we will continue providing it to new employees as part of the on-boarding program. This upcoming year, we will focus on embodied carbon education opportunities relating specifically to concrete as the ACI low-carbon concrete code is expected to be released soon.

***Additional Elective* - Initiate an embodied carbon interest group within your firm and outline their goals. This group may more broadly address sustainability, but they must include embodied carbon.**

The sustainable design committee has been formed here at PES in conjunction with our commitment to the SE 2050 program. The primary focus of this committee will be on maintaining an active membership in the program, ensuring that we are appropriately championing the four focus areas of education, reporting, reduction, and advocacy. The sustainable design committee will lead the firm through completing the program requirements while also promoting an interest in embodied carbon internally.

***Additional Elective* - Create an Embodied Carbon digital resource wiki and/or forum on your firm's internal website for staff to create, share, and discuss Embodied Carbon educational resources.**

Within the past year, we have created an internal resource page accessible to all employees that provides introductory information about embodied carbon as well as some basic strategies and things to keep in mind when working with different building materials. We have maintained our internal channel for SE 2050 program tracking, meeting planning, and sharing information for discussion. This upcoming term year, we will implement regular posts to internal company channels to reinforce embodied carbon education. The sustainable design committee will continue to take the lead in distributing information to ensure that all employees are informed of recent developments surrounding embodied carbon.

REPORTING

The SE 2050 project database hosts embodied carbon information for projects submitted by the program member firms. We recognize the importance of building this database to identify current baselines and establish reduction targets for the future. We submitted (4) projects during our first year as a member of the program and look forward to continuing to strengthen the project database with our contributions.

Program Requirements

Submit a minimum of (2) projects per U.S. office with structural engineering services to the SE 2050 Database.

PES Structural Engineers has offices in both Atlanta, GA and Hartford, CT. During our first year, we submitted (4) total projects from a variety of sectors – industrial, multi-family residential, public assembly, and public order/safety. We will submit a minimum of (4) projects to the database this upcoming year, continuing our emphasis on project variety to help build up the database.

***Additional Elective* - For multi-office firms, describe how each office is measuring and reporting embodied carbon.**

We will ensure consistency with the project information we submit by employing the same method of embodied carbon tracking across the firm. At PES we recognize the importance of producing accurate BIM models to effectively communicate design information to our clients, and plan to leverage this information to assist with our embodied carbon tracking. There are many tools available to track embodied carbon, one of which being the Revit plug-in Tally Climate Action Tool (TallyCAT). This tool permits synchronization between material quantities in Revit and information hosted on the Embodied Carbon in Construction Calculator (EC3) database. We found success using this approach during our first year as members, and plan to continue down this path while exploring the development of our own internal tools.

REDUCTION

PES Structural Engineers is committed to reducing embodied carbon on our projects, while also maintaining the high level of quality that our clients have come to expect. In our first year as members of the program, we have focused on gathering information and evaluating our current practices to identify opportunities for embodied carbon reduction. Please see below for more information on our plan to fulfill the program requirements in this area.

Program Requirements

Set clearly stated, firm-wide reduction targets in the short-term (<1 year) and long-term (>5 years)

In the short-term, our goal is to achieve reductions on our projects by requesting EPDs as much as possible and collaborating with concrete suppliers to implement more optimal mix designs. This will be guided by our efforts to produce new specifications that incorporate embodied carbon performance. We will continue to measure embodied carbon on our projects to determine what a reasonable long-term reduction goal will be.

***Additional Elective* - Update your specifications to incorporate embodied carbon performance. Include embodied carbon in your submittal review requirements.**

We are developing specifications that incorporate embodied carbon performance and plan to provide these for projects with sustainability goals. We support the movement towards performance-based specifications and will review our specifications to remove unnecessary limits for concrete mix designs, depending on the application. Additionally, we will request Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs) to be provided in tandem with concrete mix design submittals.

***Additional Elective* - Collaborate with your concrete supplier to reduce embodied carbon in a mix design below an acceptable baseline (e.g. NRMCA (National Ready Mixed Concrete Association) regional baseline values).**

As we review mix design submittals, we will look for opportunities to collaborate with suppliers to optimize mix designs as well as request EPDs if they are available. We are in the process of revising concrete specifications to incorporate embodied carbon performance, and are in communication with concrete suppliers to guide this effort.

ADVOCACY

As members of the SE 2050 commitment program, we also plan to serve as advocates in the industry and the community for decarbonizing the built environment. The growing number of SE 2050 program member firms is encouraging, but there is still plenty of opportunity to communicate this program's importance to our clients and the public. By sharing our progress in reducing embodied carbon for our projects, we hope to motivate others to also become engaged on the subject. We will achieve this through several task items outlined below.

Program Requirements

Describe the value of SE 2050 to clients. How can your design teams collaborate to reduce embodied carbon? Please attach any associated marketing materials

We will continue our work on developing resources that can be used to promote sustainability goals on our projects, investing additional effort in creating external marketing materials to communicate to clients that we can contribute to achieving project sustainability goals. We have developed an internal resource page accessible to all employees that provides introductory information about embodied carbon as well as some basic strategies and things to keep in mind when working with different building materials. Armed with this information, the design team can have these conversations at project kickoff meetings to determine the extent of sustainability goals for the project.

Publicly declare your firm as a member of the SE 2050 Commitment however you see fit (e.g. on your website, LinkedIn, or other social media).

After submitting our commitment letter and officially being accepted into the program, we proudly announced our membership on our website and our LinkedIn page. Additionally, we published our commitment letter and linked to the SE 2050 website to further advocate for the program.

***Additional Elective* - Engage with structural material suppliers in your region to communicate the importance of Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs) and low-carbon material options.**

As previously mentioned in our “reduction” section of this plan, we are excited for the opportunity to engage with material suppliers and explore any low-carbon material options that are available. We will establish a standard practice of requesting EPDs for concrete mix designs and work with suppliers to utilize low-carbon concrete in alignment with the project objectives.

CLOSING REMARKS

Since joining the SE 2050 program in December 2022, our sustainable design practice at PES Structural Engineers has grown tremendously and we will continue that development through implementation of this action plan. As mentioned in our commitment letter, the vision of the SE 2050 program aligns closely with our core values and we are proud to join the group of structural engineering firms working to solve the growing challenge of reducing embodied carbon. We look forward to reviewing our action plan next year and incorporating updates from what we have learned.