

Straw: An Eco-Friendly Construction Material

John Belmont:

It's a style of home that went out with The Three Little Pigs, but some in California are resurrecting straw homes. That's right: these people are actually building a home out of bales of hay.

Ilene Zauderer:

We wanted to do something that would be sustainable and using less energy and being more self-contained, to have that possibility.

John Belmont:

The construction isn't unlike building more traditional homes with a wooden frame, except everything here is filled in with straw.

David Arkin:

So here we are in what will be the living room of this, uh, little unit.

John Belmont:

And while this material may appear to be a poor choice, especially if it rains or the Big Bad Wolf comes along, hay does have its advantages. Owners say it's a great insulator, and they like that it's eco-friendly.

Doug Ebrite:

It's-it's reducing the need for wood, uh, so much wood, which, um, knowing the industry there's a tremendous amount of waste in this business.

John Belmont:

And for those wondering about what happens when it does rain, they have an answer for that. You see, all this hay will eventually be covered with stucco, cement, or clay plaster. Still, to keep moisture out, the plumbing is placed outside rather than inside the walls, and the shower area is waterproofed. In fact, they say the toughest part isn't building the home but finding a mortgage lender to back it. But that can be overcome by describing it in a different way.

Michael Logan:

In the case of straw bale homes, that structure is defined as a cellulose home, uh, as opposed to a straw bale home. So I think it's critical and paramount for buyers and people who are looking at building straw bale homes that they sort of understand the lingo the- of the product that they're getting into.

John Belmont:

The houses tend to cost a bit more than traditional homes, but designers say these bale houses are both fire-resistant and earthquake-proof.

John Belmont:

John Belmont, The Associated Press.

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