



What Makes Window Film a Smart Choice for Hotel Owners

By Peter Davey
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At \$100 per barrel for crude or “black gold” as the “Beverly Hillbillies” sitcom suggested, we all wish we’d strike oil in our backyards. Before erecting your own rig, there are ways to minimize the impact that astronomical crude oil prices have on our budgets. Servicing HVAC equipment, adding insulation, purchasing energy-efficient lights and equipment are all laudable conservation measures. However, the greatest source of heat loss and gain is often overlooked—windows, the environmental and security Achilles’ heel of any building. A quality insulating window film retrofit will reduce the flow of energy in and out of windows and save substantially on heating and cooling expense.

3M Company began the history of window film in 1966 when a patent application was granted for a metalized solar control window film. Since the 1980’s energy crisis, window film technology has improved dramatically. Often referred to as “tinting”, most films today are virtually invisible with little if any noticeable “tint”. However, films that block light, add architectural design elements or provide a uniform appearance to an otherwise cluttered window display are still available and in demand.

Low-E window films have been specifically designed for energy conservation. These films reduce heat loss by up to 30 percent and air-conditioning costs by blocking more than 70 percent of the sun’s heat. Many meet Energy Star certification standards. Patented construction enables their metal coating to reflect heat back into the room in colder months and reduce the entrance of solar heat in warmer months. Reductions in drafts and temperature fluctuations generate considerable savings on utilities expense. Inexpensive compared to window replacement, they provide a rapid return on investment with the energy cost savings they provide.

Films Available for Any Application Type

Depending upon window type—clear, tinted, insulated, single or double pane—and desired effects, there is an appropriate window film for any application. There are films that reduce fading of fabrics and furnishings, reduce glare, and improve a building’s overall aesthetics. Some films provide substantial enough UV protection to justify recommendation by the Skin Cancer Foundation. Optically clear, non-metallic window films that minimize reflectivity and allow light to be fully transmitted have recently appeared on the market. Since metallic films can interfere with cell phone and WiFi transmissions, non-metallic films offer an alternative.

There are also films specifically manufactured to improve safety and security. By holding glass in place when breakage occurs due to high winds, severe weather, bomb blasts or vandalism, security films help mitigate the damage and injuries that can result. I often demonstrate security films’ strength by swinging a crow bar at plates of glass with applied security film. It is impressive. The glass breaks, but stays in tact. By holding glass in place, the film continues to protect property from the elements in the aftermath of storms, vandalism or blasts.

Choice becomes a challenge. Technical data is available for each film for every circumstance. Go with experience and follow the money. An experienced window film dealer and manufacturer with financial strength to invest in research and development will be an asset when selecting window film. Note the number of years the manufacturer has been in the business of window film and whether it is an ISO 9002 certified facility. A manufacturer that uses its own adhesives is a real plus. Window film is only as good as its adhesive. A bad adhesive will produce bubbling and blistering—distortions created from thermal cycling that can result in seal failures. You will want to be assured of lifelong optical clarity, a characteristic of good adhesive.

Work with a Qualified Installer

Verify that you are working with a manufacturer's authorized dealer. An authorized dealer will be happy to have you check with their distributor or manufacturer for confirmation of their status as a dealer. An installation by a manufacturer's authorized dealer that employs professionally trained installers will assure quality work and the security of a manufacturer's warranty.

If you are considering security film, find out specifics on blast testing. Tests should have been conducted according to GSA criteria. Be certain that the test data is indicative of consistent performance in all climates and conditions. A film that incorporates micro-layered polyester technology provides optimum strength. The more a particular film has been applied in the field, the more reliable the data for performance.

With so many factors contributing to the need for energy conservation and security, it seems foolish not to consider the purchase of insulating and/or security window film...products that will pay for themselves in short order with dollars saved in utilities expense. An assessment of your building's particular specifications and your specific concerns can be addressed quickly by those who have the knowledge, experience and the products that have proven themselves in the field.

Peter Davey is president of American Window Film, Inc., a 3M Authorized Window Film Dealer and member of the Prestige Dealer Network located in Foxboro, Mass. Established in 1975, American Window Film, Inc. services both commercial and residential markets, and specializes in large commercial and retail accounts nationwide. Go to www.americanwindowfilm.com or call (800) 274-8468 for details.