
17 August 2011

Passive House: a public good

Dear fellow Passive House stakeholders,

For the past 15 years, we at the Passive House Institute (PHI) have worked to further the Passive House Standard. Throughout this time, we have made it a point to work to the highest moral, ethical and scientific standards in our research, quality assurance activities and networking initiatives, seeking to advance Passive House worldwide by keeping the concept internationally accessible and open to all. Indeed, the resulting grass roots style movement with hotspots of Passive House activity springing up worldwide has witnessed tangible success over the last two decades.

In keeping with this open approach, we have always extended our support to the multitude of organisations working to advance Passive House worldwide and do our best to calm turbulent waters when difficulties arise. As an independent research institute, however, PHI must focus its energy and move forward with essential Passive House research. PHI's long-standing relationship with PHIUS, an organisation founded by Katrin Klingenberg, has done much to bring Passive House to the American market and we appreciate what PHIUS has achieved in the US. Unfortunately, recent actions by PHIUS have culminated both in breaches of contract and good faith, unnecessarily reinforcing false divisions within the Passive House community. In light of PHIUS' disregard for its standing agreements with PHI, we are left with no other choice but to suspend all standing contracts. Evidence of PHIUS' certification of Passive House buildings without the requisite documentation has threatened the integrity of the Standard and forced PHI to terminate PHIUS' status as an accredited Passive House Building Certifier. PHIUS has infringed upon PHI's copyright of the PHPP software by both selling and making changes to it without the legal basis to do so. Finally, PHIUS' introduction of a competing professional certification scheme as well as its refusal to honour existing contractual obligations has left PHI with no other option than to revoke PHIUS' authority to offer the International Passive House Designer exam. As Passive House is and will remain an international and open concept, we accept PHIUS' choice to "go it alone" and wish it well on its journey in the continued promotion of Passive House construction. It is our hope that one day, PHIUS can again cooperate with PHI in a fruitful, positive way. Until that time, we must make it clear that PHIUS may no longer rely on PHI's name and expertise to bolster its own image.

Despite these unpleasant developments, PHI would like to assure all Passive House stakeholders that it will not abandon the development of Passive House in the US or anywhere else in the world. PHI is doing everything in its power to ensure Passive House's continued success, especially in the US where we will continue to reach out to those competent, motivated and fair actors who emphasise real work and real Passive House construction. PHI has always put enormous effort into breaking down the barriers to Passive House uptake and we will continue to use our energy to ensure the availability of our offerings, both on the American continent and internationally:

The Passive House Planning Package (PHPP)

While PHIUS is not authorised to sell the PHPP, the design tool forming the basis of Passive House design, we will continue to ensure this software's availability in the United States. PHI,

the creator and exclusive copyright holder of the PHPP, is currently offering the 2007 English-language edition of this software and is working with motivated US partners on a metric-imperial calculation tool to be integrated into the programme itself. PHI will continue to rely on its authorised PHPP resellers to distribute the PHPP in its various languages across the globe, and will work proactively to increase their number.

Passive House Building Certification

Passive House Building Certification is key to assuring the quality for which the Passive House Standard stands and while PHIUS' status as an authorised Passive House Building Certifier has been revoked, certification knows no geographical jurisdictions: any of the currently 32 [Building Certifiers worldwide](#), each internationally accredited by PHI, may certify in PHI's name according to the Passive House Standard anywhere in the world. PHI, the only organisation with the authority to train and certify such certifiers across the globe, will work to train other US-based Passive House Building Certifiers as we find it imperative that the number of authorised certifiers increase to meet demand.

Passive House Designers

Almost 1500 professionals around the world have already earned the internationally recognised Certified Passive House Designer designation since its inception in 2006¹. This designation can be obtained either by 1) passing the international exam issued by PHI and offered by 45 examination bodies in some 20 countries worldwide or through 2) the submission of a project report documenting the construction of a Certified Passive House building.

- 1) While PHIUS has declared its intention to no longer administer the international exam leading to the international Certified Passive House Designer designation, this exam may be taken at any one of the 45 [examination bodies](#) worldwide and, for example, is currently being offered in the US by the [Passive House Academy](#). The exam's focus lies on the physical principles of Passive House design, which remain the same worldwide and is thus truly international in scope. Responsible course providers also prepare their students for the regional application of Passive House by teaching the principles in relation to local building traditions and specific regional climatic conditions. In our experience, course providers whose students are well-versed in Passive House fundamentals invariably have high pass rates.
- 2) Alternatively, early adopters with proven Passive House knowledge have always had the option of achieving the international certification through the submission of a report documenting a Passive House building, planned by the applicant and certified by a PHI accredited Passive House Building Certifier. Report guidelines can be found [here](#).

iPHA

Founded by PHI as a way to connect Passive House stakeholders worldwide, the International Passive House Association (iPHA) harnesses the growing international interest in Passive House, uniting the Passive House community and offering a wealth of Passive House knowledge through tools such as Passipedia, www.passipedia.org, the wiki-based Passive House resource featuring basic information as well as years of accumulated Passive House findings. A growing network currently over 1100 strong, iPHA has become a powerful tool for Passive House promotion. We encourage Passive House stakeholders worldwide to [join](#) either directly or through one of iPHA's national [Affiliate organisations](#).

The success of Passive House is the result of decent work by actors all around the world – something that is not going to change anytime soon. PHI will continue to channel its resources to tackling relevant Passive House research and do its utmost to ensure that its work remains accessible to all those interested in making a productive contribution. Passive House is something truly global. Advancing this

¹ The year was originally cited in this letter as being 2004. Please excuse the typing error.

international standard will thus take a global effort in which people from around the world join forces and work together.

In this light, we find it especially important to show our solidarity with Passive House stakeholders in the US. We know that when Americans put their hearts into something, they truly give it their all: we are very much looking forward to sharing in the positive energy that abounds in the US. We ask you to be in touch and to keep up the outstanding work. After all, actions speak louder than words.

Sincerely,



Passive House Institute

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Wolfgang Feist".

Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Feist