

# »»» On the Road Again



After the successful launch of GS1, the company's traveling showroom, GS2, hit the road at the beginning of September.

Differences between the two trailers can be seen in the updated graphics that line the inside and outside of the trailer. Many of the visuals feature DIY kits for the home, with the larger graphics showcasing ideas for outdoor living spaces. All the trailer graphics are in keeping with the new color scheme General Shale has implemented for its marketing materials. GS2 maintains the same eye-catching interior layout of GS1 while featuring thin brick, Napoleon grills, the Sentinel Mailbox, the Retreat Garden Bench, the Paladin Garden Column, the Entertainer Round Fire Pit and a lighted pathway of pavers from door to door.

Both trailers can be booked for expo shows, home shows, dealer and distributor locations, and sporting events, just to name a few. GS1 had a very successful showing at the August NASCAR race at Bristol Motor Speedway in Bristol, Tennessee. GS2 is currently on location at the General Shale Christmas Village, which is part of Speedway in Lights, an annual Christmas event held each year at Bristol Motor Speedway that benefits more than 50 local children's charities.

"The trailers are very convenient for both the customers and our employees at locations where the trailers can be accommodated," says Bryan Hoilman, plant manager, Piney Flats. "There's very little setup involved; just hook to a power source, open the doors, and we're ready to show off our best-selling products."

As with GS1, the weight of the various products was a concern, but there was a solution. "We thin-cut all the featured kits so they have the same look but a third of the actual weight," Hoilman says. "The inside is the showroom, but the exterior is a traveling billboard as we travel from location to location. We've been getting calls from people who see us on the road. It's been a good ambassador for General Shale."

# CONGRATS to ROME & RICHMOND

Two General Shale plants are to be congratulated on achieving safety milestones. The Rome, Georgia, plant has reported one million hours of no lost-time accidents. The employees there have been lost-time accident-free since September 2005.

And in Roanoke, our plant is celebrating three million hours of no lost-time accidents, which, according to Brian Ogle, Corporate Safety and Risk manager, might be an industry first. The workers there have been working without a lost-time accident since June 2000.

"A safe working environment is part of the success profile initiative of building with a clear conscience," Ogle says. "We're always looking for ways to improve safety on the floor, like our stellar safety and health programs, our on-site inspections and having our employees looking for potential dangers every day."

Ogle says it's very important to hear from employees on ways to improve safety in the plants. "Our Success Profile initiative allows each employee to be our eyes and ears on the floor as they send us suggestions on how to make a great company even greater. By encouraging our employees to use the suggestion boxes or go online, we can continue to go down this path of recognizing potential hazards before they cause an accident."

The two plants with no lost-time accidents will be recognized in various ways for their achievements. Congratulations, Rome and Roanoke!



## SUGGESTION BOX

Currently there are so many new products being introduced that the inside sales reps have a hard time keeping current. I think there should be some kind of email notification to employees about these new products, maybe with a picture of the product and a SAP name and/or number. New block products are confusing to those of us who do not deal with a lot of concrete products, and the names sometimes do not have any meaning for warehouse locations. Maybe we could term this "New Product Alert." It would help us help the customers in a more intelligent manner. —Madison, AL

Take a look at electrical demand charges at plants. There may be opportunities to modify production schedules to take some of the load off the electrical grids during peak hours. —Spring City, TN

Retrofit our exit signs with LED lighting so we get the energy savings without having to replace the entire sign; the retro kit's cost is just under \$25. This could also go toward tech leader, modern/future-oriented as well as energy-efficient construction as the DOE continues to prohibit the use of incandescent lights. —Corporate Office



## MESSAGE FROM MR. GREEN

We had an extra day to get things done in 2012 because it was a leap year. Yet the progress we've made in the past year wasn't due to an extra day. It was because of the extra effort of our employees every day in making this a good year.

We were focused on being more productive, in becoming more innovative with exciting new products, and by marketing our products to a broader audience of potential buyers. I am happy to report that your efforts are making a positive difference.

In 2013, we will continue to take market share from our competitors by being the high-touch company that builders, contractors and homeowners expect. We will sell more of our products to consumers who are renovating their homes and businesses as well as sprucing up their back yards. We will introduce ourselves to more architects and designers who can specify our products to large commercial and residential projects. We will also build an even stronger bond with the thousands of contractors who have supported our company for more than 80 years.

We will focus harder on being the expert for building professionals through innovative and exciting new products, such as our new Endurance RS4™ structural brick that can offer amazing energy efficiency and safety from severe weather such as high winds and seismic activity.

As we pause for the holidays to reflect on our past and anticipate our future, I am grateful for your commitment to our shared success in 2012. I am confident of our future because of your efforts and continued dedication. I have never been as enthusiastic about our future as I am today. I hope that you share my passion. Together we will make 2013 another year of continued growth and achievement at General Shale.

May you have a very Merry Christmas, enjoy the holidays with family and celebrate what this time of year is all about.

Sincerely,

Richard "Dick" Green  
President and CEO  
General Shale

# Impressions

THE GENERAL SHALE EMPLOYEE NEWSLETTER

holiday 2012



## Season of Safety

BRIAN OGLE | Corporate Safety and Risk Manager

General Shale emphasizes safety not only in the workplace but at home as well. Our main goal is to make sure our employees work in a safe environment and return home to their families the way they came to work, but we also want to do all we can to make sure they stay safe at home. Throughout the year we like to offer tips that can keep your families safe as well. Holiday festivities are supposed to be filled with happiness and excitement, but unfortunately they can turn tragic if proper safety precautions are not taken.

### DRIVING

"This is an exciting time of year with all the hustle and bustle going on, but with this time of year come earlier dark skies and questionable weather. Young drivers are out of school and on the roads more frequently during Christmas break; it's a good idea to practice some defensive driving skills," says Brian Ogle, Corporate Safety and Risk manager. "Also make sure your headlights and brake lights are working properly so you're not the cause of an accident. Don't forget to keep safety items like blankets, water, snacks, a flashlight and a cell phone charger in your car. And please do NOT text and drive. If you must take a call or text someone, find a safe place to pull off the road to use your phone."

### DECORATING

Holiday decorating can be fun and something a family looks forward to every year, but it can come with its share of dangers as well. If you use a live tree inside the home, be sure to keep it watered. You've probably seen those YouTube videos of dry trees igniting and burning in a matter of seconds. Don't place a live tree near a heating source (fireplace, baseboard heat, external heaters that use kerosene, etc.) and be careful with lights, closely following the manufacturer's instructions. Be sure to unplug Christmas lights when you are out of the room or sleeping, or upgrade your Christmas lighting to LED. Older light sets are not only a danger from years of use and abuse but also consume more power.

If you use a ladder to hang lights or at any other time, inspect your ladder before you use it. Have someone with you when you're on the ladder to keep the base steady. A good rule of thumb is the 4:1 rule for safe ladder positioning. "For every four feet of elevation, pull the ladder out from the base one foot," Ogle says. And although brick made from General Shale is an excellent product, bricks are NOT made to put under the ladder for higher elevation, Ogle says. "Taking a six-foot ladder and cutting off a couple of feet doesn't make it a four-foot ladder, it makes it a hazard," he added. Watch out for the power lines around your home. Every year families suffer because an aluminum ladder makes accidental contact with power lines, and the results are deadly.



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# Wienerberger CEO discusses new energy code requirements



The next edition of “GSNews” has a special guest, Heimo Scheuch, CEO of Wienerberger AG, General Shale’s parent company headquartered in Vienna, Austria.

Scheuch sat down to discuss the impact of the 2012 energy code requirements on the construction industry and our simple solutions for code compliance.

The 2012 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC), responsible for energy efficiency standards for buildings in the United States, recently issued an update of the code. Among other changes, the 2012 code contains more stringent requirements for insulation in new buildings throughout most of the United States in order to improve the energy efficiency of buildings.

General Shale offers three systems that are the first to achieve R20 values. Bricks are inherently good insulators, so when you combine them with a solid sheet of insulation to create a “wall” next to the brick you achieve this R20 standard. The first option available from General Shale is standard residential or commercial brick products. With technical assistance from General Shale, architects and builders can easily achieve this new standard.

A second available option is General Shale’s line of thin brick or thin rock veneers. We’ve focused a lot on interiors with our veneers, but with the proper use of a new type of insulation, the thin veneers can achieve R20 on building exteriors ... as well as interiors.

The third and most recent innovation in the General Shale product portfolio is Endurance RS4™ structural brick. Endurance RS4 structural brick is the most exciting option because it offers not only greater energy efficiency but also added structural strength. Because Endurance brick is larger than a standard size brick, it can be installed with minimal labor and overall cost adjustments. Endurance RS4 brick is oversized for safer, stronger, more sustainable and energy-efficient construction. This product eliminates the need for load-bearing wood or steel framing and has excellent thermal mass properties. In addition, the product is suitable for any type of foundation, withstands higher loads and meets seismic requirements. Brick makes a building very solid and more resistant to hurricanes, fires and earthquakes. This is also reflected in insurance rates, which may be lower for a brick house than for one built with any other material.

“Since our company was founded more than 80 years ago, the nature of our business has been sustainable building,” says General Shale President and CEO Dick Green. “Brick is the ultimate construction material for environmental concerns and energy savings, and we are proud to offer a variety of products and solutions to make code compliance easier.”

Recognizing the importance of reversing America’s trend with regard to energy, the U.S. government and organizations such as AIA; American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE); International Code Council (ICC); and the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) work to provide design and construction standards to maximize energy efficiency.

To watch Dr. Scheuch’s interview, visit the General Shale website at [www.generalshale.com](http://www.generalshale.com) and click on “GSNews.”



**SYSTEM 1**  
Standard Brick Products



**SYSTEM 2**  
Thin Rock / Thin Brick Veneers



**SYSTEM 3**  
Endurance RS4™ Structural Brick



## Economic environment looks to be improving in construction industry

If you put “more houses to be built” on your Christmas list, it looks like you might get your wish. Mark Kinser, General Shale’s vice president of Corporate Development & Marketing, says most construction forecasts call for a 15-20% increase in new housing starts over last year.

“We feel good about where we’re headed. Even though this housing start number is an improvement, it’s still low based on historic numbers. But for the first time in five years things are moving in a positive direction for the industry,” Kinser said.

In the past few years we have seen some of the lowest construction starts since the 1960s, and that of course hurts the brick industry. Not only are fewer houses being built, but the type and style of home have also affected the industry. In 2012, the market built more “entry level” homes where brick isn’t always used. However, forecasters say next year in addition to more homes being built, the homes will be bigger, which lends to more brick being used.

“We may not get back to large-scale homes, but the outlook is for larger than entry-level homes, which allows more use of brick,” Kinser said.

Despite the encouraging forecasts, the economy is still in a delicate balance, especially as turmoil continues in Washington and around the world. General Shale will maintain its drive and focus with new products that consumers are looking for and on being the industry leader in innovation.

“We are working diligently in product development so we can approach the market with a broader offering. We have done that already with outdoor living and thin veneers, and we will continue to innovate products. We have some new lines that we are excited about and will launch in the coming year,” Kinser added.

With the popularity of the outdoor living and thin veneer products as well as traditional brick, General Shale looks to have a good year in 2013.

## Season of Safety CONTINUED from page 1



### COOKING

If you’re thinking about frying that holiday turkey, take it outside, away from your home or any structure (never fry a turkey indoors). If the fryer were to tip and the oil spill, it could quickly cause a house fire, so be smart and keep a fire extinguisher nearby. Fry the turkey outside on a level area. Dirt or a concrete slab are your best choices; however, splattering grease can stain concrete or cement slabs. Wooden decks can catch fire, so don’t set the fryer there. Make sure the cooker is perfectly level and steady before adding the oil. Make sure someone watches the cooking turkey at all times. Never leave it unattended – not even for a few minutes! Be sure kids and animals are kept out of the vicinity for the entire time. Allow oil to cool completely before storing or disposing of it. Never dump the oil down an outside drain or down a kitchen sink. Instead, pour it into plastic, lidded containers to dispose of it.

Remembering these safety tips and using common sense should make for a happy and safe holiday season! Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from General Shale!

Have hand-size cards with brick choices, like a paint wheel. Also show mortar colors, trim colors, stone choices that coordinate. —Humboldt, TN

Add website function to sort products by plant. —Denver, CO

Laptop computers and applicable software for qualified maintenance personnel – most equipment is run by PLC systems. The ability to quickly troubleshoot and tune machines to optimize production is greatly increased if we are able to “talk” to the PLC. —Wister, OK

The rocking machine on our Citadel line uses a three-point lifting system. We have to turn three large nuts to loosen the machine, and then we have to raise or lower (depending on product) the machine using the other three nuts. This is very time-consuming. My suggestion is for a three-point system that uses a chain hoist, powered or not. This will speed up the time it takes to set up a line. The product will get out the door faster. —Cambridge, Ontario

SAP MM Users – Purchase orders should be mailed to USER’S Outlook account instead of printed at locations. This would save up to eight pieces of paper per purchase order – printing, changing PO and faxing to vendor. —Mooresville, IN

I believe it would be helpful if we had a way of tracking the utilization of discounts and specials through SAP. Perhaps some sort of discount code that would track the type of sale, amount, merchandise sold, etc. ... This information would be very valuable in determining the effectiveness of these marketing efforts. —Louisville, KY

For us to manufacture a brick line called “the handmade series” at one of our plants, using the same size as an old Carolina brick. Use our technology of stamping and textured rollers to keep costs down, but sell it as a premium product. —Kernersville, NC

Is there a way we can capture the “average” added value in pricing our add-on products like Versa-lok, Arriscraft sills or an outdoor living fireplace? We could show an entry-level home that’s listed for \$250,000 and add some of our upgrades, spending around \$60,000 ... How much is that same home worth now? It would be one heck of a marketing tool to show the actual changed value of a home. —Corporate Office

Turn AC or heat down on Friday night before leaving, especially when the store is not open on the weekend. —Billings, MT