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"We need to do everything we can to reduce the consumption of energy."
- Homebuilder
Chuck Miller

Polar pine trees from sustainably managed forests in Finland are used to build Atrium Log Homes.

Energy-Efficient Log Homes

Atrium Log Homes Evergreen, Colo.

When most people think of log homes, they think of tiny, drafty cabins tucked away in the woods or sitting alongside rivers. But Randy Nelson isn't most people.



Smart SUMMARY

Atrium Log Homes

- High-quality polar pine logs from Finland are resistant to splitting
- Factory manufacturing reduces waste materials
- Precision-engineered construction ensures tight-fitting logs and provides energy efficiency

Nelson, president of Image Homes and partner of sister company Atrium Log Homes, both based in Evergreen, Colo., has a different vision: He sees luxury log homes that are models of energy efficiency.

Nelson, whose Image Homes has earned awards from the National Association of Home Builders for its energy-efficient building methods, now distributes log-home components supplied by Honka, based in Helsinki, Finland. Honka is the world's largest log home manufacturer, using polar pine trees harvested from sustainably managed forests near the Arctic Circle.



The demand for log homes is booming, Nelson says. More than 25,000 are built every year in the United States, according to the Log Homes Council. "Around the nation, people are building log homes because it's been their dream to live in one ever since they were little kids," Nelson says. "Now we can build them a highly sophisticated log home — everything from an 800-square-foot cabin to a 12,000-square-foot luxury home."

Committed to green building, Nelson admits he never believed it possible to build energy-efficient log homes. Honka, though, proved him wrong.

The company locates its manufacturing plants in the heart of Finland's forests, reducing the cost and pollution associated with driving materials long distances from forest to factory. During the manufacturing process, the company uses lean-construction techniques, creating components in mass quantities to build homes more efficiently and inexpensively, while wasting as little wood as possible.

Because of Finland's short growing season, the pine logs Honka harvests have closer annual rings, so they're stronger than other types of pine and resistant to splitting. They are precision-engineered in Honka's factory, ensuring a tight fit not only between the logs but also between windows and doors.

The result is an extremely energy-efficient home, Nelson says.

Over time, the walls of a log home settle, forming tighter bonds, so they keep hot and cool air inside more efficiently as the years pass. In addition, he notes, log homes absorb the heat of the sun during the day and radiate that heat at night.

Nelson is so certain that Atrium's log homes are highly efficient, he is entering a new home the company is now building in Empire, Colo., into the state's greenbuilding program. Once the house is completed, state officials will test its energy efficiency. Nelson is betting the house will score well. [www.atrium loghomes.com](http://www atrium loghomes.com); 720-352-7022.