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January/February 2008

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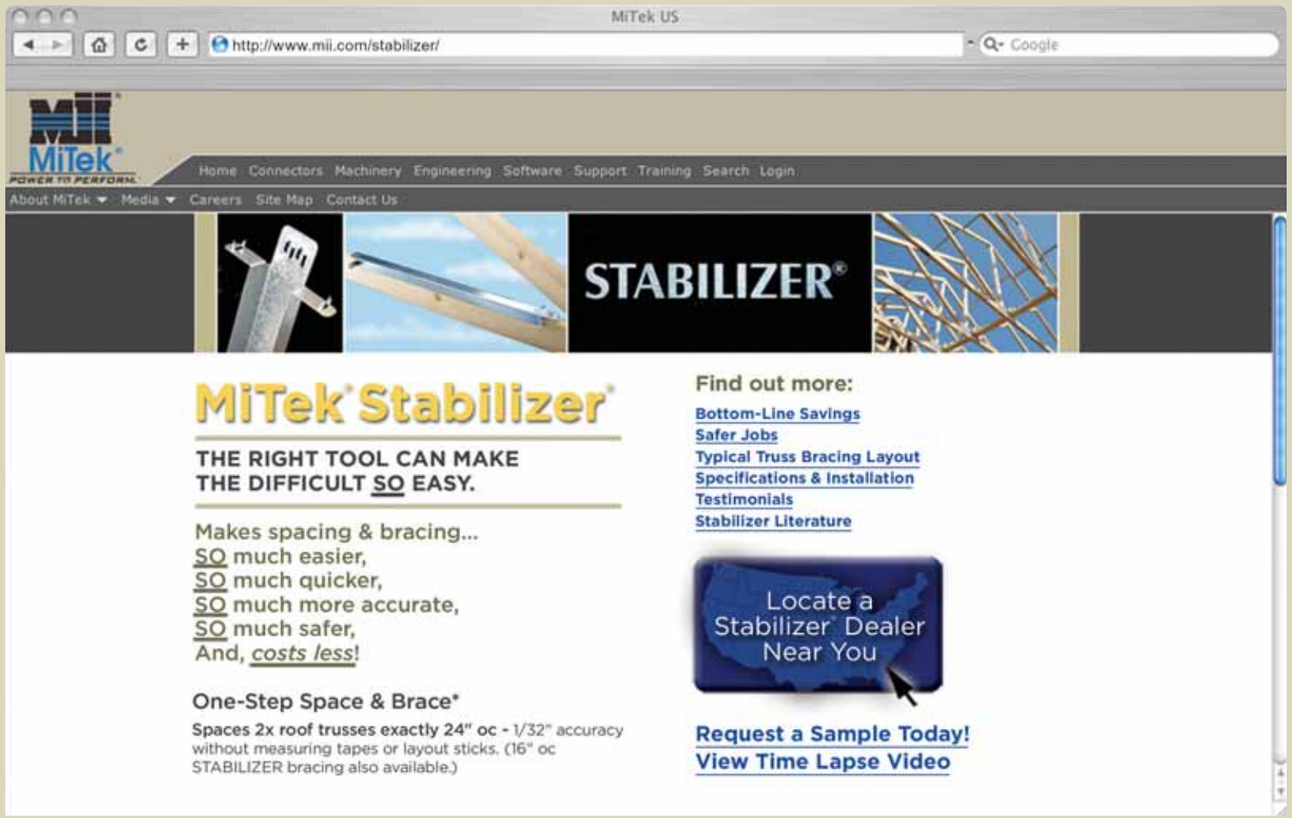

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STRUCTURAL BUILDING COMPONENTS™ THE FUTURE OF FRAMING

Editor's Message

Walls Panels Fill Customers' Needs—Just Not in South Florida

by Bob Becht

First time experiences with panels are not always smooth sailing!

When I was asked to write an article about wall panels I was challenged. Builders in south Florida use concrete load bearing walls and steel stud non-load bearing walls. Therefore, wall panels are not used in the marketplace I have been operating in for the last 26 years. To talk about my experience with wall panels, I have to go back to the mid-1960s in Chicago, which is where I got my start in the industry.

The first time I saw a wall panel I was a teenager working for my dad who was a residential builder in the south suburbs of Chicago. At the time he had several houses going up at once, one right next the other. To speed up the jobs he ordered wall panels and trusses. We pulled up to the jobs to check on the progress and saw that two houses were complete. His framers, however, who had never worked with wall panels before, had failed to brace the walls! I guess they thought wall panels were magic and didn't need bracing. My dad phoned his guys at home and got the walls braced that night.

With the labor conditions that we will face in the future and the pressures we will face to keep costs down so that built construction remains affordable, steel and wood wall panels have the chance to become an important part of all manufacturers' structural building component product offering.

My next experience with wall panels was from the component manufacturing side. In 1966 when I was in college, a family friend who owned a truss plant that had recently gone into the wall panel business hired me for a weekend job. I'll call the family friend Mr. X. Mr. X had a customer that had eight three-story multi-family buildings built using Mr. X's trusses and wall panels. The customer was complaining that the studs in the panels had excessive bow. Mr. X was sure that this was not the case and hired me to investigate. He dropped me off at the jobsite Saturday morning with a long level, a red crayon and a clipboard. I was instructed to check the bow on every stud, mark the "bad studs" with a red "X" and count the total studs and bad studs with hash marks on the clipboard. Mr. X defined for me what constituted a bad stud. It was an easy way for a college student with construction experience to make a few bucks, and I set off checking studs.

That evening when he arrived at the jobsite Mr. X was dismayed that I had only completed two buildings. His dismay turned to something a lot worse when he saw that most of the studs had red Xs on them and the clipboard had pages of "bad stud" hash marks. I didn't get to go back to finish the job and never did find out how the issue was resolved. But I am sure all those red Xs I put on the studs didn't help when he talked to his customer. The stud problem must have been solved because Mr. X's company stayed in the wall panel business for many years after that.

Back in those days there were no wall panel design programs so Mr. X had an ingenious system to layout wall panels. He had rolls of teletype punch paper marked with stud, door, window and top plate information and location. If you don't know

Continued on page 8

at a glance

- Wall panel technology has come a long way since the 1960s.
- It is important for all component manufacturers to have basic knowledge of wall panels.
- WTCA offers various resources to help educate the industry about wall panels.

Editor's Message

Continued from page 7

what teletype punch paper is, imagine an inch wide roll of paper six inches in diameter. The marks on the paper tape were one-to-one scale. The paper tape was rolled out on the fabrication table and the panel builders put the studs, door framing, etc. where the marks appeared on paper tape. The paper tapes where prepared by a group of college students. Every tape was done twice and double-checked for errors. In an era when a set of roof trusses consisted of one span of commons and two gable ends, there was a lot more room for error in wall panels. The misplacement of doors or windows, missing load bearing walls, and wrong sized panels could easily happen on the simplest house.

Even though the extent of my wall panel experience is from the 1960s, fortunately I can talk in the here and now about what WTCA is doing to promote wall panel education and technology. South Florida may not currently enjoy the presence of panels, but I'm sure you have noticed areas in which they've become prevalent. As time goes on, I encourage all manufacturers to become familiar with these resources from WTCA:

- The *Framing the American Dream*® (FAD) series is an old hit, and continues to be an effective marketing piece for component manufacturers when selling builders on the benefits of wall panels.
- The TTB series includes a brochure called *Considerations for Contractors Building with Wall Panels.* It repeats some of the marketing information contained in FAD and also provides step-by-step instructions and graphics to help framers with the installation.
- A new quality control program for wall panels (turn to page 20 for the low-down).
- BCSI has been around for a number of years now, and soon work will begin on an installation guide for wall panels. Look for more information about this document as the year progresses.

With the labor conditions that we will face in the future and the pressures we will face to keep costs down so that built construction remains affordable, steel and wood wall panels have the chance to become an important part of all manufacturers' structural building component product offering. WTCA will continue to work hard to provide all CMs the support they need to evolve their businesses to meet customer needs and provide the best economic structural building component solution for the job at hand.

I wish each of you the best in 2008. Happy New Year! SBC

SBC Magazine encourages the participation of its readers in developing content for future issues. Do you have an article idea for a future issue or a topic that you would like to see covered? Email your thoughts and ideas to editor@sbcmag.info.

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The mission of *Structural Building Components Magazine (SBC)* is to increase the knowledge of and to promote the common interests of those engaged in manufacturing and distributing structural building components. Further, *SBC* strives to ensure growth, continuity and increased professionalism in our industry, and to be the information conduit by staying abreast of leading-edge issues. *SBC*'s editorial focus is geared toward the entire structural building component industry, which includes the membership of WTCA – Representing the Structural Building Components Industry. The opinions expressed in *SBC* are those of the authors and those quoted, and are not necessarily the opinions of Truss Publications or WTCA.

Publisher's Message

Wall Panels, Etc.—A New Year Begins

by Libby Maurer

There's no better way to ring in the New Year than an issue full of diverse articles.

In this issue, we turn our attention to wall panels. Factory-built walls are still clearly an attractive add-on for many companies involved in building construction, particularly as housing starts strengthen again and skilled construction labor supply will again be builders' biggest challenge. Ask anyone who supplies panels or panel equipment, and they'll pass along this bit of valuable advice: wall panels are completely different than trusses. This goes for what it will take to be successful selling, marketing and producing them. The message is clear for start-ups: do your homework and make sure what you can offer aligns with the markets' need.

That said, the article on page 32 begins a series that will examine six different elements of starting a wall panel plant. New panel manufacturers will want to stay tuned for tips on what to anticipate and expect when starting a new operation.

Unlike any other building component in the industry's repertoire, wall panel manufacturers are made up of a wildly diverse group. Some came from stick framing backgrounds. Others have been making roof and floor trusses very well for years. More and more are builders. The feature on page 36 looks at how this melting pot goes to market, and what makes them successful.

Ask anyone who supplies panels or panel equipment, and they'll pass along this bit of valuable advice: wall panels are completely different than trusses.

Our industry is barely 50 years old, but already we have benefitted from the leadership of stellar businesspeople. Two such individuals recently exited the industry; we pay tribute to them on page 44. In their service to the industry, Andy Schwitter (Truswal) and Tom Manenti (MiTek) left footprints on history. Those are some mighty big shoes to fill.

There's a new WTCA Chapter on the map, but it's not a state. It's an entire country! Starting in early 2007, a group of eager Canadian component manufacturers and WTCA staff set the wheels in motion to form a chapter. Since then, officers have been chosen and priorities set. Turn to page 54 for a look at "le Chapitre Canadien de la WTCA."

If asked whether your company's CGL policy has a professional services endorsement, what would you say? Most of you probably don't know for certain. We often get questions from component manufacturers about obtaining this type of insurance—it's clear that it's a point of confusion for many companies. If you've ever been asked by a customer to carry professional liability insurance, you won't want to skip Legal Edge on page 28. Get the low-down on when this insurance might apply to you.

One thing we can all look forward to in 2008 is the new SBC Research Institute. ***SBC*** is poised to deliver regular updates and findings from the lab as industry testing occurs. In this issue, the testing approach and current projects are revealed on page 42. With no limit on what will be discovered, SBCRI holds powerful information about the industry's future. SBC

at a glance

- This issue focuses on wall panel manufacturing. Turn to pages 20, 32 and 36 for wall panel-related articles.
- Two industry moguls leave the industry in 2008; check out their stories starting on page 44.
- Find out what's going on inside SBCRI on page 42.

Technical Q & A

Wall Bracing Methods in the IRC

by Jim Vogt, P.E.

Unclear about IRC wall bracing methods? Look no further!

The prescriptive wall bracing requirements provided in the 2006 International Residential Code® (IRC) are sometimes difficult to understand. One of the areas that seem to generate some of the most confusion has to do with the acceptability of using different wall bracing techniques in the same building.

Question

Can different wall bracing methods be used in the same house?

Answer

In many instances, yes. Section R602.10 of 2006 IRC provides prescriptive provisions for wall bracing. Within this section, the IRC recognizes eight "standard" methods, two "alternate" methods, and the "continuous structural sheathing method" for providing wall bracing. The eight standard methods are described in Section R602.10.3 and include:

Method 1. Nominal 1-inch-by-4-inch (25 mm by 102 mm) continuous diagonal braces let into top and bottom plates and intervening studs or approved metal strap devices installed in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications. The let-in bracing shall be placed at an angle not more than 60 degrees (1.06 rad) or less than 45 degrees (0.79 rad) from the horizontal.

Method 2. Wood boards of 5/8 inch (16 mm) net minimum thickness applied diagonally on studs spaced not over 24 inches (610 mm). Diagonal boards shall be attached to studs in accordance with Table R602.3(1).

Method 3. Wood structural panel sheathing with a thickness not less than 5/16 inch (8 mm) for a 16-inch (406 mm) stud spacing and not less than 3/8 inch (9 mm) for a 24-inch (610 mm) stud spacing. Wood structural panels shall be installed in accordance with Table R602.3(3).

Method 4. One-half-inch (13 mm) or 25/32-inch (20mm) thick structural fiberboard sheathing applied vertically or horizontally on studs spaced a maximum of 16 inches (406 mm) on center. Structural fiberboard sheathing shall be installed in accordance with Table R602.3(1).

Method 5. Gypsum board with minimum 1/2-inch (13 mm) thickness placed on studs spaced a maximum of 24 inches (610 mm) on center and fastened at 7 inches (178 mm) on center with the size nails specified in Table R602.3(1) for sheathing and Table R702.3.5 for interior gypsum board.

Method 6. Particleboard wall sheathing panels installed in accordance with Table R602.3(4).

Method 7. Portland cement plaster on studs spaced a maximum of 16 inches (406 mm) on center and installed in accordance with Section R703.6.

Method 8. Hardboard panel siding where installed in accordance with Table R703.4.

The two alternate braced wall panel methods are described in Sections R602.10.6.1 and R602.10.6.2. Both require the use of minimum 3/8"-thick wood structural panel sheathing, blocked at all edges, and attached to the wall studs with special nailing requirements. In addition, these methods require tie-down devices and anchor bolts to connect the braced panel directly to the foundation, which must be continuous

at a glance

- Using different wall bracing methods on the same structure is often acceptable.
- The IRC recognizes eleven total methods for providing wall bracing.
- The continuous wood structural panel sheathing section of the code has caused confusion in terms of whether other bracing methods can be used with it.

TABLE R602.10.1
WALL BRACING

SEISMIC DESIGN CATEGORY OR WIND SPEED	CONDITION	TYPE OF BRACE[b,c]	AMOUNT OF BRACING[a, d, e]
Category A and B ($S_s \le 0.35g$ and $S_{ds} \le 0.33g$) or 100 mph or less	One story Top of two or three story	Methods 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8	Located in accordance with Section R602.10 and at least every 25 feet on center but not less than 16% of braced wall line for Methods 2 through 8.
	First story of two story Second story of three story	Methods 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8	Located in accordance with Section R602.10 and at least every 25 feet on center but not less than 16% of braced wall line for Method 3 or 25% of braced wall line for Methods 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8.
	First story of three story	Methods 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8	Located in accordance with Section R602.10 and at least every 25 feet on center but not less than 25% of braced wall line for Method 3 or 35% of braced wall line for Methods 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8.
Category C ($S_s \le 0.6$ g and $S_{ds} \le 0.50g$) or less than 110 mph	One story Top of two or three story	Methods 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8	Located in accordance with Section R602.10 and at least every 25 feet on center but not less than 30% of braced wall line for Method 3 or 45% of braced wall line for Methods 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8.
	First story of two story Second story of three story	Methods 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8	Located in accordance with Section R602.10 and at least every 25 feet on center but not less than 16% of braced wall line for Method 3 or 25% of braced wall line for Methods 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8.
	First story of three story	Methods 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8	Located in accordance with Section R602.10 and at least every 25 feet on center but not less than 45% of braced wall line for Method 3 or 60% of braced wall line for Methods 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8.
Categories D_0 and D_1 ($S_s \le$ 1.25g and $S_{ds} \le 0.83g$) or less than 110 mph	One story Top of two or three story	Methods 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8	Located in accordance with Section R602.10 and at least every 25 feet on center but not less than 20% of braced wall line for Method 3 or 30% of braced wall line for Methods 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8.
	First story of two story Second story of three story	Methods 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8	Located in accordance with Section R602.10 and at least every 25 feet on center but not less than 45% of braced wall line for Method 3 or 60% of braced wall line for Methods 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8.
	First story of three story	Methods 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8	Located in accordance with Section R602.10 and at least every 25 feet on center but not less than 60% of braced wall line for Method 3 or 85% of braced wall line for Methods 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8.
Category D_2 or less than 110 mph	One story Top of two story	Methods 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8	Located in accordance with Section R602.10 and at least every 25 feet on center but not less than 25% of braced wall line for Method 3 or 40% of braced wall line for Methods 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8
	First story of two story	Methods 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8	Located in accordance with Section R602.10 and at least every 25 feet on center but not less than 55% of braced wall line for Method 3 or 75% of braced wall line for Methods 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8.
	Cripple walls	Method 3	Located in accordance with Section R602.10 and at least every 25 feet on center but not less than 75% of braced wall line.

For SI: 1 inch = 25.4 mm, 1 foot = 304.8 mm, 1 pound per square foot = 0.0479kPa, 1 mile per hour = 0.477 m/s.

a. Wall bracing amounts are based on a soil site class "D." Interpolation of bracing amounts between the S_{ds} values associated with the seismic design categories shall be permitted when a site specific S_{ds} value is determined in accordance with Section 1613.5 of the *International Building Code*.

b. Foundation cripple wall panels shall be braced in accordance with Section R602.10.2.

c. Methods of bracing shall be as described in Section R602.10.3. The alternate braced wall panels described in Section R602.10.6.1 or R602.10.6.2 shall also be permitted.

d. The bracing amounts for Seismic Design Categories are based on a 15psf wall dead load. For walls with a dead load of 8 psf or less, the bracing amounts shall be permitted to be multiplied by 0.85 provided that the adjusted bracing amount is not less than that required for the site's wind speed. The minimum length of braced panel shall not be less than required by Section R602.10.3.

e. When the dead load of the roof/ceiling exceeds 15 psf, the bracing amounts shall be increased in accordance with Section R301.2.2.2.1. Bracing required for a site's wind speed shall not be adjusted.

Figure 1.

across the entire length of the braced wall line. The method described in Section R602.10.6.2 is most often referred to as the "portal frame" method and is intended for applications adjacent to door and window openings with a full-length header. Braced wall panels constructed in accordance with the two alternate methods set out in Sections R602.10.6.1 or R601.10.6.2 are narrower than methods 1 through 8 above, which may be advantageous for applications where wall lengths are limited. All referenced code sections can be found in Support Docs at www.sbcmag.info.

The requirements for location and amount of braced wall panels within a braced wall line for the eight standard methods and two alternate methods described above are provided in Sections R602.10.1 and R602.10.4 and Table R602.10.1 (see Figure 1). The requirements vary depending on the type of

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method used, the seismic design category, the wind speed and the number of stories in the building. Although not specifically stated in the text of Section R602.10, the provisions of Table R602.10.1 infer that the various braced panel methods can be used interchangeably in the same building and/or story.

The Nuances of Continuous Wood Structural Panel Sheathing

There has been some confusion with the requirements of Section R602.10.5, continuous wood structural panel sheathing, as to whether or not the other bracing methods can be used in conjunction with it. Section R602.10.5 contains provisions for using wood structural panel sheathing, such as plywood or oriented strand board (OSB), as a method of providing braced wall panels in a braced wall line. The text in this section of both the 2003 and 2006 versions of the IRC states (underline added for emphasis):

> **R602.10.5 Continuous wood structural panel sheathing.** When continuous wood structural panel sheathing is provided in accordance with Method 3 of Section R602.10.3 on all sheathable areas of all exterior walls, and interior braced wall lines, where required, including areas above and below openings, bracing wall panel lengths shall be in accordance with Table R602.10.5. Wood structural panel sheathing shall be installed at corners in accordance with Figure R602.10.5. The bracing amounts in Table R602.10.1 for Method 3 shall be permitted to be multiplied by a factor of 0.9 for wall with a maximum opening height that does not exceed 85 percent of the wall height or a factor of 0.8 for walls with a maximum opening height that does not exceed 67 percent of the wall height.

The underlined portion of this provision is often incorrectly interpreted to mean that *all sheathable areas of all exterior walls and interior braced wall lines* be continuously sheathed with wood structural panels whenever the continuous wood structural panel method is used anywhere on a building. If interpreted in this manner, this provision would effectively exclude the use of other code-compliant wall bracing methods and sheathing products on all other walls of such buildings and unintentionally limit the use of proven and accepted wall bracing techniques.

Extensive revisions have been made to Section R602.10, Wall Bracing, in the 2007 Supplement to the 2006 IRC with the intention of clarifying the prescriptive wall bracing requirements. Section R602.10.1 of the Supplement clearly defines the interchangeability of the various wall bracing methods (underline added for emphasis):

> **R602.10.1 Braced wall lines.** Braced wall lines, both interior and exterior, shall be provided with braced wall panels in the percentage and location specified in this section.
>
> Braced wall panels shall be in accordance with one of the bracing methods specified in Section R602.10.2, the alternate braced wall method of Section R602.10.3.2, or the continuous structural panel sheathing method of Section R602.10.4. Bracing method shall be permitted to vary as follows:
>
> 1. Variation in bracing method from story to story is permitted.
> 2. Variation in bracing method from braced wall line to braced wall line within a story is permitted, except that continuous structural panel sheathing shall conform to the additional requirements of Section R602.10.4.
> 3. In Seismic Design Categories A and B, and detached dwellings in Seismic Design Category C, variation in bracing method within a braced wall line is permitted. The required sheathing percentage for the braced wall line with mixed sheathing types shall have the higher bracing percentage, in accordance with Table R602.10.1(1), of all types of bracing used. Wall lines using continuous wood structural panel sheathing shall conform to the additional requirements of Section R602.10.4.

Section R602.10.4 provides the specific requirements for continuously-sheathed braced wall lines using wood structural panels as follows. Note that the underlined language defines situations in which other methods are permissible:

> **R602.10.4 Continuously-sheathed braced wall line using Method 3 (wood structural panel).** Continuously sheathed braced wall lines using wood structural panels shall comply with this section. Different bracing methods shall not be permitted within a continuously sheathed braced wall line. Other bracing methods prescribed by this code shall be permitted on other braced wall lines on the same story level or on different story levels of the building.
>
> **Exception:** All exterior braced wall lines shall be continuously sheathed where required by Section R602.10.4.7.

Section R602.10.4.7 adds further restrictions for high seismic or wind areas:

> **R602.10.4.7 Continuously-sheathed braced wall lines.** Where a continuously-sheathed braced wall line is used in Seismic Design Categories D0, D1, and D2 or regions where the basic wind speed exceeds 100 miles per hour, all other exterior braced wall lines in the same story shall be continuously sheathed.

The 2007 ICC Supplement Language was developed by the ICC Ad Hoc Committee on Wall Bracing (AHCWB) to specifically address issues with the previous IRC wall bracing language. The 2007 supplement language will form the basis for the development of the 2009 wall bracing language in the IRC.

There has been a great deal of confusion surrounding the braced wall sections of the 2003 and 2006 IRC to the point of having specifiers, builders and building officials take the path of least resistance and require that all braced wall lines use method 3 techniques. This has never been the intent of the IRC. This is made clear in that it gives multiple approaches that are technically justified and can provide sufficient capacity to resist the applied loads. It makes good sense that several methods be available for specifiers and builders to have flexibility in braced wall line applications so that the most affordable wall solution can be provided for the specific end use. SBC

To pose a question for this column, call the WTCA technical department at 608/274-4849 or email technicalqa@sbcmag.info.

Safety Scene

Housekeeping: Your Simple Key to Safety

by Molly E. Butz

Why good "facility-keeping" should be on your list of New Year's resolutions!

In a component manufacturing facility it can be very easy to let work areas become cluttered, poorly maintained or unorganized. Maintaining equipment, keeping up production numbers and other business activities can make a task like housekeeping easily slip to the back of the to-do list. However, good housekeeping is one of the easiest ways to promote safety, productivity and morale.

It's important to recognize that housekeeping goes beyond simple cleaning. Sure, there is a certain amount of sweeping, vacuuming, picking up, etc. that needs to be done, but housekeeping at a component manufacturing facility is more involved. The basis for a good program is keeping all work areas neat and organized.

In the office areas, this includes:

- Keeping phone lines, network cables and electrical cords up off of the ground or tucked away under cord covers.
- Designating filing/storage areas to keep desks from getting out-of-control.
- Closing all drawers and filing cabinets.
- Regularly tidying common areas (lunch room, bathrooms, etc.).

The benefits of keeping a clean work area range from financial savings to employee morale.

In the production areas, this includes:

- Keeping aisles/walkways clean and free from clutter.
- Putting tools away in designated storage areas.
- Defining and maintaining supply storage areas.
- Closing cabinet doors and drawers.
- Reporting and removing potential hazards.
- Evaluating general workspace layout for organization and efficiency.

And although many of these items may seem insignificant, they each contribute to a safer, more efficient workplace.

Neatness Not Just for Show

"The benefits of keeping a clean work area range from financial savings to employee morale," says Ralph Broughton, Safety Coordinator, Total Building Services Group, Marietta, GA. "[Good housekeeping] adds value to our company," Ralph adds. How? Read on.

Put simply, clutter and mess can lead to workplace accidents and decreased efficiency. Random tools, disorderly supplies and wet or greasy spills cause tripping and slipping hazards. And let's face it, weaving your way through unkempt aisles and storage areas will slow you down and keep you from getting back to the production line easily. That can end up meaning lost time, money and lower employee morale.

"Accidents are more expensive than most people realize," Ralph tells ***SBC Magazine***. "But, a well-managed and clean [production area] can significantly reduce the cost associated with accidents by preventing the accident from happening." In addition, keeping the clutter under control can also help maintain effective material handling, lower fire risks, and lessen tool/equipment damage and loss.

Taking Responsibility

It's a new year and a great time to get your component manufacturing plant in shape with a ramped-up housekeeping program. But what makes a housekeeping program "good," you ask? When Gerald Macon, Safety Coordinator at Spenard Builders Supply in Anchorage, AK overhauled his housekeeping program, he began by "making every individual responsible for his/her area. We never let the plant get out-of-control messy." Gerald recommends this kind of delegation of responsibilities to save time. Now, his production crew never has to spend half a day cleaning and can focus more time on building components. (See "Housekeeping During Shift Operations" case study for more tips.)

While you're planning your updated housekeeping program, do a walk-through of each area in your production facility and note the places you need new or improved storage cabinets or shelving. Ensure that, where it makes sense, your storage is separated from your work areas to keep materials swiftly moving through your plant. It's also important to add good housekeeping to your list of safety training topics and spend time working with your employees on their responsibilities.

Clutter control can help your office staff work more efficiently as well. A recent survey conducted by CableOrganizer.com found that 30 percent of the business professionals that responded admitted their work space was so cluttered that it "hindered productivity." Applying the same housekeeping concepts to your production and office areas will help elimi-

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A Note from the Insurance Expert

"Poor housekeeping usually leads to poor loss experience because it increases risk exposure," says Richard Langton, Wood Products Insurance Manager for Bowermaster & Associates. "Specifically, poor housekeeping increases the risk to property, especially when it comes to sawdust. Many fires have been fueled by the build up of wood dust or shavings."

To reduce the risk of fire at your component manufacturing facility, Richard recommends:

- Controlling and cleaning up wood dust daily
- Storing all combustibles in their designated "safe area" away from dust/debris
- Replacing all frayed electrical cords and poorly maintained electrical outlets
- Enforcing a "No Smoking Policy" in all work areas

Add these fire-related housekeeping tasks to your daily drill and decrease your risk exposure today!

at a glance

- ❑ The basis for a good safety program is keeping work areas neat and organized.
- ❑ A clean production area can significantly reduce the cost of accidents by preventing them.
- ❑ Create a daily housekeeping checklist to confirm that attention is given to specific areas of your operation—both the plant and the office.

CASE STUDY:
Housekeeping During Shift Operations

When Paul Beaumont took on the role of Safety Coordinator at Sun State Components in Kingman, AZ, he decided to take some time upfront to get a handle on the injuries occurring in his facility so that he could focus his safety training on specific areas in an effort to reduce accidents.

"As it turned out after doing some analysis," Paul explained, "one of those areas that could reduce injuries was housekeeping, specifically, housekeeping during shift operations." Paul found that, in addition to the general clean-ups at the end of each shift, continual clean-up while the crew was working helped reduce his injury reports.

Here's why: a review of the prior 18 months of accidents that had been reported uncovered lacerations/punctures and back strains as the most commonly reported injuries. For Paul, addressing strains with focused proper lifting training was straight forward. As for the laceration/puncture injuries, isolating the cause(s) was a little more difficult.

After spending some time doing a little detective work, Paul found that during shift operations he "noticed metal plates, nails and metal banding debris scattered everywhere." He knew the metal plates and loose nails created a hazard, but while investigating, he also became aware that when stepped on, the loose straps of metal banding could easily flip-up and hit the shin/leg, causing serious lacerations.

Once he knew the cause, the answer was simple: good housekeeping. "To reduce the potential risks associated with laceration and puncture injuries," Paul concluded, "our supervisors have made our workforce more aware of debris with an emphasis on removing metal plates, nails, metal banding and even saw dust during shift operations, rather than just the end of the shift clean-ups."

Now Sun State is well on its way to reduced accidents and injuries with a renewed focus and a good housekeeping program!

Safety Scene

Continued from page 17

nate distractions, heighten focus and maximize productivity. In addition, consider using all of the helpful housekeeping tools in WTCA's Operation Safety program; this way you can be proactive about untidiness instead of reactive.

Lastly, add a housekeeping checklist to your daily routine. This can be a simple paper and pencil system or a more involved procedure, whichever works for you. (See "Digital Housekeeping," April 2005, ***SBC Magazine***.) No matter which method you choose, this is a critical final step in creating and maintaining your successful housekeeping program. A daily checklist will give you the opportunity to confirm that the program is effective and provides a check to make sure your team fixes problems as quickly as they arise. (Download a simple housekeeping checklist from Support Docs at www.sbcmag.info.)

"As everyone knows a clean work area is a safe work area," says Ralph. He should know. A renewed focus on safety through improved housekeeping performance, among other things, has saved Total Building Services Group an estimated $30,000 this year. Keeping your facility in good shape is easy and one of the most straightforward ways to keep your numbers up, accidents to a minimum, and your employees feeling, thinking and working better. Safety first! SBC

To pose a question for this column or to learn more about WTCA's Operation Safety Program, contact WTCA Staff at 608/274-4849, email wtca@sbcindustry.com, or view the Operation Safety demonstration online at www.wtcatko.com.

Simpson Strong-Tie Showcases New Possibilities at BCMC

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There was much to be discovered at Simpson Strong-Tie's BCMC booth this year with several new and expanded products for the Component Industry. Visitors to the booth saw first hand how these products offer new possibilities for building faster, safer or more cost effectively.

"The BCMC Show is a highlight for us every year," said Tawn Simons, National Manager for the Engineered Wood Industry at Simpson Strong-Tie. "It's the perfect opportunity to showcase our new products and applications for the coming year, giving attendees a sneak preview of what's ahead. In addition we also enjoy networking with our valued customers and industry leaders at the Show and this year was no different. Even with the slowed building economy, the quality of attendees made the Show a big success. We already look forward to next year's BCMC in Denver!"

A few of the products Simpson Strong-Tie showcased at BCMC were:

Quik Drive® Systems for Girder Attachments
Live demonstrations allowed BCMC attendees to experience how fast, easy and safe it is to use Quik Drive Auto-Feed Systems for attaching 2-ply and 3-ply girders. The holding power of Quik Drive screws—a stronger, safer alternative to collated nails—can improve the strength and quality of the girder.

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Steel Strong-Wall® Shearwalls
Simpson's booth reached new heights this year thanks in part to its new Steel Strong-Wall shearwalls for two-story stacked and balloon framing applications.

If you missed BCMC or would like more information about Simpson Strong-Tie products, visit **www.strongtie.com**.

Thank You!
Simpson would like to thank Stark Truss, Contract Building Components and Contract Framing for helping make the Simpson Strong-Tie booth, and the show, so successful!

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Wtca Update

New Program Spotlight: WTCA QC Wall Panel

by WTCA Staff

Quality control takes another step forward with the development of the WTCA QC Wall Panel program.

The next "coming soon" from WTCA is geared for wall panel manufacturers interested in ensuring their products consistently meet a standard of quality. **WTCA QC Wall Panel,** a new quality control program created specifically for wall panels, is currently in development and is set for release later this year.

Work on the program was started in November 2007, and was made a priority by the WTCA QC Committee. When complete, WTCA QC Wall Panel will mimic the structure of the **In-Plant WTCA QC** program that is used by roof truss manufacturers. The new program will be comprised of similar components such as product inspections, a comprehensive database with reporting and management benchmarking tools, and plant certification.

"The idea for this program was driven by manufacturers with a desire to monitor the quality of the walls they're building," said Tony Piek, WTCA QC project leader. "And the certification is a way for them to differentiate themselves from those that use traditional wall construction techniques."

The program's development process is being driven largely by user input. For instance, currently a group of 12 wall panel manufacturer beta testers is running through the inspection portion of the program and providing helpful feedback to staff. Andy English from Lezzer Truss is one of those beta testers. "We have a program currently in place that we shared with staff," he said. "Other beta testers also added input and the result is a more inspection version that will be quicker and more efficient than our original process," said the Curwensville, PA-based panel designer and quality control "guy."

The WTCA Wall Panel QC inspection process will include seven criteria:

- Dimensions
- Lumber
- Headers
- Bucks
- Placement of studs, top and bottom plate
- Fastener pattern
- Exterior wall sheathing

Piek said input from manufacturers has been critical to the creation of WTCA QC Wall Panel because, unlike In-Plant WTCA QC which is based on the ANSI/TPI 1 design standard for metal plate connected wood trusses, no specific standard exists for wall panels. "We've had a lot of help and direction from manufacturers in order to meet their specific QC needs," he said.

In addition to giving manufacturers a tool with which to measure and analyze quality, WTCA QC Wall Panel will also serve as a management tool for supervisors and upper management. Piek noted that using the QC database, managers will be able monitor the performance of different crews over a period of time and track improvement. The goal is to provide a series of quantifiable benchmarks that will serve as an early warning management information system. English said using a reliable benchmarking tool such as this helps hold crews or shifts accountable. "When they know the product is being evaluated for specific aspects of quality, they're more conscious of their work," he commented.

Within the next few months, Piek aims to have enough feedback from the beta group to release a final version of the program. At that point, wall panel manufacturers can order the program and start working towards the voluntary plant certification. SBC

If you're interested in providing input in the development of this program, contact Tony Piek at tpiek@qualtim.com.

at a glance

- ❑ WTCA is developing a quality control program for wall panels.
- ❑ WTCA Wall Panel QC is being modeled after the quality control panel for roof trusses, In-Plant WTCA QC.
- ❑ A group of beta testers is providing feedback as the program is developed.

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For more information about WTCA membership, contact Anna (608/310-6719 or astamm@qualtim.com) or visit www.sbcindustry.com.

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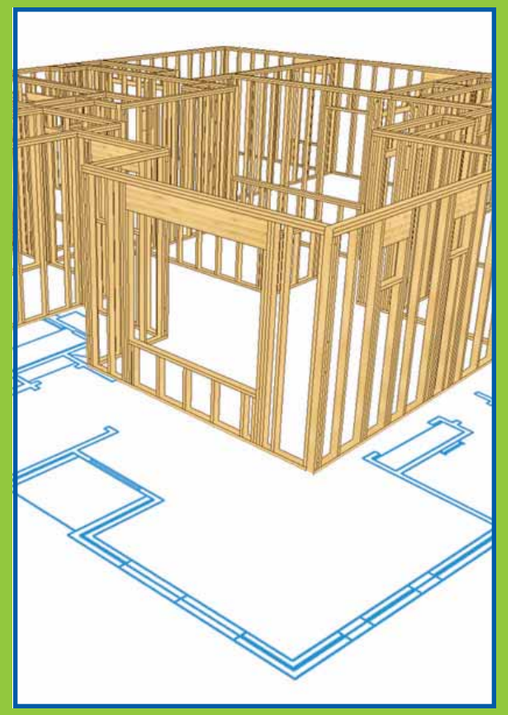

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How to...

Save on Interest in 2008

Making a case for planning equipment purchases for the year now.

by Carl Villella, CLP

A new year is always a good time to reflect and contemplate the future. Reflecting on the past by reviewing previous financial statements and comparing them to the year just completed gives manufacturers a great read on the direction their company is headed and any adjustments that may be beneficial.

Contemplating the upcoming year at this point is also beneficial for reasons such as, how likely will previous trends continue, what will change this year from last year, or what equipment will need to be added or replaced. This article will address the financial benefits of planning ahead for equipment purchases.

One reason I encourage component manufacturers to look at their long-term equipment needs is to secure a better interest rate on their purchase. Believe it or not, this can make a big difference in the total amount paid in interest throughout the loan period.

Asset based lenders such as leasing companies (i.e., lenders where the equipment financed is the only collateral) typically reduce their interest rates as the requested amount of financing increases. For example, a $150,000 loan/lease could be as many as 50 basis points (or one-half of one percent) lower than a $50,000 loan/lease. This savings is usually fixed for the term of the transaction. This option should be carefully considered as you plan your depreciable capital equipment purchases.

Let's compare three $50,000 transactions made separately throughout 2008 as opposed to all three at the same time (or within an allotted time frame). In this case, let's assume the rates are the same throughout the year for the separate purchases. This means that the payments for each of these three separate $50,000 purchases are all the same. Therefore a one-half percent decrease in rate—like 8.31 percent versus 8.83 percent—is equal to about $13 per month lower payment. $13 per month x 3 pieces of equipment = $39 per month total savings. Over the course of a 60-month term, the total savings is $2,340. (Note: If rates of each individual loan increase throughout the year, the savings of a lumped together loan is even greater.) And we could all use some extra pocket change these days!

Many component manufacturers ask: "What if I don't need the equipment at the same time but over the course of a time period?" This response is especially common given the current conditions of the housing market. To address this issue, some asset based lenders offer a Master Lease/Finance Agreement. This agreement allows the finance company to approve the entire $150,000 transaction while permitting you to purchase the equipment over a given period of time by adding schedules to the Master Agreement.

Here's how it typically works. As you purchase equipment, a new schedule is added and payments on the new purchase start 30 days after you take delivery. Sticking with the example above, the interest rate of that payment could be, at the $150,000 level, 8.31%*, instead of the level that would apply at the lower equipment cost—8.83%*. The benefits include not only the dollar savings of a lower interest rate, but also that payments do not start until after the equipment is acquired and installed, in typical cases.

Continued on page 26

at a glance

- ❑ Planning ahead for big equipment needs can reduce interest rates.
- ❑ Check out Master Lease/Finance Agreements which allow for multiple equipment purchases over a period of time at a lower interest rate.

??????

what would you like to know "how to" do?

SBC Staff wants to know how this column and other sections of the magazine can be used to best serve our readers' interests. So, we need to hear from you! What do you want to learn and read about in 2008? Email editor@sbcmag.info with your suggestions.

How to...
Continued from page 24

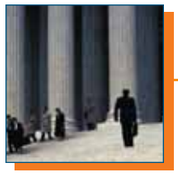
Risky Business?

There are drawbacks to using this long-term equipment finance model, and it's important to understand that this may not be the most prudent option for some component manufacturers. The timeframe to use the total amount of money borrowed is usually 60 to 90 days (although 30-day extensions are routine). Penalties may also apply for early termination, and can vary widely, from "Rule's of 78" (name for the most common method of calculating payoffs and has built in penalties) to the sum of the remaining payments.

A little planning can save your company money by consolidating equipment purchases and taking advantage of economies of scale offered by asset based lenders. SBC

* Note actual interest rates vary with financial strength of the company as well as the dollar amount of the transaction.

Carl Villella, CLP, is a Certified Leasing Professional with a background in manufacturing, sales and finance. His company, Acceptance Leasing and Financing Service, Inc. was started in 1992, and handles commercial equipment financing. Villella is a member of WTCA and has served the component manufacturing industry most of that time. Contact him at www.acceptlease.com or 877/262-3225.



Legal Edge

Design Liability: Are Component Manufacturers Adequately Protected by Insurance?

Find out whether your CGL policy covers your company's component design activities.

by Kent J. Pagel

In this article I will tackle the topic of how well component manufacturers are protected with liability insurance for a number of the activities they may undertake, particularly in the area of design. To begin, it is important to understand some of the everyday risks/hazards that exist for component manufacturers, and the insurance coverage that is likely in place to cover such risks/hazards. Take a moment to review Figure 1 on the facing page, which lists six risks typically faced by a manufacturer and the corresponding coverage that should be in place to protect it. In WTCA's *O*Risk program, particularly in the Insurance 101 track, I discuss in greater detail the types of insurance policies commonly carried by manufacturers and the risks they cover.

Now let's get a bit more specific. Your company may be performing one or all of the activities listed in Figure 2 that relate to component design and engineering.

If your company engages in any of these types of activities, do you know whether you are protected by insurance? My analysis with respect to this question begins with a general overview of the CGL policy which is referred to in Figure 1. All component manufacturers should carry some type of CGL policy, although the exact nature and limits will vary by manufacturer.

Keeping it simple, a CGL policy provides limited protection for the activities listed in Figure 2 SO LONG as the loss results in "bodily injury" and/or "property damage." While the terms bodily injury and property damage are defined in the CGL policy itself, I've provided several case examples in Figure 3 to illustrate their application to component manufacturers.

It is important to remember that only claims of bodily injury and property damage are covered under the CGL policy. Economic damages such as acceleration costs, delay damages, costs for repairing any defective trusses, etc. are not covered as they may be covered under a professional liability policy.

You should not however assume that all claims of bodily injury and/or property damage are automatically covered under the CGL policy for the activities described in Figure 2. Whether or not coverage exists depends in large part on whether the CGL policy contains the following exclusionary endorsement, frequently called the "professional services endorsement." The formal name is the Engineers, Architects, or Surveyors Professional Liability endorsement. The Insurance Services Office form number of this endorsement is CGT 22 43. When this endorsement is attached to a CGL policy, it is the intent of the insurer to preclude coverage for bodily injury and property damage;

> …arising out of the rendering of or failure to render professional services by the named insured or a design professional employed by the named insured or performing work on the named insured's behalf in a professional capacity…

The endorsement specifically states that the following professional services are excluded by this endorsement:

> The preparing, approving or failing to prepare or approve maps, drawings, opinions, reports, surveys, change orders, designs or specifications; and supervisory, inspection or engineering services…

at a glance

- A CGL policy typically provides limited protection for certain activities as long as losses result in bodily injury and/or property damage.
- The type and limits of insurance will depend on the extent of component design activities in which your company engages.
- Check your CGL policy for a professional services endorsement; if it exists take action to delete it.

Risk or Hazard	Insurance Coverage
Medical care and loss of income due to death or injury to worker working in the course and scope of his/her employment	Workers' Compensation
Lawsuit brought by injured employee or dependent	Most workers' compensation acts eliminate the employee's right to sue his or her employer within the scope of that state's workers compensation statute.
Lawsuit brought by a person for damages arising out of bodily injury, death or damage to property of others	Commercial General Liability Insurance (known as "CGL" insurance)
Lawsuit brought by builder customer arising out of a lawsuit by a third party where insured signed an indemnity provision	CGL Insurance includes coverage for certain liabilities assumed under contract.
Bodily injury to a business visitor to manufacturing facility	CGL Insurance
Lawsuit brought by injured person where damages asserted exceed the limits of the insured's CGL policy	Excess Insurance covers claims in excess of the limits of the CGL policy up to the limits of the Excess Liability Insurance policy.
Lawsuit to recover damages for bodily injury or damages to property of others arising out of the use of an automobile owned by an insured	Commercial Automobile Liability Insurance

Figure 1

Design of trusses and components
Design of truss to truss connections
Design of truss to beam or wall connections
Design of truss repairs
Temporary or permanent bracing designs that go beyond depicting the location of web compression bracing
Constructability, value engineering or material optimization reviews
Inspection of suitability of installation/bracing

Figure 2

It is important to understand some of the everyday risks/ hazards that exist for component manufacturers, and the insurance coverage that is likely in place to cover such risks/hazards.

I would first suggest that the standard means of truss design, the first activity listed in Figure 2, would most likely cover claims of bodily injury or property damage if this endorsement is NOT attached to the manufacturer's CGL policy. The same goes for the design of truss to truss connections and truss to beam/wall connections, and the design of truss repairs. As to the other activities it is questionable whether CGL coverage exists at all, as these activities go beyond the traditional scope of work of truss manufacturers and they also essentially constitute a service and do not relate to the sale of a product.

If the professional services endorsement is attached to a manufacturer's CGL policy, there is a serious question of whether bodily injury or property damage claims arising out any of the activities listed in Figure 2 are covered. Most likely

Continued on page 30

CASE EXAMPLE 1:

A manufacturer delivers an order of roof trusses. During erection, as a bundle of roof trusses is lifted to the top plate, due to a manufacturing defect in some or all of the trusses, they come apart and cause injuries to a passerby and damage to erected walls and jobsite equipment. Since the injuries were unintended on the part of the manufacturer, they are covered under its CGL policy. All the property that is damaged is covered as this falls within the definition of property damage in the CGL policy. However, there is no coverage for damage to or replacement of the roof trusses as this is not considered property damage due to exclusions contained in the CGL policy.

CASE EXAMPLE 2:

A homeowner sues a floor truss manufacturer for sagging floors. To restore the floors, furniture is moved out of the house, sheetrock and some flooring is removed, and the trusses are beefed up to restore the floors to level. All the property that is damaged and the repair costs are covered as falling within the definition of property damage, but there is no coverage for the money spent to actually repair the floor trusses themselves.

Figure 3

Continued from page 29

this would be the position at least initially taken by the insurance carrier in response to a claim. Please note that most CGL policies will include this endorsement if not negotiated by the insured early on and deleted from the policy prior to its inception. Further component manufacturers should not rely on their software provider's insurance coverage to apply to them in these areas.

I recommend that all component manufacturers review their CGL policies to see if this exclusionary professional services endorsement exists. If so, efforts should be undertaken to have this endorsement deleted from the CGL policy.

The next question that you should ask is whether the activities listed in Figure 2 present any meaningful level of risk to component manufacturers. I would submit that many do, especially those activities which involve bracing design, value engineering and inspection services. Figure 4 contains the list of activities set out in Figure 2 with my assigned risk rating. The rating is certainly subjective, but is based on the more than 20 years of experience I have representing component manufacturers.

As you review this list, keep in mind that regardless of whether the professional services endorsement exists in your policy, it is a good idea to seek counsel about the particular design work being done in light of insurance coverage that may NOT exist. This is especially important as the level of risk for a particular service rises.

Activity	Level of Risk
Design of trusses and components	Risk ↑
Design of truss to truss connections	Risk ↑
Design of truss to beam or wall connections	Risk ↑↑
Truss repairs	Risk ↑↑
Temporary or permanent bracing designs that go beyond depicting the location of web compression bracing	Risk ↑↑↑
Constructability, value engineering or material optimization reviews	Risk ↑↑↑
Inspection of suitability of installation/ bracing	Risk ↑↑↑↑↑
Combination of several of the above	Risk ↑↑↑↑↑↑

Figure 4

Is professional liability insurance an option? Professional liability insurance can be obtained by component manufacturers, although this is not coverage that is commonly purchased. Further, such insurance is not limited to claims of "bodily injury" or "property damage" as is CGL insurance and will cover economic damages such as acceleration costs, delay damages, and costs for repairing any defective trusses. However, manufacturers need to carefully evaluate the coverage that professional liability insurance provides and the applicable restrictions.

Also referred to as errors or omissions insurance, professional liability insurance is a policy designed to provide coverage in the event a client/third party alleges they suffered a financial loss as a result of an error or omissions committed by the insured in the delivery of "professional services." But what is meant by "professional services?" Here is one definition taken from a policy I recently reviewed:

> …services performed by the insured for others in the practice as an architect, engineer, land surveyor, landscape architect, construction manager, scientist or technical consultant.

The language that makes up the definition of "professional services" suggests there is no coverage unless the claim that is asserted relates to services performed as opposed to products being sold. A manufacturer would need to carefully explore this language with its insurance broker before making the decision to purchase such insurance. This is especially the case since this same policy contained the following exclusion from coverage:

> Insurance does not apply to [a claim] for or arising out of any breach of warranty, guarantee, or service level agreement, or for or arising out of any delay of delivery, failure to deliver, or non-acceptance of products or services.

COMMON FEATURES OF PROFESSIONAL LIABILITY INSURANCE:

- Most often the insured is engaged in the delivery of professional services.
- Policies are usually issued in increments of $1 million in coverage
- Self insured retentions exist—from $2,500 to $100,000
- Virtually all policies are issued on a claims made basis—as such, for claim to be covered, it must be first made against the insured and reported during the policy period.

Figure 5

"…Considering our litigious society with more and larger judgments being awarded, increased cost and time of reconstruction, and more restrictive language in insurance policies, it pays, more than ever to compare your insurance coverage and limits with [an educated broker who is familiar with the truss industry]."

—Richard Langton, Bowermaster & Associates, a WTCA Expert Insurance Partner

Figure 5 sets out the common features of a professional liability policy.

In conclusion, I'll refer to some comments from Richard Langton of Bowermaster & Associates, a WTCA Expert Insurance Partner. He said, "Everyone wants to get the best deal on their insurance; however, often insurance is purchased because it is the lowest price or because of a relationship with the agent [or broker]. Don't get me wrong—these are both good reasons, but only if you have the coverage you need at the time of a claim. Considering our litigious society with more and larger judgments being awarded, increased cost and time of reconstruction, and more restrictive language in insurance policies, it pays, more than ever to compare your insurance coverage and limits with [an educated broker who is familiar with the truss industry]." SBC

Kent J. Pagel is the President and Senior Shareholder of Pagel, Davis & Hill, a professional corporation. He also serves as the outside counsel for WTCA.

Reduce Risk & Increase Revenue when Starting a Wall Panel Manufacturing Facility

(Part 1 of 6)

by Jim Boyle

The foundation for success is a thorough business plan.

Are you considering entering the wall panel manufacturing business? Are you currently a truss manufacturer, lumber retailer, production framer, builder/developer or businessman who is considering adding an additional revenue stream, or capitalizing on a new business opportunity? Regardless of the background you come from, it pays to fully understand the risks involved when entering the wall panel manufacturing business.

OK, where do you start? You have already observed some of the benefits of providing wall panels within your marketplace. Obviously roof trusses have been popular for several decades; and aren't wall panels just another component product like roof trusses? It should be simple enough to create and fill this new demand, right?

Wrong! Most people who have experience with both will tell you that wall panels are typically more difficult to manufacture and market than roof trusses. Because of this, it is critical that you follow proven strategies and operational methods of manufacturing, personnel training, marketing and sales generation in order to maximize your long-term business success.

First, let's assume that you have already completed a feasibility study and/or business plan. If you haven't done so, this is your first step. If you have completed a business plan, have an industry professional critique it and make recommendations...prior to submitting it to your source of capital (if you are not self-funding the venture).

I can't emphasize enough how important a professionally researched/written business plan is to the beginning and long-term success of a wall panel plant. It's the blueprint for the successful building of your business! Caution, don't rely on a generic business plan writing service to create your business plan. It has the strong potential to be a waste of money.

OK, now let's assume you have your professional business plan completed and submitted; and you have just received funding approval to start your new plant! Now what?

Every decision you make from this point forward should be structured to reduce risk and increase revenue. It's very easy to pour wheelbarrows full of money into a new wall panel manufacturing operation, and then watch helplessly as the business slowly goes south in one to three years.

Fortunately, you should now have a great business plan that has been thoroughly researched; and has identified all the major pitfalls. It has now become a step-by-step guideline of the processes and procedures necessary to become a successful wall panel manufacturer and marketer.

Keep in mind, however, that your business plan is also a fluid document and will likely go through some modifications as the panel plant grows. This is normal; the business plan will continue to evolve and mature as economic, sales, and labor conditions within your market fluctuate or change.

at a glance

- ❑ A professional business plan is the first step to the long-term success of a wall panel plant.
- ❑ The business plan should be a fluid document that is modified often.

There are many areas of consideration when starting a new wall panel plant. In parts 2-6 of this series I will analyze just five areas of operation; when carefully thought through, this should help to reduce business risk and increase business revenue.

Within this series, we will look at the following areas of operation; and discuss why they are important to a wall panel plant's success:

- Production line layout/design
- Personnel hiring and training
- Quality control; quality assurance
- Estimating and pricing wall panels
- Marketing and sales of wall panels

Hopefully these articles will be thought provoking for those of you considering the start-up of a wall panel manufacturing facility; and also for those of you which are currently involved in the operation of an existing wall panel plant.

See you next month when I will discuss production line layout/design! SBC

Jim Boyle is a wall panel business startup and process improvement consultant. He has worked as a wall panel plant operations manager, sales manager and general manager, and has started facilities for two separate investment groups. Boyle can be reached at 541/771-7075 or jmb@jmb-panelman.com.

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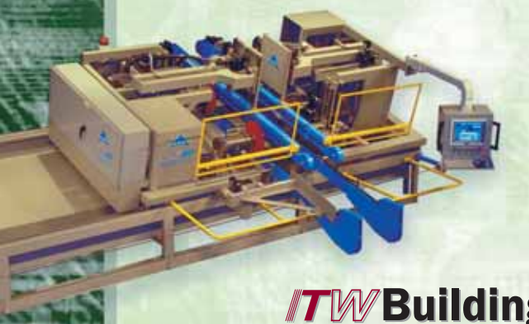

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Wall Panel Success Is All About the Customer

by Libby Maurer

One thing was clear from BCMC last October. Wall panels remain at the top of the list of emerging products in the industry. As a developing segment of the industry, the key to manufacturers' success often lies in creative marketing, intimate knowledge of their customers' business models, and working diligently to meet those needs. Easier said than done.

Two veteran wall panel manufacturers share some of their strategies for success.

Carey (pictured) and Blenker gave their wall panel presentation to many interested component manufacturers at the 2007 BCMC Show in Columbus, OH.

at a glance

- Wall panel manufacturers, equipment and education had a big presence at BCMC 2007.
- Demonstrating the cost savings and increased efficiency of using panels is how one manufacturer sells builders on the product.
- By viewing every aspect of his operation through the eyes of his customers, one manufacturer has discovered the key of wall panel success.

Enter Jason Blenker and Casey Carey, both of whom head up successful wall panel operations. The two teamed up at BCMC to offer their expertise on what it takes to get jobs, keep customers and make money with wall panels. By focusing on the keys to their success—Blenker on marketing and Carey on production processes—attendees got plenty of tips to take home. In comparing how they got where they are now, it is interesting to draw one parallel that is integral to wall panel manufacturing success: customer service.

One of the most important things panel operations should be warned of, says Blenker, is not to get too comfortable with wall panels' simplicity relative to roof and floor trusses. "Wall panels are a very unique business, with their own quality, material handling and jobsite delivery issues," he said. A big part of nailing down the "uniqueness" of this product is being so closely tied to the customers' needs that it can be demonstrated in black and white. Here's how he did it.

For Blenker, coming up with ways to market his product as a surefire way to increase builders' productivity is key. Growing up in a family-owned homebuilding business, he knew exactly what he would want to hear (as a builder) to be convinced that wall panels are the way to go. "We feel as though our 'framers point of view' gives us an advantage. We can serve our customers better because we understand what they want; we've done it ourselves," he said.

With this experience in tow, he created a side-by-side study comparing the traditional method of building walls on site to factory-built wall panels. With the cooperation of one long-standing builder customer, he broke down the labor, material and associated miscellaneous costs of framing a 2-floor 13,400 sq. ft. apartment building with panels built at his Amherst, WI plant. He did the same for the traditional approach of building walls on-site and compared the two.

What he found came as no surprise.

Figure 1 on page 38 breaks down all the labor costs for plant and framing crews, their wages and miscellaneous expenses. Since not all workers on this project worked the same hours (as they do in the field), Blenker broke out each function. He pointed out that some costs, like insurance, are lower in a controlled manufacturing environment than on a jobsite. As for the framing labor, it took the four-man crew three eight-hour days to complete the interior and exterior wall installation for the building. The total labor is shown at the bottom of the chart.

In Figure 2 on page 40, Blenker calculated the cost of the building traditional walls on the jobsite. It took a six-man crew two full work weeks to cut the first and second floor walls. He also included miscellaneous expenses (similar to those in Figure 1).

Continued on page 38

Wall Panel Success...

Continued from page 36

Adding up the total shop and field labor (and their associated expenses), the cost savings overall for factory-built walls (just over $13,000 in total costs for the job) compared to the traditional on-site framing method is over one-quarter—25.5 percent. "Even if there was a need to adjust some of the numbers (to account for additional hours or transportation), there is a substantial cost savings when using wall panels," Blenker said. And that makes the builder more efficient, he added. When builders become more efficient, it means one thing: they can put up more units in a year.

"It's my version of serving my customer," he said. "Showing him that I can make him faster while reducing his costs is what marketing our product is all about."

The cost savings overall for factory-built walls compared to the traditional on-site framing method is over one-quarter—25.5 percent.

Yes, going to this length to convince even one builder to use panels might be considered extreme. But this comparison is what Blenker needed to do to serve his customer well. "One way or another, that builder needs walls to be built. Might as well be you," he offered the group of 150.

Continued on page 40

Design & Production Crew	Hours	Total Cost (hours x hourly wage)
1 technician for layout and shop drawings ($21/hr)	16	$336
2 people building walls ($14/hr)	98	$1,372
4 people sheathing/housewrappping walls ($10/hr)	82	$820
1 sawyer cutting parts ($13/hr)	14	$182
1 material puller ($10/hr)	2	$20
TOTAL LABOR	**212**	**$2,730**
Miscellaneous Costs		
Workers' comp		$160
Unemployment		$102
Social Security		$209
Insurance		$750
Overhead (as a percentage of sale price)		$3,750
Savings on materials due to reduced waste		($1,400)
Added transportation expense to deliver load		$500
TOTAL IN-PLANT & MISC COST		**$6,801**

Wall Panel Framing Crew	Hours	Total Cost (hours x avg hourly wage of $18.25)
1 lead carpenter	24	$438
1 experienced carpenter	24	$438
2 helpers	48	$876
TOTAL LABOR	**96**	**$1,752**
Miscellaneous Costs		
Workers' comp		$249
Unemployment		$61
Social Security		$123
Insurance		$553
Overhead (as a percentage of sale price)		$1,538
Forklift rental (1 week)		$750
Crane rental		$1,200
TOTAL ON-SITE CREW & MISC COSTS		**$6,226**

TOTAL WALL PANEL COST FOR JOB = $13,027

Figure 1. Blenker Plant & On-Site Labor & Miscellaneous Costs.

On-Site Crew	Hours	Total Cost (hours x avg hourly wage of $16.85)
1 lead carpenter	80	$1,348
1 experienced carpenter	80	$1,348
4 carpenter helpers	320	$5,392
TOTAL	**480**	**$8,088**
Miscellaneous Costs		
Workers' comp		$1,357
Unemployment		$330
Social Security		$670
Insurance		$1,200
Overhead (1/12th of $40,000 total for the year)		$3,350
Forklift rental (1 month)		$2,500
TOTAL	**480**	**$8,088**
TOTAL LABOR & MISC COSTS FOR SITE-BUILT WALLS = $17,495		

Figure 2. Traditional Framing Labor & Miscellaneous Costs.

Wall Panel Success...

Continued from page 38

Carey, who worked his way up from working at a truss plant during college in the early '80s, firmly believes in defining processes to ensure success. But the way to get there, he told the audience, is to get to know your customer—both externally and internally. He says thorough evaluation of their needs actually defines how the shop is set up. Boasting as much as 50,000 lineal feet of panels produced in one week (in two shifts) at one of his former operations, this approach clearly holds water.

"Everything starts at the customer," he said, "because they define what operations you're going to perform." A good example is wall height—knowing if that customer needs standard 8-foot walls or tall walls (9- to 12-foot), is a key factor in everything from equipment choice to how it is arranged in the shop. "So once I understand that, I can come inside the facility and make good decisions. And that makes me effective," he said.

Once the builder's needs are fully defined, the focus turns to serving the needs of internal customers. "The cutting department's customer is the production [department]," Carey explained. "Every piece of material going to the 'production customer' should be cut with precision and presented in order and on time," just like you would present finished product on the jobsite, he said.

Executing this model of internal customer service does not happen overnight; it takes patience. Carey said it also requires reinforcement of the concept over and over again. "The best way to look at it is you have to develop the sort of culture internally that you want to exude on the outside," he advised.

Whether or not you choose to take this broad approach to understanding and serving the customer, Carey advises that every company (not only wall panel manufacturers) frame its business with an overall system perspective instead of viewing it as a series of individual processes. "A big mistake operations tend to make is thinking it works to bring people into an environment without a defined process," he said. In order to develop a process that works for you, he added, you have to invest time and energy into your people. "The essence is giving people what they need to succeed."

No matter your company size, market niche or business model, one thing is clear. If your focus is always centered on the customer, you've got a good shot at success. SBC

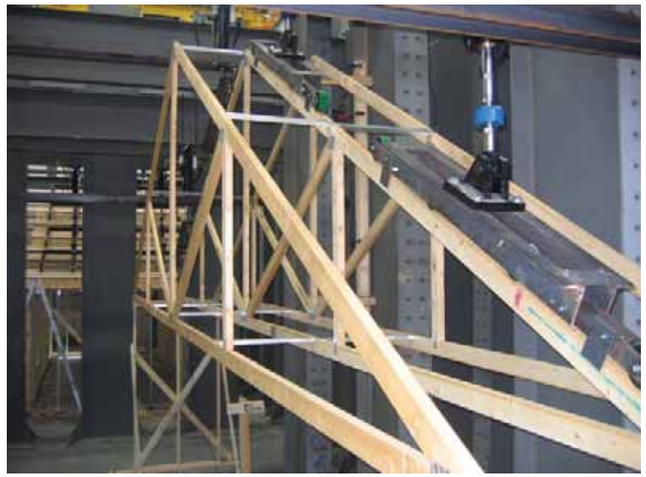
SBCRI Update: Testing Approach Defined, Fine-Tuned

by SBC Staff

A mere six months after its opening, this facility is primed for a productive new year!

On June 28, 2007, SBC Research Institute (SBCRI) opened the doors of its state-of-the-art industry testing facility. Since that momentous (beautiful) day last summer, the SBC Research Institute has been buzzing with activity.

Official testing began with two small-scale proprietary testing clients. Each project has given the SBCRI Testing and Technical Support Teams the opportunity to assess and further refine their processes, procedures and standards in the areas of data collection, documentation, testing set-up and reporting. Concurrently, SBCRI staff has been building four testing stations and their related fixtures. These set-ups, which include single connector/connection system, single floor and roof truss, single wall and fully integrated building system stations, will provide a foundation for detailed analysis of structural connections, wall, floor/roof and flow of loads through individual elements and through the entire building system. In addition, these stations will make test set-up and results processing as efficient and effective as possible, creating a "plug-and-play" working environment that can be quickly modified for any testing project as the research needs dictate.



at a glance

- Several testing stations were built inside of SBCRI since it opened in June 2007.
- Measuring the flow of loads through individual components and within a building system has been defined as the approach to most SBCRI industry testing.
- Preliminary industry testing projects have been conducted on roof trusses and wall panels.

A Solid Approach to Testing

As a result of the initial testing, a critical decision has been made regarding the fundamental testing approach. Much of the industry testing focus will be on flow of loads through individual components and within a building system. With the goal of irrefutable accuracy, the groundwork for the standardized testing procedures has been put in place to assure this is the case, an approach unique to SBCRI. Additionally, sophisticated software is being used that allows staff to produce a testing report within 60 minutes of test completion. The automation of this process allows for instant data review, analysis and next step evaluation so systematic progress can easily be made.

Here's a simplified look at the testing process. Each element, whether it's a roof truss, floor truss, I-joist, wall panel or any proprietary product, is easily tested singly using the standardized testing procedures to fully understand the flow of loads through the individual structural element. This simple, single component set-up outputs design values for the given element. Next, if additional performance data is desired, the individual element can be placed and tested within a full structural system. This structural system is constructed to replicate the exact field application the element would be placed in under real-life circumstances. Furthermore, all of the data acquisition devices used to measure the performance of the single element will be placed in identical locations when the element is tested in the single component set-up and once the element inserted into the real life system. This approach allows us to accurately view systems effects by seeing the changes in measurements taken at identical locations on the same element singularly and within real-life structural conditions. Unparalleled in the industry, SBCRI staff believe this feature will produce tremendous results.

The final step in the testing process is to perform the analysis needed to provide design values while being able to apply good engineering judgments. And, because the SBCRI facility is able to give a much better understanding of the mechanics of materials than testing previously available, these design value judgments will likely be considerably more straightforward and accurate as they relate to how a structure performs in the real world.

It is important to note that ASTM standards do not always exist for the tests performed due to the unique nature of the SBCRI facility capabilities. Therefore, the testing set-ups are relying on engineering principles and common sense to ensure that the applied loads replicate real life load conditions so that true building performance can be assessed. Already, this process has resulted in an unexpected awareness about current testing methods being used and why the results coming out of SBCRI will be even more valuable and relevant to in situ structure performance.

SBCRI staff has recently undertaken two preliminary industry-related testing projects including lateral load testing (simulating wind or seismic) for wall systems and roof truss testing to determine the amount of applied load at predefined bottom chord deformations. Watch for the results of this and other industry-related testing on the SBCRI website, www.sbcri.info and in the April issue of SBC Magazine.

Structural engineer A.R. Dykes said: "Structural engineering is the art of molding materials we do not wholly understand into shapes we cannot truly assess in such a way that the community at large has no reason to suspect the extent of our ignorance." SBCRI has first hand knowledge of how profoundly well said this is and is poised to make a contribution to positive change.

For more information and to stay up-to-date on current testing projects, visit the SBCRI website. In particular, take a moment to watch the SBCRI Talking Brochure™, which will provide you with an overview of the concepts being deployed in the testing facility. You can also use the SBCRI website to suggest industry testing projects or learn more about proprietary testing availability. SBC

Fond Farewells

The SBC industry bids a fond farewell to two of its most enthusiastic and involved leaders.

Manenti Leaves a Lifetime's Impact in 30-Year Career

by Libby Maurer

After a career spanning three decades, Thomas J. Manenti will retire from our industry later this month.

Manenti began his career in the industry in 1977 as a sales representative at Gang-Nail Systems, an equipment and truss plate supplier based in Miami. After working his way through the positions of Midwest District Sales Manager, Sales Manager, and then VP of Marketing & Sales, he was promoted to president of the company in 1989. Gang-Nail was then acquired by MiTek Industries in 1991.

Jack Palacio, formerly of Gang-Nail, reflected on the time he and Manenti worked together. "It has been a real pleasure to work with you for so many years at Gang-Nail. I have very fond memories of our traveling together during the old days," he wrote.

After seeing Gang-Nail through the MiTek merger, Manenti became Division Vice President, then Senior Vice President of Marketing & Sales. He was named president of MiTek in April 2005.

One of the lasting impacts of Manenti's career was the customer relationships he forged during his various sales positions at Gang-Nail and MiTek. More than anything, he embodied the fact that success as a businessman could be achieved by acting with integrity. Integrity, it seems, is the quality Manenti is best known for. "It has been an absolute pleasure working with you over the years. You demonstrated integrity and honesty in all of our dealings. The component industry will miss your leadership and presence," said long-time customer David Motter of Tri-County Truss, Inc.

Manenti's quiet authority caught the attention of many, and influenced those he was close to. "Far beyond your vast knowledge, the manner that you've always carried yourself provided me with a goal to pattern myself. From helping to redefine the traditional and often adversarial vendor-customer relationship into a true partnership to observing your 'grace under fire,' you've been a great role model," noted David Horne of Universal Forest Products-Eastern Division, Inc.

Friends of Manenti's acknowledged the model of professionalism he set within MiTek, which ultimately transcended the entire industry. Dan Holland of Clearspan Components, Inc. said he could always count on Manenti to be "real" and noted that was one of the things he greatly appreciated in him. "Thank you for being such an example of professional behavior for all of us in the industry. I have benefitted greatly from observing your demeanor and poise when faced with adversity which would have brought a negative and emotional response from most other people," said Holland.

Manenti's involvement in the industry did not stop at servicing Gang-Nail and MiTek customers. For many years, he advocated for the interests of all component manufacturers through leadership in industry associations TPI and WTCA. He served several terms as TPI President, working to align its priorities for the good of the industry.

For WTCA, Manenti acted as chair of the BCMC Committee several times (1992 and 2004), served on WTCA's Board of Directors and participated in the WTCA Marketing and Legislative Committees. Some will never forget the priority he put on common good. "Many of our industry's and associations' accomplishments (WTCA and TPI) would not have been possible without leadership that was focused on what would benefit the industry. Fortunately for us, you always placed the industry first [in your association dealings]," wrote Robert Ward of Southern Components, Inc.

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Fond Farewells

Continued from page 44

Lee Vulgaris, WTCA past president and BCMC co-chair with Tom in 1991, echoed Ward's sentiment. "To anyone who bought from Tom, served with Tom, or was a friend of Tom's, it quickly became obvious that he had remarkable integrity and humility. From a WTCA perspective, Tom was highly instrumental in its success and advancement. He co-chaired the BCMC through its difficult years with an unwavering vision that a strong WTCA would be the linchpin of the truss and component industry. Well done, Tom," he wrote.

A nod to his participation and influence in these associations, Manenti twice received TPI's Outstanding Leadership award (1997 and 2001) and was inducted into the WTCA Hall of Fame in 2000. Kirk Grundahl, WTCA Executive Director, credits Manenti for the teamwork relationship that the associations benefit from today. "Tom was intimately involved with the evolution of WTCA's relationship with TPI—sometimes in the foreground and sometimes in the background—but always available to help when needed," he said. Grundahl also expressed gratitude for Manenti's direct involvement and solid counsel in the tough times for WTCA: changes in BCMC, *WOODWORDS* and the management of the organization.

In 2006, Manenti received the Dick Bowman Industry Enthusiast Award at BCMC in Houston. The award is given each year to a WTCA supplier member who has supported the show and the industry with enthusiasm and integrity. People who have worked with him throughout his 30-year career in the industry agree this describes Manenti's true character. "Over a period of years, [Tom] has consistently shown support of BCMC and the industry, and he has done it selflessly and with integrity," WTCA Past President Rip Rogers said of Manenti, whom he then introduced as the award recipient.

In a letter to MiTek customers in May 2007, it was with both contemplation and enthusiasm that Manenti announced he would be soon retiring from the industry. "I have been involved with The Fellowship of Christian Athletes for many years, serving in several capacities from coaching baseball to fund raising to event planning. FCA, along with the role I play in serving in my local church, has been the focal point of my life outside of my devotion to my family and my dedication to MiTek," he explained. "It became clear to me that my passion was in the area of teaching and encouraging others. The opportunity was presented to me to work in a greater capacity with FCA, one that would not allow me to 'serve two masters.'"

Manenti closed his letter with the reassurance that is characteristic of the man of unwavering leadership and foresight that touched so many in the industry: "These are challenging times, but the recovery will arrive in due time and everyone will be stronger as a result." Anticipating talk that his retirement and the slowed housing market are not merely coincidental, he clarified that the economy was not the reason for his decision. "It's merely time for me to be where God wants me to be and for as long as He wants me to be there," he wrote. He noted that his last official day at MiTek would be January 31, and that going forward he'll be available on a consulting basis. Although his retirement comes during a difficult time for the industry, Manenti said, "I am thrilled that MiTek is in such terrific shape with so many wonderful people to fill the roles necessary to maintain our leadership position."

Many associates encouraged Manenti to follow his heart and fulfill a life-long passion. "I have greatly admired your ability to prove that there are still men of faith out there that live by example and not by words alone. I pray that you and your family will continue to be blessed in all that you put your hands to," said Scott Ward of Southern Components, Inc., a friend of Manenti's.

Steve Cabler of MiTek called his co-worker's contributions to both MiTek and the industry "legendary." He stated, "[Manenti's] leadership style is one of encouragement and empowerment built upon a foundation of personal integrity. Working with Tom (he never made it feel like you were working *for* him) for 20 years has been a tremendous learning experience, honor and blessing. He has always had an innate feel for what is best for our business by looking at things through the eyes of our customers and doing what is in their best interests."

"Much can be said of your efforts on behalf of our industry. But I'm not surprised that many [people] have expressed testimony of how you have helped them realize the need to understand God's love and purpose in their lives. You have enriched my life beyond what you can possibly imagine, as a mentor, brother and counselor," wrote Tim Rouch of Gang-Nail Truss Company of Visalia.

Grundahl was among those to reflect on the spiritual journey that brought them together. "The first time I met Tom was in 1989 at the BCMC Fellowship Breakfast in Jacksonville. This began a journey where our paths would cross often," he said. Grundahl said Manenti brought light to the industry in that he was very comfortable in his own skin, which made everyone around him feel comfortable. "His personal gifts have made a deep difference in our industry. For that we should all be very appreciative," Grundahl remarked.

As CEO of MiTek, Gene Toombs wished Manenti all the best on his journey. "Tom and I have worked together for 18 years; I will truly miss his leadership and market savvy, but mostly his friendship. His contributions to the success of MiTek are too many to list. He has mentored a number of our executives that are following in his footsteps, so he leaves us in terrific shape. I am also delighted that he will remain as a consultant to us in the future. To Tom and his wonderful wife Kathy, enjoy every minute of your well-deserved retirement."

On behalf of the entire structural building components industry, SBC Magazine thanks Tom for his many years leadership and energy. Good luck in this new phase of life, Tom! SBC

Fond Farewells

The SBC industry bids a fond farewell to two of its most enthusiastic and involved leaders.

Entered Cold, Exited Warmly

by Marisa Hirsch

Andy Schwitter entered the structural building components industry in 1991 as CEO of Truswal in Arlington, TX, and immediately made an impression. Though he started at Truswal "cold" (with no prior industry experience), he brought him with common sense and a no-nonsense, can-do attitude that had quite an effect on his employees and customers.

Schwitter retired at the end of June 2007, but his associates and customers (some of whom became close personal friends) say his contributions to the company and the industry have outlasted his daily presence there.

Val Cairns, marketing director at ITW Building Components Group (which purchased Truswal a few years go), said Schwitter initially familiarized himself with the industry by traveling all over the country and meeting customers. He memorized their names and their needs, and used that information to forge relationships and cooperation, allowing him to better meet and exceed customers' expectations.

"He always knew what was going on in the industry, in the steel markets, all over the world," Cairns said. "He is a very sharp businessman."

According to Merle Nett, president of Richco Structures, Schwitter was hired to turn a then-struggling Truswal around—a task he fully succeeded in. Nett, who was a customer of Schwitter's and is a close personal friend, said a big part of that success was due to Schwitter's focus on Truswal's software. He developed a few different users groups to assess the software and help improve it. The group members would gather, with Schwitter encouraging everyone to speak frankly about what was good and what was bad. He would then guide the adjustment process based on the information he'd gathered.

"After a while, it became pretty apparent that he was willing to walk the walk and get things accomplished," Nett said.

Nett also said that Schwitter is a savvy businessman who demands respect and gets results. "He literally turned Truswal from a struggling company to a very profitable company," Nett said. "He got a solid team of managers to head up his various divisions, and the company became very successful."

Caring for Customers & Employees

Schwitter's commitment to customer service was a big factor in his and the company's success. "He believed strongly in outstanding customer service," Cairns said. "It didn't matter if it was a small or large customer, he believed in good customer service. He would listen to them and address their concerns."

In fact, many of Schwitter's associates speak of his people skills and dedication to service. Antonio Justice, vice president and general manager at ITW, worked with Schwitter almost the entire time Schwitter was at Truswal. Justice said the relationships Schwitter formed with customers were so solid that he and other employees were sometimes invited to stay in customers' homes when in town. Also, employees were often dinner guests at Schwitter's house and would then return the favor.

"He was a very good guy in the office and outside the office," Justice said. "Very family-oriented and really got very involved—not only with the customers but also with the employees, which of course led to his success at Truswal."

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Fond Farewells

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Dick Riegle, technical support manager at ITW, said a big part of what made Schwitter such a great person to work for and with was his open-door policy. “No matter what it was, you could talk to him about it, and that just worked very, very well,” he said. “I’ve never worked for anybody any better than Andy, and that will be hard to beat.”

Cairns also mentioned Schwitter’s open-door policy, as well as his leadership and motivational abilities. “Concerning Andy’s leadership, he always gave credit to the employees for the success of the company and empowered us to do our jobs,” she said. “He had an open-door policy, he knew how to boost morale, and...he took a personal interest in all of us.”

Justice said Schwitter was a mentor to him and a great boss to work with for several reasons, among them that he was a hard worker and a fair boss. “If there was a mistake, there wasn’t screaming or yelling,” said Justice. “We did have heated arguments, but there was always a meeting and agreements were always made.”

Roger Gibbs, president of SpaceJoist TE and WTCA past president, took note of Schwitter’s company leadership and communication skills even though he never worked for him.

“I liked the way that he treated his staff at Truswal—from the VPs to the clerical [employees],” said Gibbs, who has known Schwitter since 1991. Gibbs said Schwitter made it clear to employees that they could always approach him and that they were all important to the company.

Additionally, Gibbs said that if a Truswal employee was struggling in his or her position, that employee wasn’t let go. Instead, Schwitter would find where that person’s abilities would be better suited. “There was always a place in the company where your strengths would come out and you would be an asset,” said Gibbs. “Andy identified that place.”

Extensive Contributions & Character

Kirk Grundahl, WTCA executive director, said that he and Schwitter’s relationship developed somewhat around the fact that Grundahl’s company, Qualtim, Inc., took on the management of WTCA at the same time that Schwitter entered the industry.

“Andy was a breath of fresh air because he brought a perspective that was from the outside looking in, and that is always very valuable,” Grundahl said. “Andy really took an interest in his customers’ association and we had great conversations. But, beyond that, he invited us into the Truswal family. He made us feel like a valuable part of Truswal and WTCA a valuable part of our industry.”

Grundahl also said that the initial communication with Schwitter—the friendship and sharing of industry-related information and perspectives—laid a great foundation for a variety of WTCA activities that were positive for the whole industry. “Personally, I am really glad to be able to say that Andy was a colleague on a fascinating journey and a friend,” he said.

Several people who worked with Schwitter in different ways over the years speak of him, and his support of WTCA and the industry, with high regard. Tim Rouch, president of Gang-Nail Truss of Visalia in Visalia, CA, said he will always be grateful for Schwitter’s support of WTCA. “Our organization could never have achieved its current level of success without the kind of support Truswal provided,” he said.

“[Andy’s] keen understanding and vision produced positive results for Truswal and opened new doors for the component industry,” said Carl Schoening, consultant at Trusstar Consulting in Euless, TX, and prior VP of Sales at Truswal.

Nett said that among Schwitter’s contributions to the industry as a whole was his part in bringing the Truss Plate Institute (TPI) and WTCA together. When the two associations began collaborating, there was a certain amount of communication and meshing of agendas that had to take place. Along the way, there were some challenging conversations. Nett gives Schwitter credit for diffusing some of the problems and getting the two boards to work together. “I think he was one of the real key people that helped accomplish that goal,” Nett said.

Dan Holland, president of Clearspan Components in Meridian, MS, also gave credit to Schwitter for the cooperation between TPI and WTCA. “[Andy] was a huge factor in bringing about the cooperative spirit that WTCA and TPI now enjoy,” he said.

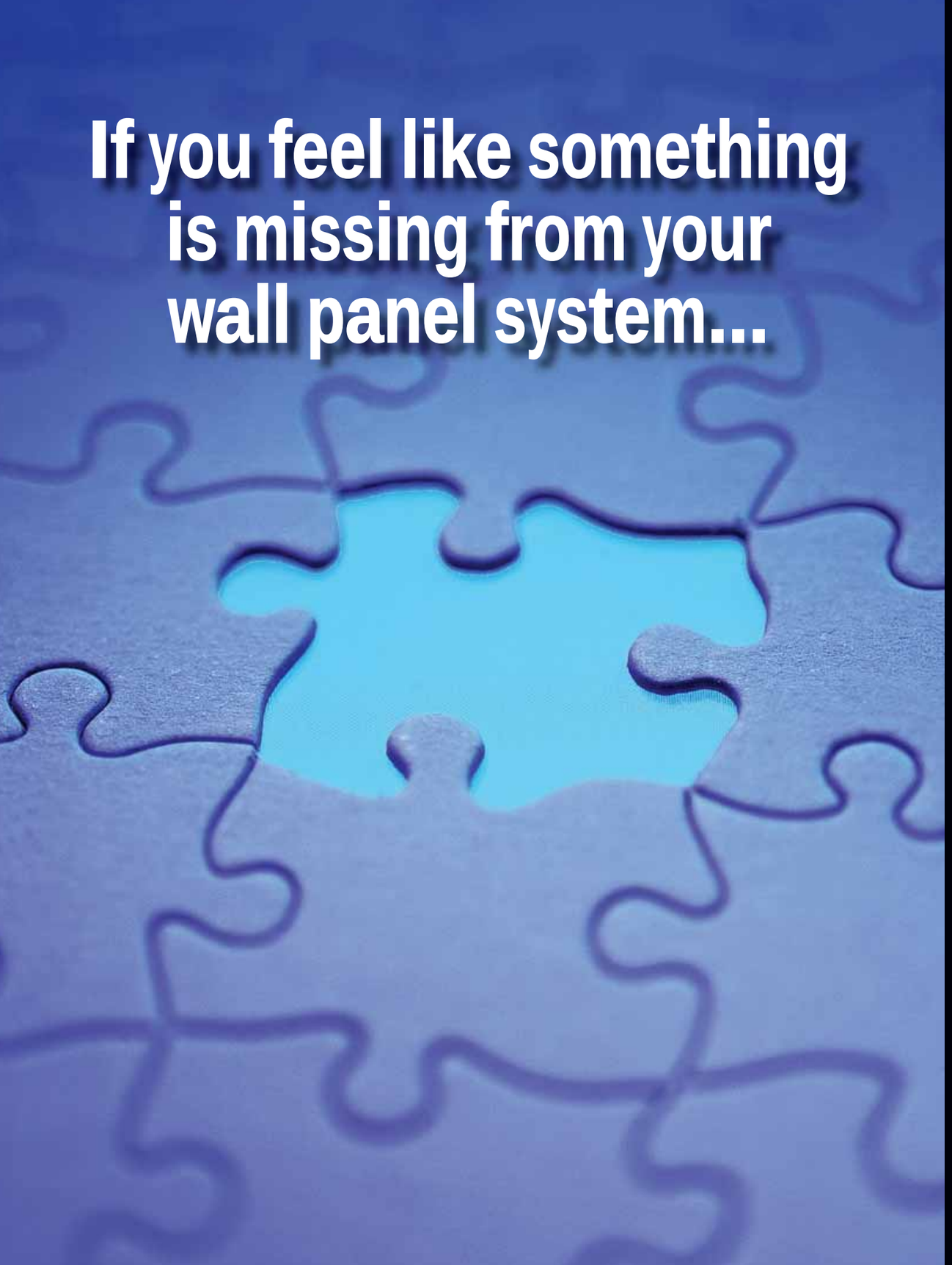
Gibbs said that Schwitter’s ability to listen and offer succinct solutions were key factors in establishing this cooperative spirit, and that Schwitter’s talent for listening was greatly appreciated by manufacturers. “They had an ear they could tell things to, and I think that’s what they liked,” said Gibbs. “That’s a big thing he (Schwitter) brought to the table.”

In fact, Gibbs said that Schwitter’s talents for listening and speaking sometimes eliminated the need for mediation. He would listen to everyone’s points of view, gather all the information and then offer his suggestions.

“So when he did speak, when he did give his viewpoint, he was very articulate about it and he always gave more than one option for the solution to a problem,” Gibbs said. “He helped people think about both of those options and how they would work for them and for the industry.”

When trying to explain what Schwitter is like, Justice called up an old saying. “What’s the saying...?,” he asked. “‘Character counts even when no one is looking.’ That’s Andy to the core.”

On behalf of the entire structural building components industry, ***SBC Magazine*** thanks Andy for his many years of leadership and energy. Best wishes for a healthy and productive retirement, Andy! SBC



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WTCA's First International Chapter

by Marisa Hirsch

The WTCA Canada Chapter aims to harness available resources and fine tune them to meet their needs.

No matter where it's manufactured, a truss is still a truss. While differences in codes, legal requirements and terminology exist in different countries and regions, a truss itself is meant to resist applied loads for a particular building in a certain way—no matter where it's built. This is one reason why WTCA members in Canada decided to form the WTCA Canada Chapter/le Chapitre Canadien de la WTCA: they can easily use the resources created by WTCA (and some already are). And, with a chapter, they'll have a more organized influence on the products and services to come.

"As an industry, it makes sense to leverage what's already been done and to not reinvent the wheel as much as possible," said Rob McLellan, WTCA Canada Chapter president and vice president of operations at Rockett Lumber and Building Supplies in Mississauga, ON.

McLellan began considering the possibility of a WTCA Canada Chapter while serving as director of the Ontario Wood Truss Fabricators Association, which is a Canadian association. As a part of that association, he saw that they were having difficulties accomplishing everything they wanted to accomplish. Rockett was already a WTCA member company, so McLellan decided to contact staff to find out if forming a WTCA Canada Chapter would be feasible. It was then he found out that the idea of a Canadian chapter was already being discussed. He was told about a preliminary meeting being held in Winnipeg, MB on March 15-16, 2007 and decided to attend.

"I think the fundamental thing, and the logic for all of this, is that there are huge resources available through WTCA," McLellan said.

Background & Motivation

Discussions about forming a WTCA Canada Chapter had actually been going on for several years between Warren Bracken, managing director of Manu-Fab Building Components, LTD in Newton, MB, and Kirk Grundahl, executive director of WTCA. Bracken was president of the Canadian Wood Truss Association (CWTA) for seven years, and Grundahl attended several of their meetings. This is how the two got to know each other and began discussing the possibility of a WTCA Canada Chapter very early on.

Bracken said the advantages of doing so were obvious to him. WTCA has already created many resources that can fulfill the needs of Canadian component manufacturers with only minimal tweaking. Bracken said it's just a matter of making sure that, when needed, the work done is compliant with the National Building Code of Canada (NBC) and the Canadian Standards Association (CSA), and then getting things translated into French, which is an official language (along with English) in Canada.

"It's really not all that difficult," said Bracken, who represents Manitoba in the WTCA Canada Chapter. "The problem was that there weren't a lot of people ready for that concept. They wanted to do [everything] themselves, which would cost a pile of money."

Grundahl agrees with Bracken, and said that leveraging WTCA's resources is a concept that just makes sense. "The issue was really about building momentum

Continued on page 56

at a glance

- WTCA's newest chapter is made up of Canadian manufacturers and their suppliers.
- While legislation and building code interpretations differ, trusses and wall panels are designed and manufactured similarly in both the U.S. and Canada.
- Many Canada Chapter members see the benefits of leveraging the programs and work already created by WTCA.
- The chapter's first project is creating English/French versions of the BCSI documents, which currently exist in an English/Spanish format.

Continued from page 54

around the concept's common sense, believing that the sum would be much greater than the individual parts and making this work out positively for everyone involved," he said.

Steve Toner, president of Timber Top Trusses Ltd. in Grand Falls, NB and current CWTA president, also quickly saw the value of a Canadian chapter. "After we met [in Winnipeg], I immediately saw the benefits because we'd been paying dues to WTCA and I was using a lot of the materials," he said.

Toner's company was sending out two sets of documentation with their products—one set for jobs being shipped into the U.S. and one for those staying in Canada. "It was a little confusing for our staff because there wasn't a unified documentation," said Toner, who represents the Atlantic Provinces in the Canada Chapter. "This is basically the goal of...developing a Canadian chapter."

Toner, Bracken and McLellan all said that creating English/French versions of the Building Component Safety Information (BCSI) documents is indeed the first main goal of the WTCA Canada Chapter. These documents could then serve as a unified North American installation guide.

"A truss is a truss and it doesn't matter where it's built," Toner said. "Once I saw that, I went back to my Canadian counterparts and explained the goal of the Canadian chapter.... It does make sense, and there's room for TPIC (Truss Plate Institute of Canada), TPI (Truss Plate Institute), WTCA and CWTA."

Bracken said his company originally joined WTCA in order to understand their American customers' expectations and to be in compliance with American standards. Now that there's a WTCA Canada Chapter, they will be more able to harness WTCA to help them meet the expectations of their Canadian customers, as well as their American ones. With a unified voice, they'll have more organized input into WTCA's goals and projects.

Defining Details

Of course, there were (and are) challenges to overcome in the process of creating a Canadian chapter of a U.S. association. Not the least of these is to make sure everyone understands the goals of the WTCA Canada Chapter—which is to add to and complement what's being done in Canada. Equally important is to ensure that everyone understands what the chapter's goal definitely isn't—to dictate what is already being done in Canada.

"I think the key challenge is trying to get everybody aligned in terms of what we're trying to achieve with different organizations," McLellan said. "It's not a competition with WTCA and CWTA and others."

Bracken also spoke about the challenge of making sure everyone understands the purpose of setting up a Canadian chapter. He said that after explaining the idea behind the Canadian chapter to skeptical people, his explanation is often still met with concern that WTCA will "take over." He then explains that isn't the intent, and that WTCA's goal is simply to look after its members.

"The intent is to complement," said Bracken. "Therein lies the challenge: to convince people that there's a major difference between takeover and complementary. I would like to unite Canada in the sense that this is a good thing for us."

Getting WTCA publications translated into French is another doable challenge—and one that staff has made progress on. This is a process that requires a lot of time and coordination between staff and Canadian members. But, as Toner said, it is imperative—and so it will be done. "[Translation] was a bit of a challenge from the beginning because of the lack of useable terminology," said Toner.

Staff has been working with some Canadian member companies to create a list of French industry terms to be used within BCSI documents. Once this list has been finalized, WTCA will then have a list of approved French terms at its disposal when translating. With members' help, the list can grow and change as needed—making translations more accurate and consistent all the time.

Goals & Expectations

Preparing the BCSI summary sheets for Canadian use is the chapter's primary goal, but Bracken said they have begun thinking about what else they'd like to do.

The first official WTCA Canada Chapter meeting took place on October 4, 2007 at BCMC in Columbus, OH. At this meeting, members and interested parties discussed what they would like to accomplish through the chapter. One idea was to look into customizing WTCA's Truss Technician Training courses for Canadian use, and Toner said he would like to see a Canadian version of In-Plant WTCA QC.

The objective, Bracken said, is to determine what chapter members as a group want done. Based on the meeting at BCMC, the chapter has been gathering feedback from different members to help them define how to proceed and what future projects and goals will be. It may still be a little while before this process is finished, but Bracken said that once it's done, the chapter will have a firmer idea of how to proceed in the longer run.

However, immediate goals are a little clearer. "For the first year [the goal] is really to get some quick bits into Canada, starting with BCSI, and working with the Canadian organizations to try to get that alignment," McLellan said. "If we can get that, then I think other things will fall into place pretty quickly. If we're coming from opposite directions in what we're trying to achieve between Canadian organizations and WTCA, then it's just going to be conflict—and nobody wins."

Robert Baynit, director of engineering at MiTek Canada, was present at the chapter's meeting at BCMC. Baynit said he

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Chapter Corner

For more information about WTCA Chapters and how to become more involved, contact Anna L. Stamm (608/310-6719 or astamm@qualtim.com) or Danielle Bothun (608/310-6735 or dbothun@qualtim.com). Contributions to Chapter Corner, including pictures, are encouraged. Submissions may be edited for grammar, length and clarity.

Chapter Spotlight

The Mid Atlantic Chapter Gets Serious About Education

by Melanie Birkeland

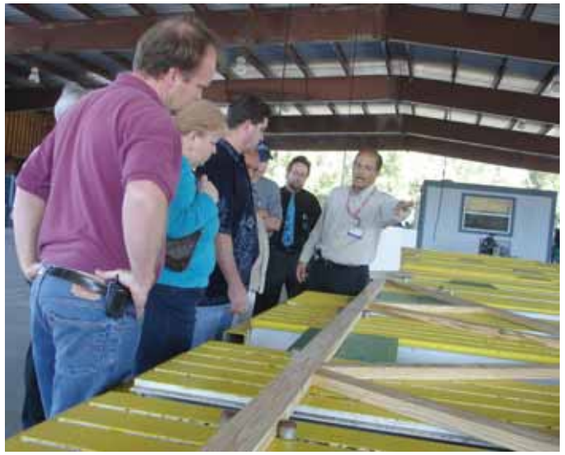
The Mid Atlantic Wood Truss Council (MAWTC) is a chapter that is serious about education and they have the results to prove it! Focusing on education this year, chapter members spent quite a bit of time scheduling, planning, manning booths and organizing seminars and plant tours in their area. In particular, the chapter sponsored three notable events this fall.

First up was the 38th Annual Pennsylvania Building Officials Conference (PennBOC) in Harrisburg, PA. In addition to a seminar taught by Ken Watters, PE. of KW Engineering, the chapter manned a booth where members handed out flyers on Carbeck, TTWs, Truss Plant Tours, *SBC* and chapter rosters. This is the second year in a row that MAWTC has sponsored a seminar with PennBOC and it certainly won't be the last—PennBOC has already asked them to return next year! For 2008, the chapter plans to host a truss plant tour for the group.

Following PennBOC, the chapter provided two seminars contracted through Rutgers University in New Jersey on "Wood Trusses and Fire Performance" for building and fire officials. On the program evaluations: 100 percent said the presentation was "Excellent" or "Very Good" overall, and 100 percent said the presentation was "Excellent" or "Very Good" at meeting their personal expectations. R. Wojcik from Fire Prevention in Atlantic City wrote: "Ken is a top notch instructor. His easy soft spoken style was a refreshing change from other instructors." The chapter also provided an impressive handout package for each attendee that included the BCSI booklet and several other publications.

Great job to Ken Watters for teaching such worthwhile sessions—and great job to MAWTC for jumping in and educating the building officials and fire officials in their area. This chapter is serious about education—100% of the time! SBC

Chapter Highlights



West Florida Truss Association

The West Florida Chapter held its annual Building Officials Seminar on November 2 inside the truss plant of 41 Truss in Springhill, FL. The inspectors were treated to a truss plant tour as well as a 2-hour continuing education course. It was the first time in recent memory that the association did not hold the event held at Robbins Engineering, where inspectors have enjoyed watching trusses put to the test, literally, on Robbins' test racks. But this year Robbins was in the process of moving its test facility, so Dave Wood, the owner of 41 Truss, stepped up and provided the facility, and Simpson Strong-Tie sponsored the food so that the 63 attendees could spend a few hours learning a little more about our industry. WFTA's chairman, John Goley of West Coast Truss, welcomed building inspectors, plans examiners and building officials to witness automated and laser gantry systems, as well as automated saws, and a state-of-the-art paperless truss plant. The chapter has been holding these training classes for building departments in the Tampa Bay area for more than 20 years.

Western Component Manufacturers Association

This fall, the Western Chapter held two successful events: a golf tournament in September and a membership meeting in November. Kicking off the meeting Steve Wethern of BMC West and Lee Howe of Lumbermen's Building Centers focused on strength in unity and the importance of the association. Steve also accepted the post of Chapter President and Lee Howe moved to the Secretary post. David Hughes of Oregon Truss retained the job of Vice President, and Mark Smith of Trus-Way joined the officer rotation as Treasurer

The guest speaker for the evening was Jim Chapman, President of Legend Homes, one of the regions largest builders. Jim reviewed the state of the market and where it is headed for 2008. In the context of the urban growth boundaries of the insular Portland market and the overbuilding of recent years, the most notable pressures are currently green building standards and construction defect litigation.

The attendees also reviewed the crane operator training and inspection certification legislation that recently passed in Washington. The effect of this legislation on chapter members in Oregon and southern Washington was discussed as well as steps that WTCA is taking with members to modify aspects of the proposed rules and positively influence the outcome.

Wood Truss Council of the Capital Area

The Capital Area Chapter held its final meeting of 2007 at the Hyatt Dulles in November. With a program based on ESPN's "Pardon the Interruption," it was a very lively and well attended night. Encouraging attendees to speak their minds, the moderated discussion forum topics included handling/installing/bracing, contracts/bids and building codes.

Under chapter business, it was agreed that the group would renew its educational program by getting on the agenda of the States of Virginia and Maryland's Building Officials groups' annual meetings, if possible. The objective is to discuss BCSI or any other pertinent issues, and WTCA staff will assist in making these contacts.

With a moderate change in officer positions for the coming year, Chris Johnson of Toll Integrated Systems agreed to serve a new term as Chapter President. Russ Airington of Chesapeake Structural Systems moved to the Vice Presidency. Shep Campbell of Glaize Components and Ed Basham Chesapeake Building Components retained the Treasurer's and Secretary's posts, respectively.

The 2008 meeting schedule was tentatively set for: February 6 (instead of January 9), a meeting in conjunction with the SBC Legislative Conference, a summer Orioles game, and November 5. The February 6 meeting will feature an economist from George Mason University. SBC

For more information about WTCA Chapters and how to become more involved, contact Anna L. Stamm (608/310-6719 or astamm@qualtim.com) or Danielle Bothun (608/310-6735 or dbothun@qualtim.com). Contributions to Chapter Corner, including pictures, are encouraged. Submissions may be edited for grammar, length and clarity.

WTCA's First International Chapter

Continued from page 56

hopes the WTCA Canada Chapter will focus on identifying ways members can benefit from existing solutions already available from WTCA. He also said there are ways that CWTA and WTCA can work together.

"I think CWTA and WTCA members can work together by making joint decisions on areas of cooperation where synergies can be realized," Baynit said. "A good place to start is in the areas of BCSI and QC."

More Input, Better Output

As the WTCA Canada Chapter grows and meets its current goals, it will benefit both the chapter and individual Canadian manufacturers if new people continue to get involved and participate in chapter events. Fresh perspectives and new ideas are always wanted and needed.

Bracken said he wants all Canadian manufacturers, whether they're currently WTCA members or not, to think about the possibilities that may come with a WTCA Canada Chapter. "This is a win-win for everybody," he said. "Even non-members will see [the products and services offered] and order if they want to. But hopefully they would join so they can have a say."

McLellan said more people getting involved in the chapter means the industry will be able to move forward at a faster pace and that professionalism will continue to increase. "Like any industry association, [the WTCA Canada Chapter] is only as strong, and the benefits only as good, as what people put into it," McLellan said. "So, if there's a limited number of us giving input into the work of the association, then we'll get limited output from it—even if we are leveraging the work already done in WTCA." SBC

If you would like to participate in the WTCA Canada Chapter, please contact Rob McLellan (905/275-1800 or rob.mclellan@rockettlumber.com) or Anna Stamm (astamm@qualtim.com or 608/310-6719). If you are willing to assist in the translation of documents into French, please contact Libby Maurer at lmaurer@qualtim.com or 608/310-6724.

If you are interested in starting a WTCA chapter in your area, please contact Anna Stamm at astamm@qualtim.com or 608/310-6719.

Industry News & Data

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Consumer Price Index

[an index measuring the change in the cost of typical wage-earner purchases of goods and services expressed as a percentage of the cost of these same goods and services in some base period - called also cost-of-living index]

Expenditure Category	Changes from Preceding Mo. Sept	Oct	Nov	Compound annual rate 3-mo. ended Nov 07
All Items	.3	.3	.8	5.6
All Items Less Food & Engery	.2	.2	.3	2.6

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Unemployment Rate

Aug	4.6%
Sept	4.7%
Oct	4.7%
Nov	4.7%

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Producer Price Index - Customized Industry Data

An inflationary indicator published by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics to evaluate wholesale price levels in the economy.

Engineered Wood Mem. (exc. truss) Mfg.	Sept	Oct	Nov
Eng. Wood Mem.	93.5(P)	92.6(P)	91.0(P)
LVL	114.2(P)	114.2(P)	114.2(P)
Other	109.5(P)	109.5(P)	108.4(P)

(P) = preliminary

Truss Mfg.	Sept	Oct	Nov
Truss Mfg.	110.4(P)	110.1(P)	109.3(P)
Wood Trusses	106.3(P)	106.0(P)	105.3(P)
Primary Products	106.3(P)	106.0(P)	105.3(P)
Secondary Products	100.6(P)	100.2(P)	98.9(P)

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Consumer Confidence Index

The Consumer Confidence Index is a measure of consumer optimism toward current economic conditions. The consumer confidence index was arbitrarily set at 100 in 1985 and is adjusted monthly on the basis of a survey of consumers. The index considers consumer opinion on both current conditions (40%) and future expectations (60%).

Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	% +/-
108.2	104.0	108.5	103.9	112.6	105.6	99.5	95.2(r)	87.3	-8.3%

Source: www.consumerresearchcenter.org

NOVEMBER 2007 ISM MANUFACTURING AT A GLANCE

	Series Index	Direction Nov vs Oct	Rate of Change Nov vs Oct
ISM Manufacturing Index (formerly PMI)	50.8	Growing	Slower
New Orders	52.6	Growing	Faster
Production	51.9	Growing	From Contracting
Employment	47.8	Contracting	From Growing
Supplier Deliveries	51.7	Slowing	Faster
Inventories	46.9	Contracting	Faster
Customers' Inventories	49.0	Too Low	From Too High
Prices	67.5	Increasing	Faster
Backlog of Orders	41.5	Contracting	Faster
Exports	58.5	Growing	Faster
Imports	47.5	Contracting	Same

For an in-depth explanation of this summary, go to https://ism.ws/ISMReport.

Producer Price Index General

% changes in selected stage-of-processing price indexes

Month	Total	Ex. Food & Energy
Aug	-1.5(r)	0.1(r)
Sept	1.1	0.1
Oct	0.1	0
Nov	3.2	0.4

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

U.S. Prime Rate

Month	2007	2006	2005
Aug 1	8.25%	8.25%	6.25%
Sept 1	8.25%	8.25%	6.50%
Oct 1	7.75%	8.25%	6.75%
Nov 1	7.50%	8.25%	7.00%
Dec 1	7.50%	8.25%	7.00%

Source: Federal Reserve Board

Industrial Production Index

The industrial production (IP) index measures the change in output in U.S. manufacturing, mining, and electric and gas utilities. Output refers to the physical quantity of items produced, unlike sales value which combines quantity and price. The index covers the production of goods and power for domestic sales in the United States and for export. It excludes production in the agriculture, construction, transportation, communication, trade, finance, and service industries; government output, and imports. The IP index is developed by weighting each component according to its relative importance in the base period. The information for weights is obtained from the value added measures of production in the economic censuses of manufacturer and minerals industries, and from value added information for the utility industries in Internal Revenue Service statistics of income data. The weights are updated at five-year intervals to coincide with the economic censuses. The current index base year is 1992. (r=revised)

	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov
Industrial Production Total Index (% change)	-0.1(r)	0.3(r)	-0.7(r)	0.3
Capacity Utilization Total Industry (%)	82.0(r)	82.1(r)	81.4(r)	81.5

Source: Federal Reserve Board

CM News

STONE TRUSS OFFERING 10% DISCOUNT TO SOUTHERN CA WILDFIRE VICTIMS

As homeowners and businesses begin to clean up after wildfires blazed across thousands of acres in Southern California last month, Stone Truss Company announced it is offering a 10% discount on the purchase of commercial and residential trusses.

"The wildfires have been devastating. The losses have been overwhelming for the victims with billions lost. Many of our neighbors have literally lost the roofs over their heads and we want to help them to recover," said Gary Sartor, president of Stone Truss. "Every truss we sell to fire victims from Malibu to Mexico we will discount 10 percent," he explained.

"For 21 years we have been serving San Diego, Orange, Los Angeles, Riverside and San Bernardino Counties from the same location. We are deeply saddened that so many of our neighbors have suffered damage to their homes and significant economic loss as a result of the wildfires. We're committed to the communities we serve and we're proud to do what we can to help rebuilding," said Sartor. "We believe in neighbors helping neighbors." [Source: www.buildingonline.com, 12/5/07]

84 LUMBER HOLDS GRAND OPENING OF FOUR FACILITIES

84 Lumber held grand opening celebrations of four new locations across the country Nov. 27, with simultaneous events in Oregon, Louisiana, Florida and Utah. West Jordan, UT, hosted a new 84 Lumber building materials supply yard as well as a truss and panel manufacturing facility. The Eighty Four, PA-based company also unveiled new stores in Redmond, OR; Pearl River, LA; and Sanford, FL. The openings included ribbon-cutting ceremonies and donations to the stores' respective Habitat for Humanity chapters. 84 Lumber operates in more than 425 locations nationwide. [Source: www.homechannelnews.com, 11/27/07]

PROBUILD PURCHASES NEW MEXICO-BASED LUMBER, INC.

In mid-December, ProBuild Holdings, the nation's largest supplier of building materials to professional contractors, announced its purchase of the assets of Lumber, Inc., a distributor of lumber, floor and roof trusses, wall panels and millwork based in Albuquerque, NM. Founded in 1972 by the Wickens and Chiado families, Lumber Inc. today operates four locations in the greater Albuquerque market, one in Santa Fe and one in Las Cruces. Its customers include national and regional production builders as well as custom builders. Terms of the sale have not been disclosed.

ProBuild continues to follow an aggressive strategy to serve the national market by expanding its presence in major markets, strengthening the company's country-wide footprint. The Lumber Inc. acquisition provides ProBuild with access to Albuquerque's strong housing market, which was ranked in the top 50 in the U.S. in single family permits in 2006. The Lumber Inc. locations will complement ProBuild's existing operations in Santa Fe and Albuquerque.

Continued on page 65

Housing Market Index 2007 (HMI)

The HMI is a weighted, seasonally adjusted statistic derived from ratings for present single family sales, single family sales in the next 6 months and buyers traffic. The first two components are measured on a scale of "good" "fair," and "poor," and the last one is measured on a scale of "high," "average" and "low." A rating of 50 indicates that the number of positive or good responses received from the builders is about the same as the number of negative or poor responses. Ratings higher than 50 indicate more positive or good responses.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
35	39	36	33	30	28	24	22	20	19	19	19

Source: National Association of Home Builders

Housing Starts

November housing starts decreased 3.7%, to 1.187 million (SAAR) with single family starts down 5.4% to 0.829 million (SAAR). Single family activity was the lowest since April 1991. Permits continue to slide, down 1.5% to 1.152 million (SAAR), the slowest pace since June 1993.

U.S. Housing Starts

Millions - Seasonally Adjusted Annual Rate (SAAR)

U.S. Totals	Nov	Oct (rev.)	% Change
Starts	1.187	1.232	-3.7%
Permits	1.152	1.170	-1.5%
Single Family			
Starts	0.829	0.876	-5.4%
Permits	0.764	0.809	-5.6%
Multi Family			
Starts	0.358	0.356	0.6%
Permits	0.388	0.361	7.5%
Starts and Permits By Region:			
NE Starts	0.128	0.153	-16.3%
NE Permits	0.128	0.143	-10.5%
MW Starts	0.202	0.205	-1.5%
MW Permits	0.189	0.187	1.1%
S Starts	0.601	0.599	0.3%
S Permits	0.576	0.535	7.7%
W Starts	0.256	0.275	-6.9%
W Permits	0.259	0.305	-15.1%

Analysis & Outlook: The housing correction continues. Total starts are off 24% from year ago levels (Nov 2006) while the single family sector is off 35%. Inventories remain stubbornly high, with the total homes on the market approaching five million (516,000 new, 4.53 million existing)—a 10-month inventory, double the normal average inventory over the past two decades. The solution to this problem as described by Dr. Irwin Kellner in his recent articles on Dow Jones' MarketWatch website (www.marketwatch.com) is a substantial decline in home prices—as much as 20% from current levels. Today, median prices for existing homes are 3.5 times median annual family incomes, compared to the average of 2.8 during 1984-2000 (a period of strong demand) and 2.3 during the early 1970s when demand reached 2 million units twice. A 20% price decline would be needed to bring prices down to a level where they equaled 2.8 times the average family income. At this point, Kellner says supply and demand would balance, and prices would stabilize. This would have the added impact of bringing confidence to buyers and sellers including the homebuilders; and the mortgage industry would be better able to assess risk and this would address the "credit crunch" problem we are now experiencing.

Will housing drag the rest of the economy into recession? I don't think so, but we may be in for a period of "stagflation"—slow growth plus inflation. Slow growth due to the housing and related problems and the credit crunch; inflation from the weak dollar and rising prices at the consumer level (CPI) and producer level (PPI). If inflation becomes a problem, this will make things difficult for the Fed as they will not be able to lower rates as much as they would like to. As far as wood product prices go, they won't get any better until housing turns around.

Not to end on a bad note, the Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies released their long term housing outlook in November (W0-7–Projecting Demand for New housing Units, www.jchs.harvard.edu), and their analysis suggests that the next ten years should be better than the last ten. Strong demographics, solid net immigration, and replacing homes past their economic life all make for solid fundamentals once we get through the current correction. SBC

This housing starts report is provided to ***SBC*** on a monthly basis by ***SBC** Economic Environment* columnist Al Schuler. Visit www.sbcmag.info for more economic news.

Calendar of Events

Check out WTCA's web site at **www.sbcindustry.com** for the most current calendar information.

January

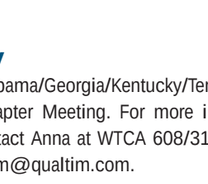
- 24: Alabama/Georgia/Kentucky/Tennessee Joint Chapter Meeting. For more information, contact Anna at WTCA 608/310-6719 or astamm@qualtim.com.
- 29: Mid South Component Manufacturers Association (MSCMA) Chapter Meeting. For more information, contact Dani at WTCA, 608/310-6735 or dbothun@qualtim.com.

February

- 6: Wood Truss Council of the Capital Area (WTCCA) Chapter Meeting. For more information, contact Anna at WTCA, 608/310-6719 or astamm@qualtim.com.
- 13-16: NAHB International Builders' Show. For more information visit www.nahb.org.
- 13: Southwest Florida Truss Manufacturers Association (SWFTMA) Chapter Meeting. For more information, contact Anna at WTCA, 608/310-6719 or astamm@qualtim.com.
- 14: West Florida Truss Association (WFTA) Chapter Meeting. For more information, contact Chapter President John Goley at 813/887-3664 or johngoley@westcoasttruss.com.
- 14: Wisconsin Truss Manufacturers Association (WTMA) Chapter Meeting. For more information, contact Chapter President Steve Johnson at 608/884-6141 or sjohnson@nelsontruss.com.
- 21: Minnesota Truss Manufacturers Association (MTMA) Chapter Meeting. For more information, contact Chapter President Tom Nomeland, 507/872-5195 or tnomeland@ufpi.com.
- 23–Mar 1: Alpine Engineered Products Executive Retreat. For more information visit www.alpeng.com.
- 26: Iowa Truss Manufacturers Association (ITMA) Chapter Meeting. For more information, contact Chapter President Tom Lambertz at 515/283-7100 or tlambertz@robertsdybdahl.com.
- 28: Understanding Metal Plate Connected Wood Trusses from the Ground Up Truss Technology Workshop (TTW) for Southern Nevada Area Inspectors and Installers in Las Vegas, NV, sponsored by WTCA's Southern Nevada Chapter. For more information contact Melanie at 608/274-4849 or mbirkeland@qualtim.com.

March

- 4: WTCA-Illinois Chapter Meeting. For more information, contact Dani at WTCA, 608/310-6735 or dbothun@qualtim.com.
- 5-7: WTCA Open Quarterly Meeting, Albuquerque, NM. For details, contact Stephanie at 608/310-6721 or swatrud@qualtim.com for details. All are welcome to attend!
- 9: Missouri Truss Fabricators Association (MTFA) Chapter Meeting. For more information, contact Dani at WTCA, 608/310-6735 or dbothun@qualtim.com.
- 11: California Engineered Structural Components Association, Southern Region (CalESCA-South) Chapter Meeting. For more information, contact Dani at WTCA, 608/310-6735 or dbothun@qualtim.com.
- 11: Colorado Truss Manufacturers Association (CTMA) Chapter Meeting. For details, contact Chapter President Dennis Wilson at 303/307-1441 or DWilson@HomeLumber.com.
- 13: California Engineered Structural Components Association, Northern Region (CalESCA-North) Chapter Meeting. For more information, contact Dani at WTCA, 608/310-6735 or dbothun@qualtim.com.
- 13: Wood Truss Council of Michigan (WTCM) Chapter Meeting. For more information, contact Anna at WTCA, 608/310-6719 or astamm@qualtim.com.
- 18: Central Florida Component Manufacturers Association (CFCMA) Chapter Meeting. For more information, contact Dani at WTCA, 608/310-6735 or dbothun@qualtim.com.
- 19: North Carolina/South Carolina Joint Chapter Meeting. For details, contact Anna at WTCA, 608/310-6719 or astamm@qualtim.com.
- 20: South Florida WTCA (SFWTCA) Chapter Meeting. For details, contact Dani at WTCA, 608/310-6735 or dbothun@qualtim.com.
- 26-28: WTCA Annual Workshop & Conference, Susnset Station & Hotel, Henderson, NV. All members are welcome to participate! For more information, contact Anna at WTCA, 608/310-6719 or astamm@qualtim.com.
- 27: US Wood Solutions Fair, Charlotte, NC. For more information on the fairs, please contact Ioana Lazea at 613/747-5544 ext 227 or wsf@cwc.ca. SBC



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Industry News

Continued from page 61

"Lumber, Inc. is a company successfully rooted in serving the professional contractor in New Mexico," commented Jim Cavanaugh, president, ProBuild South region. "The Wickens and Chiado families have built an outstanding company with a stellar reputation. This acquisition allows ProBuild to expand our presence in New Mexico in all areas of our business, including building materials, component manufacturing and millwork assembly. We are particularly pleased to have the vast majority of the Lumber, Inc. management team on board to provide the leadership to continue growth in this key strategic market." [Source: denver.dbusinessnews.com, 12/12/07]

FURTHER 1,300 POSITIONS TO BE ELIMINATED AT STOCK, FERGUSON

In late November, Wolseley, the United Kingdom-based parent of Stock Building Supply, announced that 1,300 more positions would be eliminated at Stock and the company's U.S.-based Ferguson division, following a round of 1,500 layoffs in the prior fiscal quarter.

Wolseley noted it already had made a 3,500 headcount reduction over the last year in its U.S. operations. Wolseley's U.S. results have been affected by the decline in the U.S. housing market, as well as falling consumer confidence and a weakening U.S. dollar, the company said.

"Stock's revenue is down by 25 percent, principally reflecting a 22 percent decline in organic sales volumes," the company said in a statement issued prior to its annual meeting of investors, held today. "The effect of previous branch closures and price fluctuations in lumber and panels ... reduced revenue by around 1 percent. Stock is now cumulatively reporting a trading loss for the three month period following losses in September and October."

Headcount reductions at the company's two U.S. divisions have accounted for approximately one-third of Stock's work force and 10 percent of Ferguson's. [Source: www.homechannelnews.com, 11/28/07]

News

WTCA SECURES APPOINTMENT TO INTERNATIONAL BUILDING CODE STRUCTURAL COMMITTEE

On October 27, WTCA was pleased to receive a letter from the International Codes Council asking Executive Director Kirk Grundahl to again serve on the International Building Code (IBC) Structural Committee from January 1, 2008, to June 30, 2009. Grundahl also served on this committee for the 2005/2006 and 2006/2007 Code Development Cycles.

"I've always thought that involvement with the ICC was great. It gives our industry a voice," stated WTCA President Bob Becht of Chambers Truss, Inc. "Since this is our third consecutive appointment it is just further evidence of what great work WTCA is doing to benefit and speak for our industry."

ICC Committees are the foundation upon which the system of the ICC International Codes ("I-Codes"), standards and related services are built. This appointment reflects the IBC Council's expectation and belief that WTCA's participation will make a significant contribution to the success of the committee. [Source: WTCA Press Release, 11/15/07] SBC

Parting Shots

Share your stories and photos with us! Send submissions to **partingshots@sbcmag.info**.



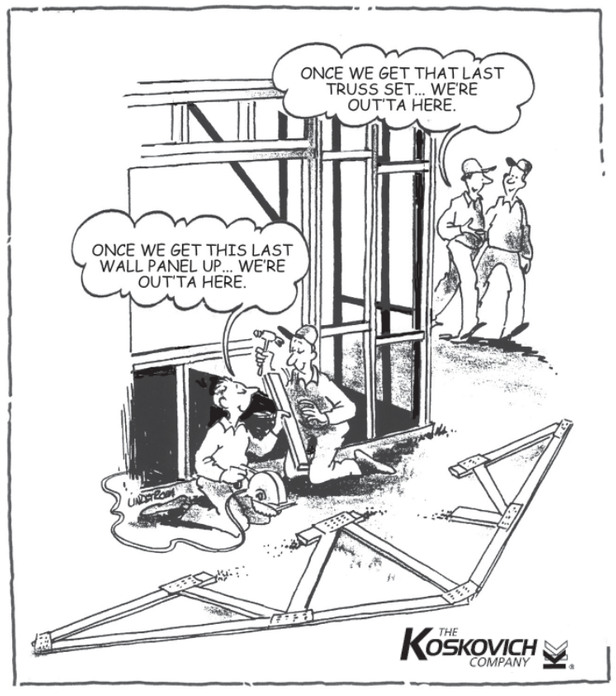

Pioneer Truss Company of Owensville, MO, used trusses to spread Christmas cheer at their local 1st Baptist Church. They created a four-tier, 24-ft. tall platform out of pre-fabricated floor trusses that held 32 singers for their living Christmas tree performances at the church this holiday season.

This unique project came about because Pastor David Robertson had created a similar stick-framed platform at his previous church in California, and approached Chris Lenauer (owner of Pioneer Truss) with the idea to use pre-fabricated trusses. Chad Sieker was the technician who worked with Pastor Robinson to bring this tree to life.

"The tree is rock solid," commented Lenauer. "There is absolutely no movement when you walk on it." The fact that the tree held 32 singers without swaying an inch is certainly a testament to the structure's stability.

This unique Christmas tree isn't all that Pioneer Truss has built for the church. The company recently built 24-inch deep floor trusses for a stage for the youth band, as well as a stair stepped truss for 8'x10' bleachers for the youth room. Everything was made in eight-foot sections so that they can be easily taken apart and re-assembled.

The tree was also made in sections so that it can be stored easily, as the church plans to bring it back to life each year. Thanks to the generosity of Pioneer Truss, the holiday season will be extra special for many years to come. SBC



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