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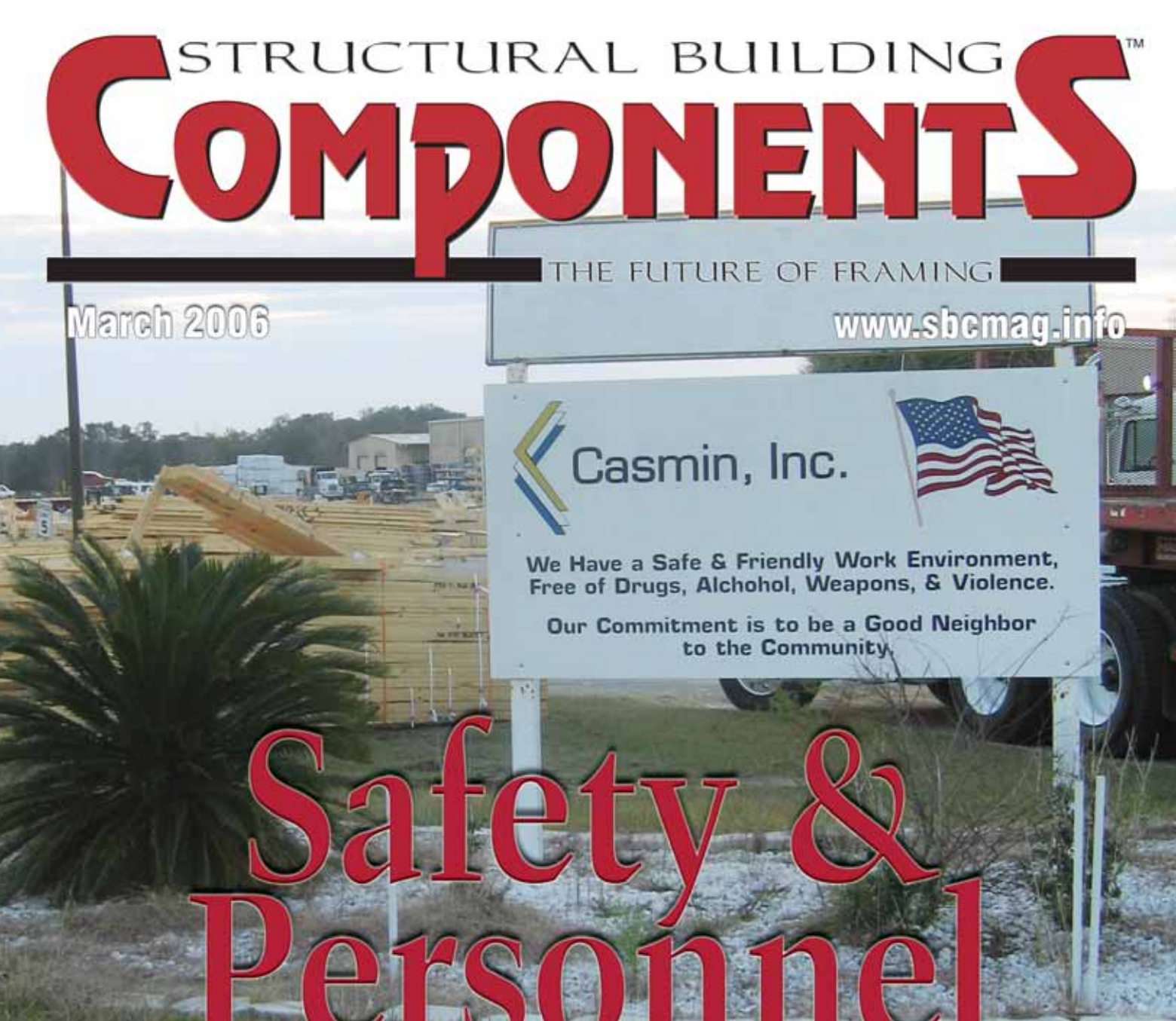

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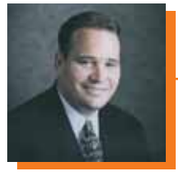

Editor's Message

Finding Ways to Keep Employees for the Long Haul

by Don Groom

Retaining personnel can be as challenging as finding workers in the first place. What measures have you implemented to keep valuable employees?

The structural building components industry is a great place to work. From the sawyer who starts in the shop and works his way up to plant manager to the entrepreneur who grows his family business, workers can find more than a job in the building components industry; they can find a career and a home.

Nevertheless, the industry continues to face a skilled labor shortage. For more on the causes of this shortage, implications for the industry and ways component manufacturers can address this issue, read the article "Working for your Workers?"on page 52. As the article illustrates, component manufacturers continuously face the challenge of creating a work environment that attracts and retains top personnel. How do we do it? While there's no magic solution when it comes to personnel issues, many component manufacturers have come up with creative ways to find good employees and keep them for the long haul. Sharing success stories with one another is one of the surest ways to further these best practices and spark new ideas. In that spirit, here are a few personnel-related initiatives that Stark Truss Co. has undertaken.

Component manufacturers continuously face the challenge of creating a work environment that attracts and retains top personnel.

Having a reputation for being a good employer can often be your best recruiting tool. We make every effort at Stark to show employees that we care about them and want to help them achieve their goals. Some of our best employees hear about the company from word of mouth. Many employees join the company right out of high school and find numerous opportunities for advancement over the years. While the ability to promote employees is dependent on a number of factors ranging from a company's size to its bottom line, I strongly encourage manufacturers to invest as much time and money in their employees as they can. Whether it's taking the time to train staff on company procedures, putting employees through WTCA's Truss Technician Training program, or offering a worker a formal promotion, employees appreciate the opportunity to learn and improve their skills. Going out and hiring a new employee may be the quick and easy fix to a staffing issue, but investing in your current staff can reap long-term benefits.

At Stark, we believe in—and have had great success with—promoting from within. Most of our plant managers (yours truly included) as well as many sales staff and technicians have been promoted from within the company. When someone with management potential joins the company, they generally start in the shop and go through one or two years of learning the business from the ground up. This hands-on training allows staff to learn the company inside and out, and if they are successful, they earn the right to take the next step and move forward in their career. Employees who take this training route often turn out to be some of our best producers, and giving them the chance to prove themselves instills strong loyalty and an appreciation for the opportunity to advance.

Likewise, our prison technical program has resulted not only in some top-notch truss technicians, but some of Stark's most industrious and loyal employees to

Continued on page 8

at a glance

- Having a reputation for being a good employer can often be your best recruiting tool.
- Some of our best employees hear about the company from word of mouth.
- Hiring a new employee may be a quick fix to a staffing problem, but by investing in your current staff, you reap long-term benefits.

...at the heart of any good personnel initiative is the idea that success is a two-way street—it's not just what employees do for the company but also what the company can do for its employees.

Editor's Message

Continued from page 7

boot. Started in 1996 with the goal of helping inmates learn a trade and develop life skills so they wouldn't re-offend upon release, many truss technicians have been trained in the program based at the Marion Correctional Institution 40 miles north of Columbus, OH. Admittedly, there were hurdles in the beginning and some reservations when the program was in its infancy, but now it's safe to say the program has developed some great working relationships between the inmates and employees at our partnering truss plants. Our customers have also given us nothing but positive feedback on the program. Several inmates in the program have been released from prison; every technician joined Stark after their release, and many continue with the company to this day. To learn more about Stark's prison technical program, see ***SBC's*** three-part series, "The Road to Re-entry," that ran from March to May 2005.

No doubt, clear and effective communication in the workplace is a top priority, but component manufacturers can also keep the lines of communication open when employees are off the clock. For example, Stark sends out a monthly newsletter to every employee's home. Now, I know that production and printing costs for a newsletter can add up, but a regular mailing like this is one of the best ways to stay in touch with employees and their families. Along with information on the company's health insurance and 401(k) program, each newsletter features a safety article (to literally drive home the safety message) and highlights employment anniversaries. Each issue also includes a "Success Is What You Make It!" article, spotlighting an employee who's been with Stark for a number of years and worked his or her way up in the company. It's their chance to tell their story.

Also, to show we care about the well-being of our employees, we have a full-time chaplain (credentialed through a workplace chaplaincy program) on staff, available 24/7 for employees who may be going through a tough time. Whether it's marital issues, a death in the family, or any time an employee needs someone to talk to, the chaplain is there to listen. Providing this resource to help employees with non-HR issues is our way of showing that we care and we're here to help.

The above are just a handful of things one component manufacturer does in an effort to address personnel issues. No matter what type of program a manufacturer chooses to implement, at the heart of any good personnel initiative is the idea that success is a two-way street—it's not just what employees do for the company but also what the company can do for its employees. 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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Publisher
Truss Publications, Inc.
6300 Enterprise Lane • Suite 200 • Madison, WI 53719
Phone: 608/310-6706 • Fax: 608/271-7006
trusspubs@sbcmag.info • www.sbcmag.info

Editor
Donald Groom
Stark Truss Company, Inc. • dgroom@sbcmag.info

Art Director
Melinda Caldwell
608/310-6729 • mcaldwell@sbcmag.info

Managing Editor & Circulation Director
Libby Maurer
608/310-6724 • lmaurer@sbcmag.info

Editorial Assistant
Emmy Thorson-Hanson
608/310-6760 • ethorson-hanson@sbcmag.info

Advertising Manager & Editorial Review
Suzi Grundahl
608/310-6710 • sgrundahl@sbcmag.info

Advertising Sales & Marketing
Peggy Pichette
608/310-6723 • ppichette@sbcmag.info
Jan Pauli
608/310-6746 • jpauli@sbcmag.info
Kirk Grundahl
608/274-2345 • kgrundahl@sbcmag.info

Staff Writers for March
Molly E. Butz • Emily Patterson • Marisa Peters
Sean Shields • Anna L. Stamm
Stephanie Watrud • Richard Zimmermann

Accountant
Mike Younglove
608/310-6714 • myounglove@sbcmag.info

Computer Systems Administrator
Jay Edgar
608/310-6712 • jedgar@sbcmag.info

Send all ad materials, insertion orders, contracts & payments to:
Truss Publications, Inc.
6300 Enterprise Lane • Suite 200
Madison, WI 53719
Phone: 608/310-6706 • Fax: 608/271-7006
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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 the Wood Truss Council of America (WTCA), the Steel Truss and Component Association (STCA) and the Structural Component Distributors Association (SCDA). These associations make up an industry strategic planning committee called the Structural Building Components Council (SBCC). The opinions expressed in *SBC* are those of the authors and those quoted, and are not necessarily the opinions of the associations listed above.

Publisher's Message

Safety & Personnel

by Libby Maurer

"It is one of the worst of errors to suppose that there is any path for safety except that of duty."
—William Nevins

Welcome to ***SBC Magazine's*** annual personnel and safety issue. We've dug deep to bring you stories ranging from understanding the industry's skilled labor dilemma to a new twist on light duty work. Thanks to the manufacturers who contacted us with questions that served as the basis for these articles.

WTCA member Casmin, Inc. of central Florida is serious about safety, but the company hasn't always operated under the "Safety First!" mantra. When the company decided to put a special emphasis on developing a safety culture in 2002, some drastic changes took place. Three years later, Casmin's safety record had improved dramatically. Turn to page 42 to read Molly Butz's story of safety salvation.

The industry has faced a skilled labor shortage for many years, which will not likely come as a surprise to anyone reading this column. However, you may be wondering just how we managed to get to this point, and why it seems to be a growing trend. "Working for Your Workers?" (page 52) explores the "why" of the industry's skilled labor shortage. This article serves as an introduction to a new work force column debuting in the next issue of ***SBC***.

Without a doubt, safety is critical in the truss plant. But how often do you consider safety inside the office? Although there may not be heavy machinery and equipment or sharp objects in the office, "Preventing 'Uh-Oh' in the Office" reminds you that office safety is no less important than shop safety.

And, no matter how hard you strive to build a culture of safety, you'll still have the occasional injury to handle. If you're like most manufacturers, when the doctor prescribes light duty, you hand injured workers a broom. In fact, a recent ***SBC*** poll reports that almost 80 percent of manufacturers use janitorial work to bide injured workers' time. For an in-depth look at the psychology behind light duty and a fresh new list of ideas for workers placed on light duty, don't miss Marisa Peters' article, "Light Duty, Weighty Subject," on page 60.

In the September/October issue, we brought you the history of the Wood Truss Council of America, as told by the early leaders of the organization. WTCA Past Presidents shared thoughts on their respective terms, their victories and the memories that helped to shape the future of the association. In "What Lies Ahead: Presidents Foresee Technology, Software in Industry's Future," we've asked them to dust off their crystal balls and share their predictions for the future.

Attending the BCMC Show each year can leave your head spinning, especially when it comes to the varying degrees of automation available to you. To help you sort it all out, we've asked industry veteran and automation giant Jerry Koskovich to enlighten us with a series of articles focused specifically on this important topic. In his first installment, Koskovich explains why automation can be so complicated and how automated equipment can improve efficiency and productivity. Whether you are looking to automate one area or your entire facility, read Koskovich's recommendations on what to consider before making your decision.

Good luck in your personnel and safety endeavors this year! SBC

at a glance

- This issue of ***SBC Magazine*** is devoted to topics relating to personnel and safety.
- The cover story reveals what Casmin Inc., a Florida component manufacturer, did to make a major league turnaround in the company's safety record.
- One feature article explores the "why" of the industry's current shortage of skilled labor, for both truss plants and design departments.

Technical Q & A

Wall Girders, Part 2

Prompted by a recent column on second story wall girders, one reader continues the dialogue on this topic by sharing an engineer's perspective.

by Scott Coffman, P.E., Builders FirstSource

Editor's Note: *Scott Coffman, an engineer in Sumter, SC, prepared an installment of this column before he knew the topic of wall girders was covered by Steve Kennedy in the December 2005 issue. Scott makes several good points in addition to Steve's original article, so we thought it worthwhile to continue the discussion in this month's column.*

Many truss technicians and manufacturers recommend pre-manufactured wood trusses to form the wall while the top and bottom chords support structural framing. Many contractors see these "wall girders" as an ideal solution because costly beams and field framing are virtually, if not totally, eliminated. Unfortunately, the truss industry typically promotes wall girders considering only vertical gravity and uplift loads while neglecting lateral loads induced by wind or seismic forces. Before a truss manufacturer suggests a wall girder as a viable alternative, it should recognize the limitations and have the Truss Designer perform a thorough structural analysis of the wall girder.

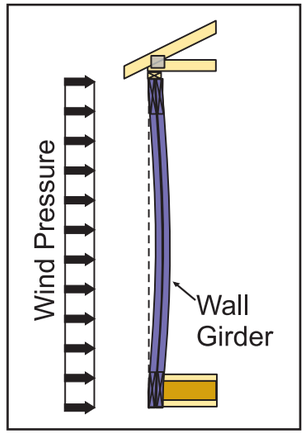

Figure 1. Lateral forces can cause lateral buckling of wall girders.

The primary issue that must be considered is out-of-plane bending when some or all of a wall girder is exposed to wind pressure (see Figure 1). A firm understanding of how a wall performs is the most direct approach to exploring wall girder viability and limitations. The building code is used for this study since it details minimum and maximum requirements for wall construction, including minimum sheathing and stud framing that must be used.

The building code recognizes the United States Department of Commerce PS 1-95 "Construction and Industrial Plywood" and PS 2-92 "Performance Standard for Wood-based Structural-use Panels" for design values of structural wood panels. Structural panel grading agencies like APA, TECO and PSI use a span rating to indicate performance for a particular structural panel when used as roof or floor sheathing. The span rating consists of two numbers separated by a slash, such as 32/16. The left number indicates the maximum roof support spacing in inches when the panel is used on a roof, whereas the number to the right of the slash is the maximum spacing for floor supports. A typical 7/16" panel used to sheath exterior walls would be assigned a span rating of 24/16 indicating a maximum 24" on center support spacing. Using the roof number is appropriate since sheathing applied to both roof and wall supports must resist lateral wind pressures.

The sheathing is fastened to wall studs that must resist lateral wind pressure along with either axial tension or compression loads. Fortunately, the 2003 International Residential Code (IRC) and International Building Code (IBC) provide enough insight into minimal wall stud design by creating tables that use panel span rating. IRC Table R602.3(3) limits the allowable stud spacing to either 16" or 24" depending on panel nominal thickness. Additionally, IRC Table R602.3(5) also limits maximum stud spacing to 24" for bearing walls comprised of either 2x4 or 2x6 studs. Similar information can be located in IBC Tables 2308.9.1 and 2308.9(3). Fastener spacing is also addressed in the code. Without going into shear wall design, we can use IRC Table R602.3(1) to identify minimum fastener spacing at the panel edges and intermediate supports. (Visit **Support Docs** at www.sbcmag.info to view the IRC and IBC tables referenced above.)

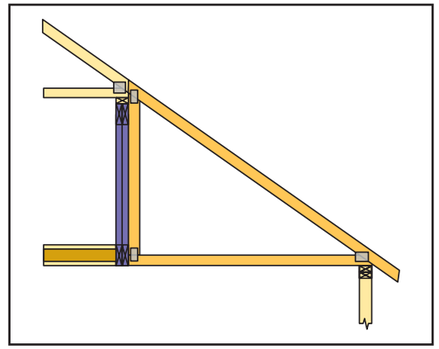
Figure 2. An interior wall girder.

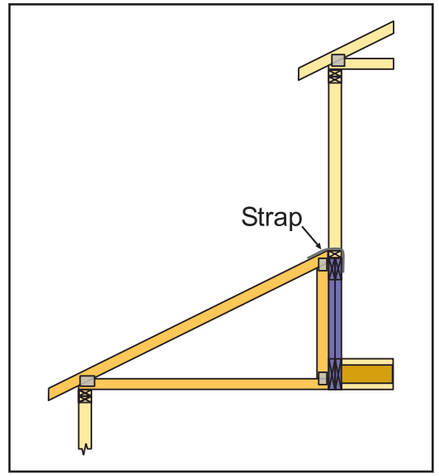

Figure 3. Wall girder protected from exterior exposure.

Using this straightforward approach, the three general conclusions that can be made are a minimum 3-½" wall thickness must be present, the wall sheathing must be supported at no more than 24" on center and panels must be fastened to supports anywhere from 3" to 12" on center. This creates a real dilemma for truss wall girders that typically have large panels connected by diagonal members and a thickness of only 1-½". Nevertheless, some design guidelines and suggestions can be made for the appropriate use of premanufactured wood truss wall girders.

Question

What are some guidelines to use when deciding to use wall girders?

Answer

Use these general guidelines when deciding to use wall girders.

General Guideline 1: Limit Wall Girders to Interior Applications. The key is not to expose any portion of the wall girder to external wind pressure that creates out-of-plane bending. Figure 2 demonstrates an interior wall girder application where sheathing attachment is not critical and design loads are generally the vertical gravity or uplift loads easily applied by most truss design software.

A typical example of Figure 2 is a bonus room over a garage. This application requires the wall to be furred to provide minimum sheet rock attachment per IBC Table 2304.6.

General Guideline 2: Use solid sawn framing in those regions exposed to wind. The girder truss in Figure 3 is completely protected by the roof envelope with wall studs framed along the top chord. The wall studs are installed to meet building code requirements and the girder truss can be a minimum two-ply.

Continued on page 14

at a glance

- Many contractors see wall girders as an ideal solution because costly beams and field framing are eliminated.
- Wall girders must meet the provisions for wall construction in the IBC or IRC.
- The primary issue that must be considered is out-of-plane bending when some or all of a wall girder is exposed to wind pressure.
- No matter which approach is chosen with wall girders, it must account for all the applied loads, connections and permanent bracing.

plies together to function as a unit.

The wall sole plate performs this function when a wall is constructed above a wall girder. Also, nails may be inadvertently driven between the plies when perpendicular framing is toe-nailed to the top edge of the top chord of a multi-ply truss. Attaching a cover plate or attaching structural framing to the girder truss with pre-fabricated metal tie-downs eliminates this possibility.

General Guideline 4: The Peter & Paul Principle. Robbing Peter to pay Paul demonstrates the truth behind the old adage...you cannot get something for nothing. Consider the following:

1. Exposed wall girders must have vertical webs no more than every 24" on center for wall sheathing attachment.
2. Exposed wall girders must be a minimum of two plies with a "T" or "I" brace fastened to each web to resist the applied lateral wind pressures.
3. Any interior wall girders must be furred for sheet rock attachment.
4. The truss industry promotes the design of components for the loads specified. Replacing a beam and wall studs with a wall girder requires a thorough analysis of the applied lateral loads by a Building Designer who then needs to work with the truss designer to ensure that all required loads are properly applied to the wall girder and the resulting flow of loads through the wall girder are transferred down to the foundation. The loads to be applied and the permanent bracing of the wall girder are typically outside the scope of work of the truss technician and truss design engineer. If this analysis is not conducted properly, the component manufacturer may find greater truss performance risk.

Wall girders can provide a very sound structural engineering alternative to framing situations that would be difficult to handle with any other method. Each case should be thoroughly analyzed to determine the best and most economical structural solution, balancing truss design with prescriptive framing practices in the building code. No matter what approach is used, it must account for all the applied loads (gravity and lateral), connections and permanent bracing. This generally requires working closely with the Building Designer to ensure that sound field performance is achieved. This is particularly true with exterior wall girders exposed to wind loads. SBC

Scott Coffman works for Builders FirstSource in Sumter, SC and has more than 25 years in the wood design and component industry. To pose a question for this column, call the WTCA technical department at 608/274-4849 or email technicalqa@sbcmag.info.

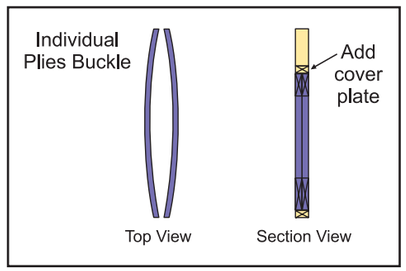

Figure 4. Cover plates prevent improperly fastened plies from separating.

Technical Q&A

Continued from page 13

Metal straps may be required to prevent the top chord from buckling toward the inside. Although providing lateral resistance to the top chord through the roof diaphragm is part of building design, the truss technician needs to be aware that lateral forces applied to the wall cause the girder truss to move laterally, which must be resisted. Additionally, furring may be required, depending on girder depth, for sheet rock attachment to the inside.

General Guideline 3: Solid sawn cover plates may be fastened to the girder truss top and bottom chord. Individual girder plies perform as a unit when fastened per the requirements detailed in the *National Design Specification for Wood Construction (NDS).* Insufficient field nailing generally does not become obvious because structural sheathing across the chords assist in tying these members together and pre-fabricated metal hangers provide a sufficient concentration of fasteners. Wall girders do not have this redundancy, especially along the top chord, which may be supporting trusses at intervals of 24" or more on center. The simple solution is to install a wood cover plate that ties the

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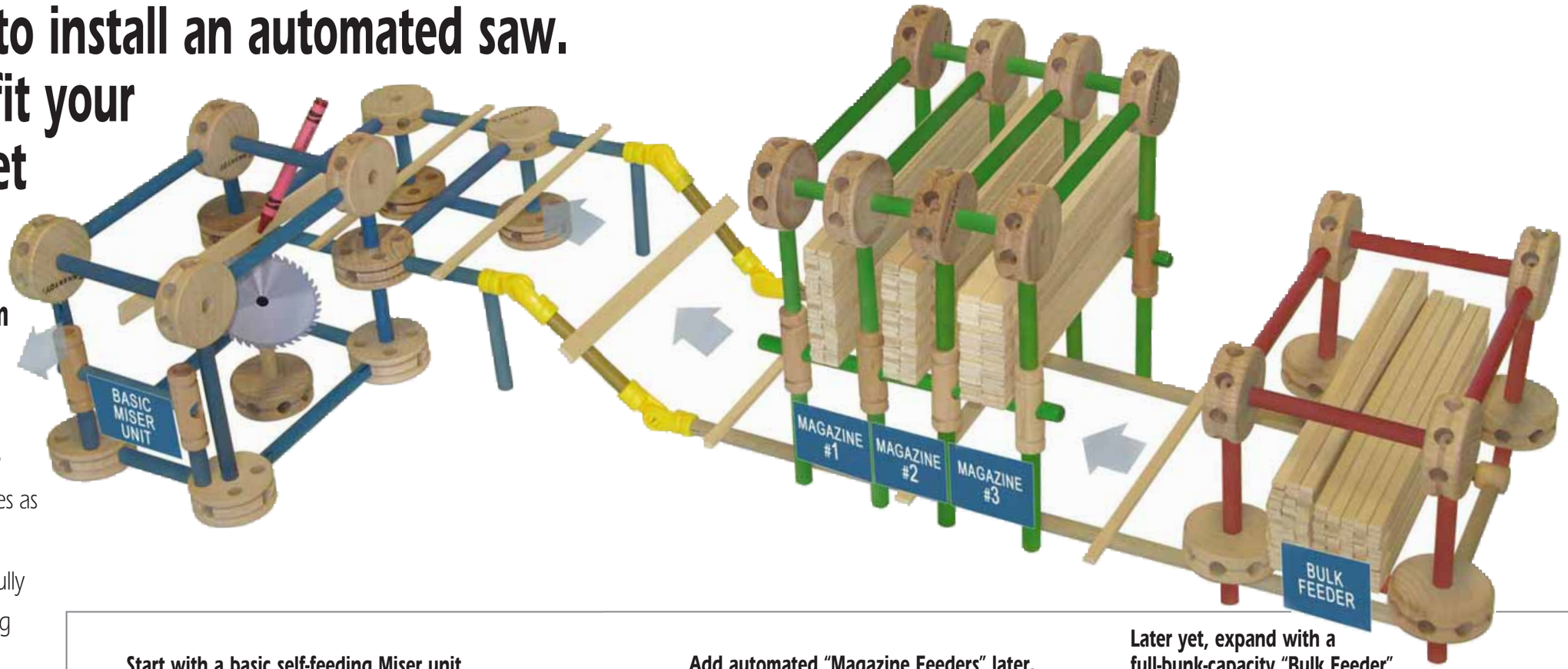

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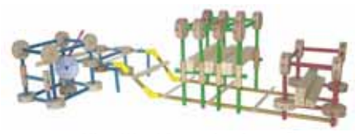

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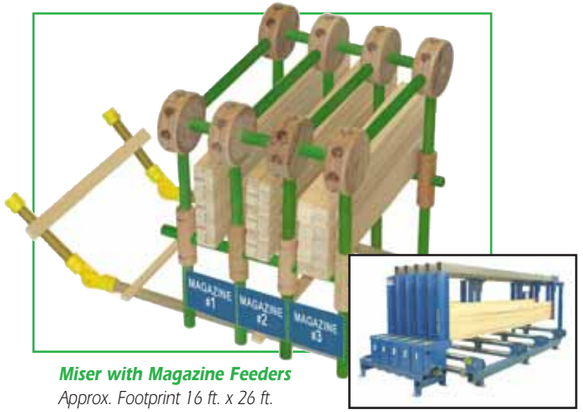

Miser with Magazine Feeders
Approx. Footprint 16 ft. x 26 ft.

Start with even several Magazine Feeders and eliminate the need for an operator to stage lumber manually on the feed deck. Now Miser will automatically select, pick and feed the correct lumber stock for the parts it's cutting. And you can always add additional magazines.

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Safety Scene

Preventing "Uh-Oh" in the Office, Part 1:

Office Safety for Your Component Manufacturing Plant

by Molly E. Butz

While safety in the truss plant is openly discussed, office safety often takes an unfortunate back seat. Remember to emphasize safety in both places.

When "component manufacturing" and "safety hazard" all appear in the same article, it can be assumed that the general gist will be anything from handling truss plates and hand protection to forklift safety. However, our ever-transforming offices bring with them new technology, automation and all manner of safety hazards that are also critical to address. Attention to safety best practices isn't just for the shop anymore.

Although finding statistics about office injuries is difficult because they tend not to be as severe as those originating in the production area, there are still a number of injuries—like slips, trips and falls—that can and should be prevented to avoid musculoskeletal disorders. This series of office safety articles will give you tips on good housekeeping, hazardous equipment/materials and workstation ergonomics that will whip your office into shape in no time.

Housekeeping

Phone lines, network cables and electrical cords can pose tripping hazards in aisles and walkways. Keeping all cords up off of the ground and out of traffic paths can eliminate this danger. If a cord cannot be moved, ask to have a new outlet installed or purchase cord covers. (Taping cords to the floor or running them under carpeting are other alternatives to cord covers, but the process used should be checked because a lumpy job can also create hazards.) Boxes, files and other miscellaneous items that tend to mess up desks or get left in stacks on the ground are also hazards. It only takes a few seconds to find these pesky items and put them in their rightful place. And although we certainly wouldn't recommend denying your employees their morning cup of java, be sure that if any of it (or anything else slippery) ends up on the floor, it gets cleaned up immediately. Even slightly wet or snowy shoe prints can send Sally sailing.

If you need something from a drawer or filing cabinet, be sure to close it completely; an open drawer is an invitation for a fall. Even if you think you'll be putting said item back "right away," close the drawer—we all know how easily "right away" turns into three hours. Also, try to ensure that any potential walkway is well lit and that the light switch isn't lurking behind the "Personnel File Blockade of 1997."

General upkeep of the office area is also a good idea. This includes repairing missing or chipped tiles, damaged concrete or carpeting or any other walking surface defect that might cause a slip or trip. Dusting and vacuuming regularly will also help keep your office space looking and feeling neat and tidy. All of these things can lead to a safer workplace and make it easier to concentrate too!

Hazardous Equipment/Materials

Sharp metal connector plates and high pressure nail guns don't make their way into the office very often, but there are several office related "tools" that can definitely do plenty of damage. For starters, be sure that all scissors, box cutters and other sharp cutting tools are stored in an appropriate place and have their blades properly protected. And, designate a suitable place to dispose of the blades once they become dull; they still pose a threat to skin when their paper-cutting abilities have worn off.

Various machines, desks and other office equipment can have sharp edges, or pieces that jut out into an aisle. Pay good attention when you are walking, and avoid carrying objects that are big enough to obstruct your view. Any sharp furniture or equipment that may cause severe injury should be padded and highlighted with a bright color to make them easy to see.

Non-weighted filing cabinets can easily tip when heavy top drawers are pulled all the way out. Bolting them to the floor or wall can prevent this from happening. Shelving units should also be secured to the floor or wall and all heavy items should be placed on lower shelves to prevent them from tipping over.

The chemicals found in many areas of a component manufacturing plant are most likely absent from the office space, but there are still a variety of materials that you may come in contact with including combustibles, flammables and irritants. From detergents and other cleaners to toner, many office-related materials can be bothersome and should be used with caution. Keeping a pair of rubber gloves around will help protect the hands of the person using these chemicals.

Even some common office machines present special safety concerns. As is the rule with the dangerous saws and presses in the assembly areas of your plant, make sure you are properly trained on any office machine before you use it. Copiers, fax machines and microwaves may seem straightforward, but each one has its own personality and its own set of doors, gears and pinch points you will need to approach with caution.

Good Sense

Using good old-fashioned common sense is the best way to be safe in any environment, from work to play. Be aware of your surroundings, no matter how small or large they may be, and always keep safety in mind. An office may not seem like a dangerous place, but hazards can be lurking around any corner, especially if you are in a hurry to get back to your office to take that next call.

If you take just one small step backwards, it's easy to see that using a rolling office chair as a ladder isn't a very good idea; is it worth saving a few precious seconds? Tune in next month for office and workstation ergonomics, and in the meantime, go get that ladder, it's worth the 30 seconds! 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@woodtruss.com, or view the Operation Safety demonstration online at www.wtcatko.com.

at a glance

- Phone lines, network cables and electrical cords can pose tripping hazards in aisles and walkways.
- Like nail guns and metal banding in the truss plant, some office related "tools" also pose a safety hazard.
- Using good old-fashioned common sense is the best way to be safe in any work environment.

Economic Environment

Construction Markets & Building Material Prices: How Strong Is the Relationship?

by Al Schuler

The building components industry has no doubt reaped the benefits of the U.S. housing boom. But how do new home prices and building material costs correlate?

Building materials account for about one-third of the sale price of a new home and materials and labor combine for about half the price. Thus, for component manufacturers serving residential markets, it is important to understand the relationship between home prices and building material prices.

In this article, we shed light on that relationship as well as an underlying issue—with the rapid rise in home prices during the past five years, are component manufacturers (CM) sharing in this boom? We also compare construction cost trends across construction types—residential, nonresidential buildings and non-building construction (e.g., highway and street construction).

There are two significant differences between residential and nonresidential construction: (1) Residential markets are heavy wood users while nonresidential sectors favor concrete and steel; and (2) Inflation in basic inputs, such as oil, natural gas, iron and scrap steel, and copper ores, have increased costs for nonresidential construction faster than residential construction (see Ken Simonsen, Associated General Contractors of America, Table 1).

Analysis

As shown in Figure 1, material costs, including wood (plywood, lumber, engineered wood products [EWP], trusses, OSB), and non-wood materials (cement, plastic, brick) account for about one-third of the sale price of a new home (NAHB).

Increases in material prices will increase the cost of building a home and consequently will usually impact the sale price. But the reverse is not necessarily so (sales price can often be more sensitive to the demand-supply balance of homes for sale). Between December 2003 and December 2005 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics started publishing price indexes for EWP and wood trusses in December 2003), there were strong, positive correlations between house prices and EWP, trusses, and a composite index representing all building materials used in residential construction (Figure 2). Due to the volatility of framing lumber prices, the correlations were not relevant. Over this period, price increases for building materials were similar to increases in house prices. Trusses were up 20 percent; EWP up 22 percent; all building materials used in residential construction up 18 percent; framing lumber composite prices were up 12 percent; and house prices were up 14 percent.

Wood typically used in a house (OSB, plywood, lumber) accounts for only about 6.3 percent of total cost (Henry Spelter, USDA Forest Products Laboratory):

- Lumber: $600/mbf (x 15 = $9,000)
- Plywood: $550/msf (x 3.5 = $1,925)
- OSB: $475/msf (x 7.5 = $3,575)

The average cost for lumber and panels in a new house would be $14,500, which represents about 6.3 percent of median price ($231,000) of new single family homes in 2005 (U.S. Bureau of Census).

The most important cost factor for home ownership is financing. As seen in Figure 3, mortgage rates are about five times as important as wood costs in the price of a new home. Henry Spelter, a colleague at USDA Forest Products Laboratory, compared the impact of a 17 percent increase in wood costs and mortgage rates on the cost of a new home. This increase affected home construction costs by 1.1 percent, while an 85 basis point increase (i.e., an increase in the 30-year mortgage from five percent to 5.85 percent) in mortgage rates (17 percent increase) increased the financing cost by 5.4 percent. Although we are comparing apples and oranges (i.e., construction costs versus financing costs), mortgage rates are clearly more important than wood product prices in determining the "cost" of a home.

Comparison of Costs Among Construction Types

Residential construction costs have not increased as much as other types of construction (see Table 1 on page 22). This is primarily due to greater cost increases in steel, concrete, and gypsum products when compared with wood products. The rapid rise in prices for non-wood products is being influenced by escalating cost increases for basic inputs such as oil, natural gas, cement, iron ore and copper. Globalization trends, including rapid economic growth in China, India and other developing nations, are driving demand for construction materials and straining some supply chains. Currently, globalization trends have more inflation impact on non-wood construction materials; most analysts don't expect these trends to change in the near future. For example, China now consumes 47 percent of the world's cement production and 26 percent of the crude steel production, thus competing with the U.S. for available supply. In fact, globalization has resulted in an increase in the supply of wood products to the U.S. market (e.g., more lumber from Europe) while straining supply of steel and concrete.

Discussion

In the past 50 years, land costs have increased the most, from 11 percent of

Continued on page 22

at a glance

- Price increases for building materials have been very similar to increases in house prices in the last several years.
- Mortgage rates are more important than wood prices in determining the cost of a home.
- With the rapid rise in home prices during the past five years, it appears that most component manufacturers are sharing in the housing boom.

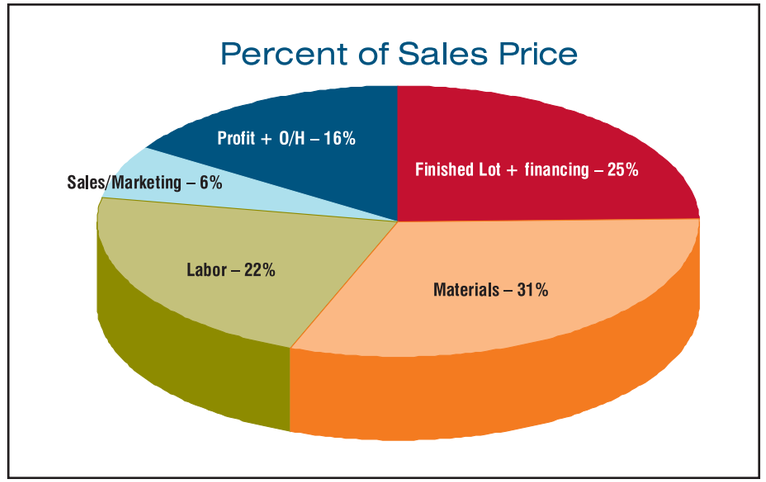

Figure 1. Large Homebuilders - Price breakdown. (Source: Professional Builder and NAHB, March 2003)

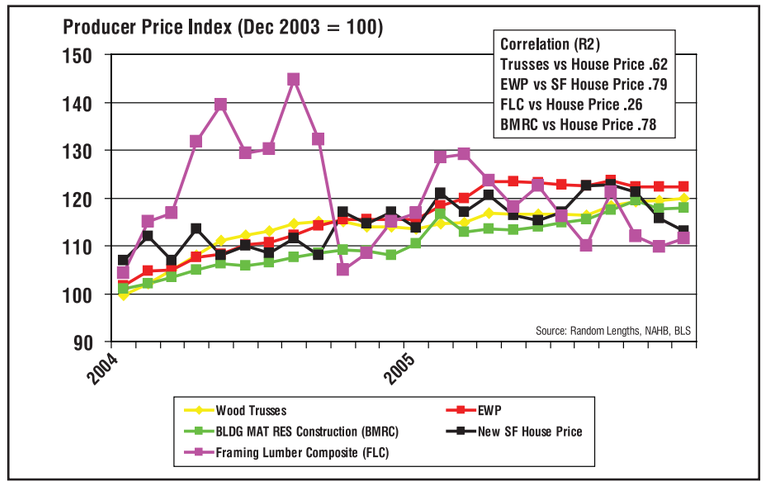

Figure 2. Building materials and new SF home prices. (Source: NAHB, *Random Lengths*, BLS)

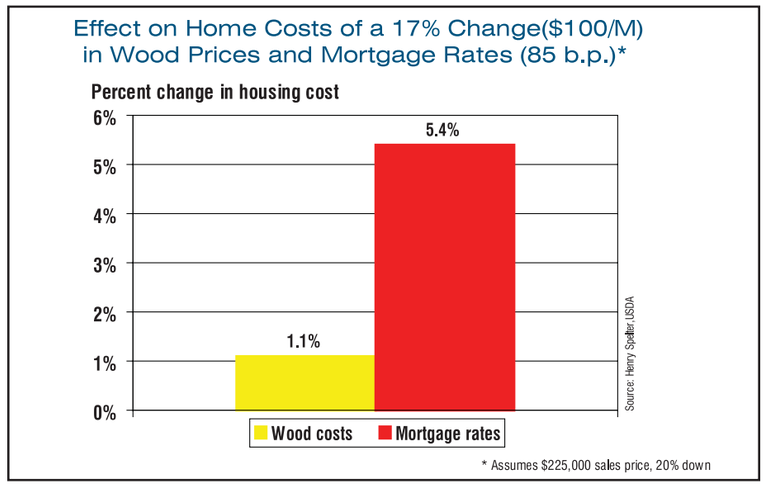

Figure 3. Home costs and changes in wood costs and mortgage rates.

	Percentage change in 12 months ending:				
	12/01	12/02	12/03	9/04	9/05
Construction Types					
Nonresidential buildings	-0.5	0.7	2.4	9.3	7.7
Highway and street construction	-3.6	1.0	2.6	11.0	16.0
Other heavy construction	-2.6	1.0	2.6	13.3	9.2
Multi-unit residential	-0.1	0.4	2.7	9.0	7.2
Single-unit residential	-0.4	0.6	3.5	7.3	5.2
Construction Inputs					
Concrete products	2.5	-0.3	1.5	7.9	10.0
Gypsum products	0.4	3.4	2.8	20.8	12.7
Steel mill products	-6.1	11.1	1.7	48.2	-5.5
Copper and brass mill shapes	-9.5	-1.6	11.6	32.2	19.2
Lumber & plywood	-2.9	1.4	3.1	16.5	-8.5
Basic Inputs					
Oil	-42.4	60.6	14.3	57.7	44.6
Natural gas	-36.7	12.2	20.3	7.9	39.7
Iron & steel scrap	-5.6	27.8	64.9	75.0	-4.0
Copper ores	-19.6	3.6	27.4	78.9	31.8

Table 1. Changes in Costs Among Construction Types and Specific Inputs. (Source: Ken Simonsen's (http://www.agc.org/page.ww?name=Construction+Inflation+Alert&section=Construction+Economics)

Economic Environment

Continued from page 21

the sale price of a new home in 1949 to about 24 percent today. In the same period, construction costs (as percent of total sale price of a new home) have decreased significantly (see Table 2).

Developed land costs are increasing for a number of reasons: higher spec roads (better quality and higher design standards), wetlands protection, conservation easements sometimes required, larger lot size, underground utilities often required and increased drainage considerations. However, if we look at the recent past (1995-2002), the other major categories affecting cost have remained relatively constant. Construction and labor costs are about half; finished lot costs are about one-quarter, while financing, marketing, profit and sales commissions make up the remainder.

Related NAHB studies also suggest that during the past three decades the builder's gross profit has remained between 15 and 20 percent and operating expenses between 11 and 17 percent. This leaves a net income before taxes between 2.7 to seven percent. The conclusion from this study is that builders were not collecting exorbitant profits during this period (we don't have data for the 2003-2005 period).

What does this suggest for component manufacturers?

1. Wood building materials are expected to experience less cost price pressures in 2006 as weaker market conditions reflect lower housing demand and increased wood product supply.
2. Steel and concrete are expected to experience raw material price pressures in 2006 due primarily to rising energy costs and strong world demand for these commodities.
3. At the national level, EWP and truss prices have increased as much or more than house prices between 2004 and 2005, so it would appear that most CMs are indeed participating in the housing boom.
4. Median house prices in the U.S. have increased 73 percent in the last eight years (see ***SBC Magazine,*** November 2005), while lumber prices during this period (framing lumber composite) were flat, and the structural panel composite prices (blended OSB and plywood price) were up 83 percent. Lumber prices were flat because lumber was abundant; however, OSB, a growing commodity, went through periods of relative shortages while capacity caught up to needs, as in 2004-2005. Historically, a key driver for commodity wood prices has been availability or supply.

	1949	1969	1982	1995	1998	2002
Sale Price Breakdown (Percent of Total Sale Price)						
Finished Lot	11.00	21.00	24.00	24.40	23.60	23.48
Total Construction	69.00	55.00	45.00	53.30	54.80	50.83
Financing	5.00	7.00	15.00	2.00	1.90	2.13
Other Costs*	15.00	17.00	16.00	20.40	19.70	23.56
a. General Overhead				5.80	5.70	5.53
b. Marketing				2.20	1.40	2.39
c. Sales Commission				3.30	3.40	3.67
d. Profit					9.10	9.20
Total	**100.00**	**100.00**	**100.00**	**100.00**	**100.00**	**100.00**
Sale Price	**$9,500**	**$26,000**	**$70,000**	**$183,585**	**$226,680**	**$298,412**

Table 2. Cost Breakdown of Single-Family Home (National). (Source: NAHB Surveys of Builder Members)

The issue of rapidly increasing house prices (and potential bubbles) during the past five years was discussed at length in the November issue of ***SBC***. We concluded that the growth in the demand for housing and relatively large price increases were due to a host of influences including cheap money, innovative mortgages, some speculation, shortages of developed land in some regions and strong demographic demand.

Summary

From this admittedly "quick and dirty" analysis, there are several conclusions that can be drawn:

1. Truss and EWP prices have participated in the housing boom as prices for these two product categories actually increased more than housing prices over the past two years.
2. Prices for commodity products, such as lumber, structural panels, steel and concrete, are influenced by house prices and housing demand, but another major economic influence is supply.
3. It appears that while material prices impact house prices via construction cost linkages, the more important factor in determining the "carrying" cost of a new home is mortgage rates.
4. Although material and labor still account for about half of the sale price of a new home, there are other costs that are becoming increasingly important. For example, the cost of a finished lot is now 25 percent of the sale price (national basis); but, in some larger metropolitan regions, a shortage of developable land is pushing this percentage higher. And, as stated in the November 2005 issue, housing markets are regional in nature, so there can be significant differences in housing prices between regions. Therefore, regional building material prices will be impacted by regional demand/supply conditions. SBC

Al Schuler works for Forestry Sciences Lab in Princeton, WV. Please note that the economic information/opinions contained in this article are not necessarily those of the USDA Forest Service. Dr. Schuler can be reached at 304/431-2727 or aschuler@fs.fed.us. His economic information can also be found online at www.sbcmag.info.

Bcmc 2006

Exhibitor Spotlight: Finnforest USA

One long-time exhibitor reveals how the show has changed, why his company continues to participate and how he uses it to make product improvements.

by Stephanie Watrud

As Managing Director for Finnforest USA, Jim Gilleran knows what it takes to be successful at the Building Component Manufacturers Conference (BCMC). Exhibiting since 1994, Gilleran's company has seen the show change from the alternate year tabletop display format to the full show structure including machinery and exhibitor demonstrations. He has witnessed the growth of the show as well as the longevity and stability of the component manufacturers that attend BCMC, and is amazed at the show's transformation in a little over a decade.

"The show has grown and is so well attended by decision-makers that it's a very good source for our company to discuss, negotiate with and learn from our existing customers," said Gilleran. "It's also a great opportunity to get to know potential new customers." Another change Gilleran has noticed is there is no longer just equipment at the show; there are higher end engineered products. "BCMC is a great place to expose one's products," said Gilleran. "It's also very important for everyone in your organization to see what the competition is doing."

At the 2005 show, Finnforest USA premiered a new stair product. Gilleran recognizes how effective stairs are as components, and believes launching new products and technology at the show is part of the global industry. When a new product is unveiled at the show, Gilleran says it drives attendee feedback, which in turn facilitates product improvement. "There has been an overall cultural shift in the show, as well as an increased opportunity to learn about equipment. That focus on education wasn't there 12 years ago," said Gilleran.

"There are qualified individuals dealing with engineered wood products and other materials at the show that were not there when we started exhibiting years ago," said Gilleran. Companies are sending every level of their staff to BCMC to maximize their current knowledge and exposure to all that is new. Although not every attendee is the "head" decision-maker, most report back to the company owner, president or CEO to let them know about a product or feature that they feel would enhance their operation. As a result, manufacturers are that much closer to real purchasing or implementation decision maker for a product.

Along with the upper management, Finnforest sends a representative from several departments to the show: research and development, marketing, logistics and customer relations. Once BCMC has concluded, they have a debriefing session to regroup on feedback, issues or suggestions made by customers. They determine adjustments to be made in how to go to market, how to proceed with new trends, and how to implement attendees' creative suggestions. Gilleran said the team asks themselves, "What can we improve upon for next year's show?"

Gilleran said his company strives to nurture relationships between staff members and existing customers at the show, by "truly working as a team to serve our customers." SBC

For more information on BCMC, visit www.bcmcshow.com. Join us in Fort Worth, TX, October 4-6 for "Bigger and Better in Texas" and experience for yourself what exhibiting at BCMC can do for your company. Check out the web site for online registration information. Remember, the exhibitor early bird registration deadline is May 1.

at a glance

- Exhibiting at the BCMC show is a great opportunity to get to know potential new customers.
- Engineered wood products become increasingly prevalent at BCMC in the last several years.
- When a new product is unveiled at the show, Jim Gilleran says it drives attendee feedback, which in turn facilitates product improvement.

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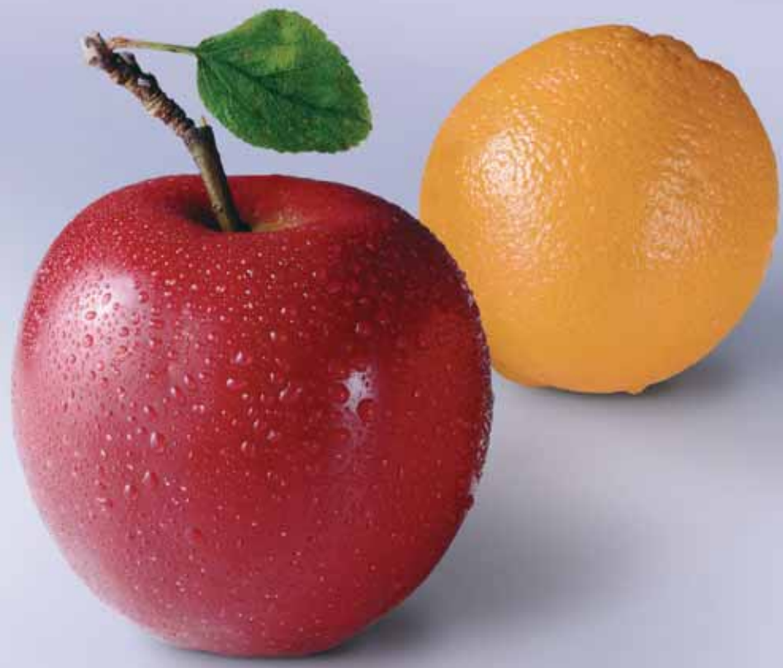

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Wtca Update

Post-Katrina Housing Analysis

Learn more about how the rebuilding timeline following Hurricane Katrina will affect the construction industry as a whole.

Excerpted from The American Institute of Architects

By a wide margin, Hurricane Katrina ranks as the most costly natural disaster in U.S. history. Current estimates place the loss in the $150 billion to $200 billion range, more than four times the damage incurred by Hurricane Andrew in 1992. Somewhere between 275,000 and 300,000 homes are probably permanently lost, with an equal number likely in need of major improvements.

Within the coming months and years, the rebuilding of this region will progress. The magnitude and composition of the rebuilding will depend on many factors: the amount of money earmarked by the federal government for rebuilding, payments by insurance companies for insured losses, and the magnitude of charitable contributions for disaster relief that are used by households for rebuilding. These funds will supplement reinvestment by businesses and households for affected communities and business activities.

Over the longer term, the effect of Hurricane Katrina on building materials prices should be fairly well contained. Due to the relatively long time horizon for rebuilding the affected Gulf Coast areas after Hurricane Katrina, and given that the rebuilding should follow a staged timing, price increases are expected to be moderate.

However, the rebuilding of residential and nonresidential buildings in this region is not simply a matter of replacing structures that were lost and renovating those that were damaged. These activities take place in the context of a broader regional economy, where the economic impacts from the hurricane also will determine the level of rebuilding activity.

The American Institute of Architects (AIA) contracted with Economy.com, a leading economics consulting firm specializing in forecasting regional growth patterns. The analysis that follows pulls heavily from material supplied to the AIA by Economy.com, as well as from surveys of AIA members on the timing of rebuilding after natural disasters.

at a glance

- Current damage estimates for Hurricane Katrina are between $150 and $200 billion, four times the damage caused by Hurricane Andrew in 1992.
- Close to 250,000 housing units were destroyed in metropolitan New Orleans alone.
- By 2008 only about 100,000 of the housing units lost to Katrina will be replaced in Louisiana.
- Over the next three years, housing starts for the Gulfport-Biloxi and Pascagoula (Mississippi) areas will exceed pre-Katrina estimates by about 22,000 units.

The Timing of Rebuilding

Initially, there is an assessment phase where the extent of damage to a structure is determined and the owner decides whether to renovate, rebuild in the current location or devote those resources to other purposes. For any specific rebuilding project, the design and construction process then begins, which typically lasts from six months to three years depending on the complexity of the structure and the availability of construction labor and other resources.

A recent survey of U.S. architecture firms determined that rebuilding after a natural disaster typically lasts anywhere from two to five years, with one in six respondents indicating that rebuilding often continues for more than five years. For this analysis, we have assumed that most of the rebuilding will occur by the end of 2008. While probably realistic for most areas in the Gulf region, this schedule is likely optimistic for rebuilding New Orleans, given the complex issues caused by extensive flooding.

Continued on page 30

What You Need to Know about Blue-Stained Lumber

Component manufacturers at several recent WTCA chapter meetings have raised the topic of blue-stained lumber, wondering what causes it and whether it negatively impacts lumber's strength. The following summary from the Southern Pine Council (SPC) contains some useful information all manufacturers concerned about this stained lumber should know. (For the complete SPC Q&A and pictures, visit **Support Docs** at www.sbcmag.info.)

Photo courtesy of the Southern Pine Council, www.southernpine.com.

What makes the lumber blue?

Blue stain is a common cause for the discoloration of lumber. Certain dark-colored microscopic fungi cause a bluish or grayish discoloration in the sapwood of the tree. However, not all blue stains are blue. Other stain shades can be blue, bluish black, gray, brown, red, yellow, orange, or purple.

Does it affect the strength properties?

Blue stain has no effect on the performance and strength of lumber. Structural lumber is not downgraded due to the presence of blue stain and should not be labeled inferior lumber.

Where can blue-stained lumber be used?

Because blue stain does not detract from the strength properties of dimension lumber, blue-stained lumber can be used for exactly the same purpose as non-stained lumber.

What is it...blue stain or mold?

Blue stain is not mold. However, for a simple test to determine whether or not a piece of lumber is blue-stained or growing mold, lightly rub the affected surface of the wood. Mold grows on the surface and can be brushed off or smeared, whereas blue stain penetrates deep into the wood and cannot be removed.

What about health and safety concerns?

Blue stain poses no health risk, and blue-stained lumber is safe to handle.

Does blue stain cause decay?

Blue stain is not a decay fungi. Blue stain fungi live on the nutrients stored in the cells of the wood, not on the cellulose fibers of the tree itself.

Why may I see more stained lumber than previously?

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita damaged the forest resources along the Gulf Coast. As salvage operations begin to recover downed timber, the lumber manufactured may contain a natural discoloration that begins after trees are severed or damaged. Combined with the devastation Hurricane Ivan caused in 2004, a larger proportion of blue-stained lumber will likely enter Southern Pine lumber markets.

Can stained lumber be pressure-treated?

Blue stain fungi have no effect on the treatability of Southern Pine lumber and stained lumber may be treated to guard against decay and termites. SBC

New WTCA Members

All Truss Inc.
22700 Broadway
Sonoma, CA 95476
707/938-5595
Mr. Robert Biggs

Allstates Building Systems, Inc.
400 W Market St
Johnson City, TN 37604
423/434-0004
Mr. Robert B. Smith

B&R Lumber & Truss
119 Didion Dr
St Peters, MO 63376
636/397-2246
Mr. Michael Vroman
Sponsor: Mr. Richard Terbrock

Biomass Combustion Systems
67 Millbrook St
Worcester, MA 01606
508/393-4932
Mr. Charles R. Cary

Daelim ENC Co., Ltd
468-15 Yubang-dong, Yongin-Si
Gyeonggi-Do, 449-935 KOREA
02-579-3848
Mr. Haesung Hwang

Daniel C Smith PE Consulting Engineers
8805 Bickley Pl
Raleigh, NC 27613
919/844-6050
Mr. Daniel C. Smith, PE

Forest Homes
Rte 522 RR #1 Box 131K
Selinsgrove, PA 17870
570/374-0131
Mr. Henry Walthery
Sponsor: Mr. Dwight Hikel

Frierson - Bailey Lumber & Supply
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Jackson, MS 39209
601/923-0250
Mr. Walter L. Hamilton
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210/337-6464
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Mr. Andrew Higgiston

Livable Designs
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North Bend, OR 97459
541/756-0216
Mr. Jon E. Sumpter

Palfinger North America
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905/374-3363
Ms. Kristi Kraneyk

Stimson Lumber Company
520 SW Yamhill Ste 700
Portland, OR 97204
503/295-0951
Mr. Bob Crow

Structures RBR Inc
394 Rue Principale CP 159
Saint Anges, QC G0S 3E0
418/253-5454
Mr. Jonathan Thibodeau

Sweed Machinery, Inc.
PO Box 228
Gold Hill, OR 97525
541/855-1512
Mr. Scott Ashpole

Szewczak Associates Consulting Engineers
200 Fisher Drive
Avon, CT 06001
860/677-4570
Mr. Richard Szewczak

TQC, Inc.
1409 Indianhead Dr Ste 1
Menomonie, WI 54751
715/232-7880
Mr. Joel Steinhauer

Truss Fab, LLC
PO Box 848
Glendale, AZ 85311
623/215-2738
Mr. Dean Rana

For more information about WTCA membership, contact Anna (608/310-6719 or astamm@qualtim.com) or visit www.woodtruss.com. Listing as of February 9, 2006.

WTCA Update

Continued from page 28

The Outlook for Louisiana

Louisiana will likely take the longest to recover from the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Three key components of the state's economy—energy, transportation/port, and leisure/hospitality—were dramatically affected by the storm. Employment in the state is estimated to have declined by ten percent immediately after Hurricane Katrina.

The state economy is expected to decline between three percent and four percent during the second half of this year, and remain essentially stable next year. This means that the state economy will not recover from Hurricane Katrina until 2007. Retail sales are expected to grow by almost five percent per year through 2008, so commercial construction levels will largely serve to offset losses to the pre-Katrina inventory.

Job losses will likely translate into population losses over the next several quarters. Close to a quarter million housing units are estimated to have been destroyed in the New Orleans metro area alone. Many of the homes destroyed were built since 1970. Though the New Orleans metro area has a relatively old and historic housing stock, the older homes were generally located on higher ground where the damage from flooding generally was not as severe.

Declining population levels in the near-term will limit the need for replacement housing units. However, some of the population declines expected to be realized in New Orleans will be offset by gains from migration to other parts of the state, most noticeably Baton Rouge. Other migrants will relocate to other states. By 2008, probably only about 100,000 of the housing units lost to the storm will have been replaced.

The Outlook for Mississippi

Much of the reconstruction in Louisiana will be delayed until the flooded areas are cleaned and a redevelopment plan is in place. However, the reconstruction of Mississippi can begin sooner. While state employment levels fell in the third quarter 2005, a rebound should begin by the fourth quarter, and pre-Katrina employment levels are expected to be reached by mid-2006.

The economic base of the areas that sustained significant hurricane damage—the coastal cities of Gulfport-Biloxi and Pascagoula—is heavily concentrated in the manufacturing sector and the leisure and hospitality sector. Both of these sectors are expected to see a fairly quick rebound, with a significant portion of the rebuilding completed by the end of 2006. The recovery in Hattiesburg should occur even more rapidly than the coastal areas.

Gulfport-Biloxi and Pascagoula lost an estimated 25,000 housing units during the storm or about 15 percent of their combined stock of homes. Resulting rebuilding of these homes will likely push construction levels in these metro areas up an additional 22,000 units over the next three years from levels that were expected prior to Hurricane Katrina.

The Outlook for Alabama

Alabama was the least affected of the three states, with Mobile being the principal area affected. Only two percent of the housing stock in Mobile is estimated to have been destroyed by the hurricane, which can be accommodated out of current vacancy rates, so minimal residential construction directly linked to Hurricane Katrina is expected.

Building Materials & Labor Outlook

The past two years have seen significant price increases in selected construction commodities (steel, concrete, gypsum products, and insulation), as well as occasional material shortages. Part of this increase is the result of a recovering nonresidential construction industry in the United States coupled with strong international demand. However, in some cases the price hikes have been the result of U.S. trade policy designed to strengthen domestic industries. In all likelihood, trade restrictions will be eased in those cases where materials price increases have been excessive.

In the short term, we can expect to see some spikes in prices for construction commodities. Gypsum products (e.g., wallboard) and concrete have increased 5.5 percent and 2.5 percent respectively over the past two months. In the months ahead, we should also see some jumps in lumber and plywood/OSB prices because some regional timberlands were destroyed. There may even be supply shortages for some products in addition to price increases. Other short-term dislocations in materials prices and availability are likely to occur until building product manufacturing and distribution facilities in the region are fully functional.

Rising prices for petroleum products will further complicate the construction outlook. Transportation costs have risen dramatically, and prices for petroleum-based construction products have recently increased. Again, we can expect near-term volatility in prices for these products until regional refining facilities have fully resumed operations.

However, over the longer term, the effect of Hurricane Katrina on building materials prices should be fairly well contained. Due to the relatively long time horizon for rebuilding the affected Gulf Coast areas after Hurricane Katrina, and given that the rebuilding should follow a staged timing, price increases are expected to be moderate. Between now and the end of 2006, price increases are expected to be in the three to four percent range with the exception of gypsum products and cement. Between 2006 and 2008, prices for building materials are expected to moderate, with increases averaging about two to three percent a year.

The impact of rebuilding on construction labor should be comparable to that of materials prices. While demand for labor is expected to increase by about 20,000 positions in Louisiana over the next 18 months and an additional 2,000 in Mississippi, this is coinciding with an expected national slowdown in residential construction, which should free up some of the skilled trades needed for rebuilding in this region. There is likely to be some relocation of labor to the region, as workers in areas with depressed construction levels look to opportunities in the Gulf region. SBC

For the complete AIA report, visit **Support Docs** *at www.sbcmag.info.*

Get to Know the New 2006 WTCA Board Members

Every year brings new faces to the WTCA Board of Directors. We would like to help you get to know a little bit more about each of the new members of the 2006 Board. For a complete listing of the 2006 Board of Directors, see page 29 or visit www.woodtruss.com.

New Executive Committee Secretary

Mr. Robert J. Becht, Chambers Truss, Inc.

In the 1950s, I grew up on my father's jobsites. In the 1960s, while in college, I worked at a truss plant. In the 1970s, I was a partner in a computerized truss cutlist company that evolved into a provider of business programs where I became a programmer. In 1981, I left my one man programming business to work for Chambers Truss. My first task was developing cutlist programs. In 1983, I took over a subsidiary truss company and ran it until 1991. In 1996, I was named the president of Chambers Truss. I computerized Chambers Truss, developing our CutCheck expert program, many other truss programs and all of our business programs.

Chambers Truss is a founding member of South Florida WTCA Chapter and a member of WTCA since 1987. In 1998, I started my first year as president of SFWTCA. I joined the WTCA Board of Directors in 2000. I developed the Chambers Truss Safe Truss Partnership, which as been adopted by WTCA and is accredited by Florida for continuing education. I bring my commitment to safety and advancing truss technology to the WTCA Board backed by 30 years of experience in business, programming and truss manufacture. Being a member of the WTCA Board has exposed me to a world of ideas benefiting Chambers Truss and me.

WTCA is the best means for our industry to meet the challenge of keeping in front of problems. Through the WTCA Florida Executive Committee and other tools, I want to continue to be a part of meeting that challenge.

New At-Large Representatives

Mr. Dean DeHoog, Trussway Ltd.

Dean has been in the construction industry since his high school days. Through high school and college he worked at Wickes Lumber in Grand Rapids, MI. After college he started at Marquette Fabricators as a sales representative in West Michigan and sold trusses to lumber dealers for about 10 years. In 1999, Dean had an opportunity to become involved in sales management and, shortly after that, as general manager of the Michigan operations. This occurred at about the same time that Trussway, a truss company out of Houston, TX, acquired Marquette. Dean currently oversees operations at two production facilities in Sparta, MI, and Michigan City, IN, along with a sales and design office in Bloomington, IL. A great deal of Dean's time is spent assisting his sales team sell major projects in the Midwest.

Dean has been involved with the WTCA for the past ten years in a few primary areas. Trussway's Michigan designers have been actively involved with the online training programs offered by WTCA and the production facilities have been In-Plant WTCA QC certified. The plant in Michigan was the first plant in the state to receive its certification through WTCA. Dean has also been involved in the Michigan Chapter and works to promote the benefits of other WTCA programs within the Trussway organization.

One of the greatest challenges Dean sees in the Midwest is getting the end users of trusses and components to see the value of these products and not view them as another lumber-related commodity. As WTCA promotes our industry and markets its products, the value and benefits will become evident, assisting truss plants with future success.

Mr. Mike Walsh, P.E., Stock Building Supply, Inc.

Mike is the Director of Manufacturing and Installed Sales for Stock Building Supply working out of Raleigh, NC. Mike heads up corporate initiatives, standardization and strategic direction for the 37 Stock plants throughout the country. Stock has been a member of WTCA since 2000. "Participation itself keeps us abreast of what's going on with codes, challenges for the future, legislative issues," he commented.

Mike looks forward to bringing a foundation for growth to the board, a thought process of continuous improvement and a willingness to try new ideas and new ways of doing things. He has participated in the Annual Legislative Conference in Washington, DC, and is always looking for ways to improve and embrace change. This is his first term on the Board.

Labor is the prominent issue facing our industry in Mike's opinion. It is a challenge to have a ready supply of skilled designers to sustain growth. And it is also a challenge with unskilled designers to maintain quality to keep up with demands, laws and making sure that everyone is playing on a level field.

New Directors Representing Chapters

Ms. Priscilla "Perky" J. Becht, Chambers Truss, Inc., South Florida Chapter

Priscilla, know to everyone as Perky, is the Human Resources Manager, Safety Manager and Credit Manager at Chambers Truss, Inc. in Fort Pierce, FL. In those positions, Perky handles all of the employment issues, quarterly reports, taxes, workers compensation, unemployment and safety issues at Chambers Truss. In particular, she likes working with unemployment because it is a challenge.

Perky attended her first WTCA meeting with her husband Bob over ten years ago at the Douglas Airport in Washington, DC. She has been involved with her local chapter as long as she has been involved with WTCA. In 2005, Perky served as the President of the South Florida Chapter and she is now serving as the Secretary. Perky also has a seat on the Palm Beach County Safety Council Board and is working on getting the safety council to become more active with WTCA.

One talent that Perky will bring to the Board is an extensive knowledge of the "office side of trusses." She is an expert in human resources, collections, workers comp, immigration issues and legal issues. While serving on the Board, Perky has learned so much that she compares it to getting a college education in trusses. She also feels there is a lot of information to be acquired at BCMC, meetings and from other members.

Technology is the biggest obstacle that Perky sees facing the industry. From a human resources/personnel point of view, if we can become more automated, then we will be ahead of the game.

Mr. Mark A. Casp, Casmin, Inc., Central Florida Chapter

Mark is President/CEO of Casmin, Inc. headquartered in Leesburg, FL. Mark has been in the component industry for 23 years. His job entails a lot of leadership and strategic planning and he enjoys "coaching the team and seeing the company achieve nice results." Casmin has several manufacturing facilities in Florida and is a longtime member of WTCA. Mark and his company have been active in the local Central Florida Chapter for many years.

Mark is looking forward to contributing to the Board and acting as a communicative voice between his local chapter and WTCA-National. Mark attended his first Board Meeting in October, and he is looking forward to becoming more involved with the Marketing and QC Committees. He is excited for the opportunity to learn from the industry's many talented individuals.

Mark feels there are more than enough challenges facing our industry, including immigration, insurance issues and onerous governmental regulations. Another key issue for Mark is the diminishing quality of construction crews out in the field. He sees this as an opportunity to provide a wider range of components to builders who seek to build a quality home.

Mr. Ted Kolanko, P.E., 84 Components, Tennessee Chapter

Ted started in the wood truss industry with Hydro-Air Engineering (now MiTek) in July 1979. His primary focus has been engineering seal review and repair specifications, but he enjoys getting out to do forensic work because of the unique challenges when determining cause and effect. Ted is also known for his temporary bracing models which he makes for the industry—over 135 models have been distributed to date. His current position is Regional Engineering Manager for 84 Lumber/84 Components.

Ted has been involved with WTCA for many years. In addition to making the bracing models, which are marketed through WTCA, he has been attending the Engineering & Technology Committee meetings. He was a member of TPI TAC from the time that Cherokee Metal Products became a member of TPI. In addition, Ted has been involved with the Tennessee Chapter since its formation and became Chapter President in 2006.

The experience that Ted will bring to the Board includes his engineering knowledge of truss design and manufacturing, his long involvement in the truss industry and his work with TPI TAC and the E&T Committee. As for the challenges ahead, Ted sees the increasing demand for sealed engineered truss drawings, the constant battle against sealed layouts, and the issues and opportunities that will arise from whole house design.

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2006 WTCA Board Members • Continued from page 33

Mr. Michael Redmon, Carolina Truss Systems, Inc., South Carolina Chapter

Mike has been in the truss industry for 10 years. Currently, as General Manager of Carolina Truss Systems in Summerville, SC, he oversees sales, design, production and shipping. What he enjoys most in his job, however, is when he is able to take a hands-on role in the production of trusses or on the jobsite. He likes spending time in the shop building something as well as walking the jobsite, dealing with customers and seeing how the components are put to use.

Carolina Truss Systems was a longtime member of WTCA even before its acquisition by Stark Truss Company. Mike has been active in WTCA for five years. In addition, Mike helped relaunch of the South Carolina Chapter in 2005 and is serving as Chapter President.

Mike hopes to bring to the Board new ideas and he looks forward to meeting challenges and helping our industry grow. In South Carolina specifically and in the industry as a whole, there are perennial challenges but also opportunities. For example, getting municipalities to understand new codes can be difficult, but doing so helps our businesses and our industry. Education is key to continued growth and profitability.

Mr. Mark H. Rose, Manning Building Supplies, North Florida Chapter

Mark has been associated with the component industry for 16 years, but only at Manning Building Supplies for one year. The prior 15 years he worked in the engineered wood industry with 10-½ years at Trus Joist, 1-½ years self-employed with Tennessee Structures and three years with Huber Engineered Woods. Mark is currently employed as General Manager of Manning's Jacksonville, FL truss operation and has been involved with WTCA since joining Manning.

Mark holds an undergraduate degree in Architecture from Memphis State University and an MBA from The University of Phoenix. He is a licensed contractor and has a lifelong passion for architecture, construction and structures in general. With experience in markets ranging from the Midwest, to the southcentral U.S., to the Southeast, Mark has a broad knowledge of construction practices and techniques. He feels his limited experience in plated component manufacturing lends itself to creative thinking and fresh ideas and is excited about bringing his outside the box mentality to the WTCA. Being involved with the WTCA will help broaden Mark's understanding of the component industry through the relationships he hopes to develop with other members.

Complete system analysis, design, sale and fabrication are a few of the many advantages of the component industry. Today's society demands more for less and through value engineering and just-in-time supply, the component industry can satisfy this desire. In contrast, Mark feels that one of the greatest challenges to the industry is the available work force. The lack of responsible skilled workers is an ongoing challenge to keeping the production facility operating in an efficient, profitable manner. Workers with skill sets conducive to component fabrication along with a responsible mentality are scarce, therefore, developmental programs ranging from design to fabrication to quality control are critical to the future of our industry and its vision as a viable career.

Mr. Dave Walstad, U.S. Components, Inc., Mid Atlantic Chapter

Dave started in the family lumber and truss business at Verona Lumber in Wisconsin after graduating from Madison Area Technical College with a degree in Architecture. He worked in all aspects of the lumber and truss business from sales to production to operations and design. After the company was sold in 1986, he worked for Stock Lumber in Green Bay for ten years, starting in design and becoming plant manager and involved with startups and acquisitions as well as lumber purchasing. Needing to start something new, he moved to Atlanta to do a startup in steel truss only and had the opportunity to move to New Jersey. He is now VP of Manufacturing for the Strober Organization as senior officer of the parent company as well as the President and COO of U.S. Components.

With his involvement in WTCA and local chapters spanning several states, Dave has served as President, Vice President and Board member of the Wisconsin Chapter as well as President and Board member of the Mid Atlantic Chapter. He has been involved in the truss and component business actively for over 26 years not including the times as a kid roaming around the lumber and truss plant that his father ran.

Dave will bring to the Board his extensive experience with multi-plant and multi-lumber yard environments and he will be able to add perspectives on the interaction between truss shops and lumber yards. Working with a large conglomerate, he will be able to share insight as well as learn from fellow members.

The challenge Dave sees for our industry is also an opportunity—resolving local conflicts and finding common ground. In our day-to-day operations, we face many levels of red tape and differing code enforcement: township, county, state. While the differing demands placed upon manufacturers present immediate challenges, they also open the door to developing relationships. For example, a township that asks for sealed layouts, even though the code does not, represents a hurdle, but working together to remove these hurdles will benefit us individually and as an industry.

Mr. Scott Ward, Southern Components, Inc., Mid South Chapter

Growing up with a family-owned business, Scott has been around the truss industry all of his life. He started working for Southern Components after attending college in 1995. In his current position as Production Supervisor, he oversees the human resources decisions as well as managing the flow of material coming from the engineering department until it leaves through the gate. The part of his job he enjoys most is the personal interactions and the constant learning that comes from working with people.

Southern Components has been a WTCA member from the start. It was Louisiana's first and the nation's fourth certified user of In-Plant WTCA QC. Scott has attended numerous BCMC shows and is deepening his involvement in the recently reinvigorated Mid South Chapter. By being on the Board, Scott is looking forward to serving and learning. He is anxious to be of help to our association and therefore our industry.

The most important ingredient for success that Scott sees is maintaining a focus on quality. He has helped restructure his company so that they do not focus on price but on quality. Likewise, it is essential that the component industry maintain its reputation as people who care about what they do and deliver a quality product. SBC

Code Connection

Update on 2006 ICC Code Changes

New building code regulations could be heading your way as early as this year!

by WTCA Staff

The International Code Council (ICC) is in full swing with another year of code work, most notably, the release of its newest edition. Here is a look at what component manufacturers and the industry at large should expect in the next year.

The ICC will release the 2006 editions of the I-Codes this year. These may even be adopted by some local jurisdictions in 2006 or early 2007. To give you an idea of the widespread adoption of these codes within the United States, the ICC web site (www.iccsafe.org) listed the following statistics regarding state code adoptions:

- 45 states plus Washington, DC use the International Building Code
- 45 states plus Washington, DC use the International Residential Code
- 39 states plus Washington, DC use the International Fire Code

The shear number of code change submittals proposed by various parties for the new 2006 edition is overwhelming; over 2,000 code changes were submitted and reviewed by the various ICC code committees! The following are a few of the significant changes to the International Residential Code (**IRC**) and the International Building Code (**IBC**) that will impact the structural building components industry. A number of these changes were proposed by a working group consisting of members of the Truss Plate Institute (TPI) and the Wood Truss Council of America (WTCA).

Accepted Code Change S14-03/04: The code change submitted by TPI and WTCA on the interpretation and implementation of live and dead loads on the bottom chord of roof trusses will be implemented in both **IRC** Table R301.5 and IBC Table 1607.1. (See the August 2004 issue of ***SBC Magazine***.)

Impact on Manufacturers: This change clarifies when the non-storage load of 10 psf is applied and that it need not be assumed to be acting concurrently with any other live loads. Also, it clarifies when and how the storage load of 20 psf is applied. It details that storage loads do not need to be applied to scissors truss bottom chords with slopes greater than 2 on 12 and also where adjacent trusses do not have the same web configuration. Finally, the adjacent trusses must be capable of containing a rectangle 42 inches (1067 mm) high by two feet (610 mm) wide, or greater, located within the plane of the truss.

Accepted Code Change S165-04/05: The code change submitted by WTCA modifying **IBC** Section 2303.4 regarding metal plate connected wood trusses will be implemented.

Impact on Manufacturers: This change clarifies that a truss placement diagram is not typically an engineered document and does not require sealing. It also clarifies the importance of permanent bracing. (See the January/February issue of ***SBC Magazine.***)

Change: A code change submitted by WTCA provides equity with the light gauge steel prescriptive provisions and is accepted in section R802.10.2.1 of the **IRC**.

Continued on page 38

at a glance

- 45 states plus Washington, DC use the International Residential Code.
- A few changes to the International Building Code (IBC) and the International Residential Code (IRC) will impact manufacturers.
- The first eighteen month code change cycle for the 2009 edition begins with the March 24, 2006 submission deadline.

Code Connection

Continued from page 36

Impact on Manufacturers: This change allows trusses to be designed using 0.7 times the ground snow (pg) as the roof design snow load within the following applicability limits:

> R802.10.2.1 Applicability limits. The provisions of this section shall control the design of Truss roof framing when snow controls for buildings not greater than 60 feet (18 288 mm) in length perpendicular to the joist, rafter or truss span, not greater than 36 feet (10 973 mm) in width parallel to the joist span or truss, not greater than two stories in height with each story not greater than 10 feet (3048 mm) high, and roof slopes not smaller than 3:12 (25-percent slope) or greater than 12:12 (100-percent slope). Truss roof framing constructed in accordance with the provisions of this section shall be limited to sites subjected to a maximum design wind speed of 110 miles per hour (209 km/h) Exposure A, B or C and a maximum ground snow load of 70 psf (3.35 kN/m2). Roof snow load is to be computed as: 0.7pg.

Change: Both the **IRC** and **IBC** 2006 will continue to reference ANSI/TPI 1-2002.

Impact on Manufacturers: There will be no changes to the third party inspection or quality control requirements as currently required by the **IRC** and **IBC** 2003.

Change: Both the **IRC** and **IBC** 2006 will reference ASCE/SEI 7-05, Minimum Design Loads for Buildings and Other Structures.

Impact on Manufacturers: For the structural component industry, the primary impact will be on roof and floor truss design for commercial and other structures that fall within outside the scope of the **IRC** which covers one- and two-family dwellings.

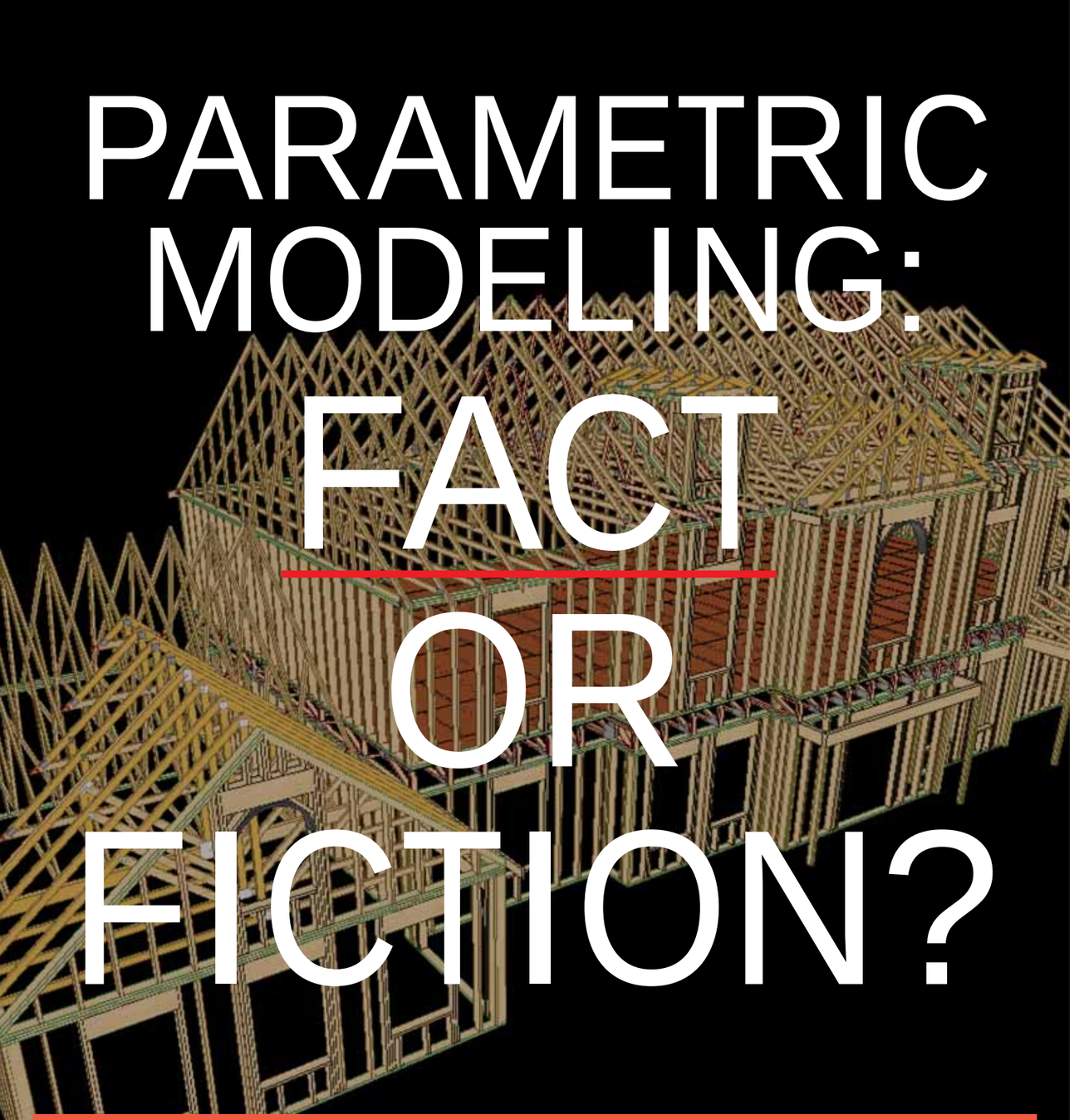
a. A number of significant changes will impact roof truss design:
   i. Snow drifting across gable/hip ridges (unbalanced snow load consideration) has been revised and in most cases its impact is reduced. Even though not explicitly required by the **IRC**, unbalanced snow loading is typically considered for trusses, where snow loading controls design, regardless of whether the structure is within the scope of the **IBC** or **IRC**.
   ii. Roof live and concentrated loads are now included in Table 4-1 and include the consideration of a separate load case for a 300-lb concentrated load on "All roof surfaces subject to maintenance workers." This is applicable to structures within the scope of the **IBC**, since the **IRC** roof loading requirements were not revised.
   iii. For roof members exposed to a work floor, the concentrated load consideration of 200 lbs. has been raised to 300 lbs. It will still be considered at each panel point separately. This consideration is only applicable to structures within the scope of the **IBC**.
b. One will impact floor truss design. The current partition load of 20 psf is reduced to 15 psf as appropriate for structures within the scope of the **IBC**.
c. Changes made to the determination of the exposure category for wind or snow could impact structures regardless of whether the structure is within the scope of the **IRC** or **IBC**. (This determination is a Building Designer or code official concern.)
d. Significant changes have been made to the seismic requirements. Since seismic design impacts the structure (rather than either roof or floor trusses directly), these changes will have the greatest impact on building design. The impact will be on any structure regardless of whether the structure is within the scope of the **IBC** or **IRC**, if engineered design is required.

The primary news regarding the International Fire Code (IFC) is that a truss labeling provision proposed during the 2004/2005 code change cycle was summarily defeated.

As new editions of the ICC are released every three years, the first eighteen month code change cycle for the 2009 edition begins with the March 24, 2006 submission deadline for code change proposals and a scheduled code development hearing date of September 20-30, 2006. SBC

For more information about how to get involved in the code process, contact WTCA staff at 608/274-4849 or codes@woodtruss.com.

PARAMETRIC MODELING: FACT OR FICTION?



Some of our competition are saying that Parametric Modeling doesn't exist.

We can see why they would say that; in their software world....IT DOESN'T.

—*from the TechEncyclopedia on TechWeb, www.techweb.com*

parametric modeling / pă r'ə-mĕ t′r ĭk mŏ d′l-ĭ ng / using the computer to design objects by modeling their components with real-world behaviors and attributes. Typically specialized for either mechanical design or building design, a parametric modeler is aware of the characteristics of components and the interactions between them. It maintains consistent relationships between elements as the model is manipulated. For example, in a parametric building modeler, if the pitch of the roof is changed, the walls automatically follow the revised roof line. A parametric mechanical modeler would ensure that two holes are always one inch apart or that one hole is always offset two inches from the edge or that one element is always half the size of another.

Parametric modeler software also provides tabular views of the components (parts list, door schedule, window schedule, etc.) and maintains their association with other views of the model. If a component is edited graphically, the list is updated; if a component is edited on the list, the graphic views are updated.

"The test for a state-of-the-art parametric building modeler is whether it can coordinate changes and maintain consistency at all times. It's like working in a spreadsheet. Update the model in one place, and all views, drawings and schedules are instantly synchronized."

—Rick Rundell, AIA. "1-2-3 Revit: Not All BIM is Parametric" Cadalyst AEC. Online. Available: http://aec.cadalyst.com/aec/article/articleDetail.jsp?id=146865. February 15, 2005

Take the test to see if your vendor's software is a true parametric modeling software.
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The Casmin, Inc. safety story is a dynamic one with both good times and bad fueling their determination for improvement over the last four years. An outsider might zero in on a serious OSHA reportable incident that occurred in their plant in 2003 and others would pinpoint their sheer size as the reason their safety program was in need of an overhaul. But once you get to know the group at Casmin, it becomes clear that their positive safety culture has grown slowly and steadily and can only be attributed to one thing: the company's desire to protect the health and well-being of all its employees. If anyone ever tried to tell you it can't be done, Casmin is here to tell you it can.

Here is Casmin's story from the start, deep in the heart of central Florida.

EMR: An Experience Modification Rate (EMR) is a factor that is calculated for each employers Workers' Compensation insurance. The EMR is a value that compares the claim profile of the employer to the claim profile that would be expected of an employer of similar size in the same industry. A value of 1.00 is average, which means that the actual losses roughly equaled the expected losses. An EMR factor greater than 1.00 means the employer experiences more losses than expected and an EMR of less than 1.00 indicates the employer experience fewer losses than expected. "Credit EMRs" (less than 1.00) reduce the insurance premium, while "debit EMRs" (greater than 1.00) result in a premium surcharge.

[Source: Understanding Your Workers' Compensation Experience Modification (PDF), Risk Administrations Services, Inc.]

More than Magic

Safety Takes the Stage at Casmin

by Molly E. Butz

at a glance

- WTCA member Casmin, Inc. overhauled its safety program in the nick of time.
- Casmin conducted a series of ergonomic assessments to help revise job descriptions and reduce task-related injuries.
- Small changes made a big difference: a switch to composite strapping material, custom-cut anti-fatigue mats and employee-selected personal protective equipment.

Once upon a time, in a land known better for tourist attractions, alligators and talking mice, there was a component manufacturing company called Casmin. Unfortunately, Casmin was not the fairest in the land; their poor safety performance had driven their experience modification rate (EMR) for their workers' compensation insurance up to 1.47 (a value of 1.00 is average). Credit EMRs (less than 1.00) reduce premium, while debit EMRs (greater than 1.00) result in a premium surcharge. Virtually uninsurable, it was clear something, or some things, needed to change.

(Don't get discouraged, no good fairytale goes without a happy ending.)

However, in component manufacturing there is no fairy godmother, magic wand or flying carpet to whisk away the hazards and unveil a sparkling, incident-free workplace overnight. A good safety culture takes time and care to cultivate and maintain—so that's what Casmin did. Through a variety of unique solutions, Casmin unlocked their positive safety potential.

The Casmin turnaround began in 2002 when Casmin approached Lake Centre for Rehabilitation (LCR) for assistance to reduce the number of injuries at their Lady Lake location. (Casmin has two additional manufacturing facilities.) The primary concern was the number of new hires experiencing injuries within weeks of starting work. At the time, a team of LCR clinicians toured the plant and conducted an "ergonomic assessment." This entailed observation and measurement of movement patterns and loads handled in key areas of Casmin's operations including yard, assembly, saw and maintenance zones.

Next, the clinicians tested a significant number of employees from each of these areas to determine their strength in various tasks such as lifting, push/pull activities and gripping. The data gathered from the ergonomic assessment and strength testing allowed LCR to develop new job descriptions that accounted for the physical demands of each job. These job descriptions were further expanded into post-offer functional screens, which meant that once a potential employee was offered a position at Casmin, he or she was asked to visit LCR for a post-offer screening.

Not surprisingly, the impact of implementing these new post-offer screens made a tremendous impact on Casmin's injury log (see Figure 1 on page 44). In a short amount of time, this unique approach provided long-term solutions in Casmin's facilities.

Taking Command

In 2003, Casmin's Shipping and Receiving Manager, Dan Kleczka, was moved into a newly created Safety Coordinator position. Dan had been instrumental in developing the safety program already being used at Casmin, so his move to Safety Coordinator made perfect sense and allowed him to focus all of his time and energy on expanding their safety procedures and policies.

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More than Magic

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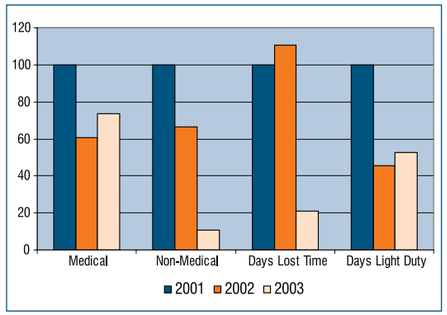

Figure 1.

"Not more than four weeks after I transferred to the new safety position a major safety incident occurred at Casmin," Dan recalled. "However, we had a safety program in place and I made sure that I provided OSHA with all of the documentation I could get my hands on." With several years of part-time safety experience and an OSHA hearing as a result of the incident behind him, Dan and the Casmin management team pushed full-steam ahead with additions, revisions and a general overhaul of the Casmin Safety Program.

The safety achievements at Casmin started appearing in small doses and their EMR began to drop with each accomplishment. Simple changes that might go unnoticed by the untrained eye made enormous differences to Casmin's employees, beginning with their lumber carts. One of the ergonomic tests conducted determined that lumber carts with rubber wheels required 90 lbs. of energy to move whereas carts with steel wheels required just 30 lbs. of energy. Today, all of Casmin's lumber carts have steel wheels and fewer back injuries as a result (see page 48).

It's a given that Casmin employees look out for each other; their safety culture runs that deep.

Casmin changed the type of banding they were using to bundle trusses together; their new composite strapping material makes it virtually impossible to get hurt. They also require affected employees to wear safety shoes, gloves, goggles/side shields and, after thorough audiometric testing, hearing protection. Dan explained that employees get to choose the personal protective equipment that is right for them. "If we expect them to wear it and take care of it, then it needs to be comfortable," Dan said. "Within reason, we try to accommodate our employees with a comfortable fit in every way we can."

A plant tour at Casmin reveals even more safety features from top-of-the-line, anti-fatigue mats that were custom-cut for individual equipment areas to encouraging messages on safety banners that serve as a constant reminder to all of its employees: Casmin takes safety seriously. White walkways, yellow equipment areas and red safety zones make it clear where people, carts and tools do and don't belong (see page 48). (Don't get caught lingering in a red zone, because you can be sure someone will point it out to you.) It's a given that Casmin employees look out for each other; their safety culture runs that deep.

You'll also notice, if you're paying close attention, that the newest additions to their forklift fleet look a little odd. That's because they were designed using the latest ergonomically correct controls, positioned to the right of the seat and exactly at the driver's fingertips. And, if you happen to see any one of their certified forklift drivers in action, you'll notice he's snuggly cinched into his seat by his seat belt.

Taking Part

Almost any safety program assigns varying degrees of disciplinary action for failing to adhere to its policies and procedures. In this respect, Casmin is no different. From issuing a safety violation to immediate termination, Casmin takes action for

Continued on page 48

RAM EASYRIDER

See why it is taking the industry by storm.

More than 75 Ram Easy Rider systems have been installed in just the last 18 months. One truss plant alone has 16 Easy Riders in everyday operation. Clearly, it is the most successful truss fabrication system ever introduced. Why? The answer is simple. Because you can build more trusses with less labor. Its unique distribution of workload keeps the manufacturing process smooth, efficient, and highly productive.

The AutoSet C4 is an exciting new addition to the complete line of available jigging options. The C4 is an automated jigging system with an innovative offset drive that keeps table slots clear and open to the floor for easier maintenance. ALPINE AUTOSETC4

See for yourself why the RAM Easy Rider is the component industry's leading trackless truss fabrication system. Call your Alpine representative to learn what the RAM Easy Rider can do for your production and ask for a copy of the video showing the Easy Rider in action.

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800-755-6005

More than Magic

Continued from page 44

each incident. However, a truly innovative safety program strives to correct unsafe behavior before it begins, and this is where Casmin sets itself apart.

The safety committee at Casmin is a force to be reckoned with and their mission statement says it all: “We will assure our employees a safe work environment by complying with all safety rules and regulations through reinforcing positive behavior, work area/procedure improvement and enforcement.” Comprised of one employee from each department or area per shift, Casmin’s safety committee meets a minimum of once each month to review the incidents for that period and conduct any new business. Even though each final safety decision is made by the safety department, this is a safety committee with teeth.

And, if you hang around Casmin long enough, you just might get to see one of the most interesting things of all—a Behavioral Safety Observation (BSO). “Each member of Casmin’s safety committee is asked to participate in the Behavioral Safety Program.” Dan explained. “All they have to do is walk up to an employee, explain that they are going to perform a Behavioral Safety Observation and then watch what the employee is doing for two or three minutes.”

Intended for educational purposes only, the observed employee cannot be issued a safety violation or reprimanded in any way, even if they are doing something wrong. After filling out a user-friendly form for each BSO, any safety concerns are discussed with the employee. The items for observation include everything from the use of personal protective equipment to general employee attitude and the simple choices of N/A, Safe or Unsafe make it easy to spot the problem areas. The forms are returned to the safety department at the end of the month and the statistics are tallied for review. In the end, Casmin’s BSOs are easy and non-intrusive to perform and they provide an excellent proactive way to encourage safe behavior and change unacceptable actions.

Taking It to the Next Level

This is not where the story ends. In 2004, Casmin conducted another ergonomic assessment, this time reviewing the office workstations at the Lady Lake and Tavares production plants and also the corporate office in Leesburg. To reduce stress and strain, a number of recommendations for workstation modifications resulted from this process. Even minor workstation tweaks made an extraordinary difference to the office employees. “I think my new footrest is my favorite part,” Amy Stubrud revealed. “But really, a lot of things on my desk changed just a little bit. It’s amazing, but it made a big difference. I used to have a lot of back trouble, and now....it’s just gone!”

> A truly innovative safety program strives to correct unsafe behavior before it begins.

Taking It Outside

Casmin has also taken steps to ensure the safety of those working outside of their component manufacturing plant. Their delivery trucks are equipped with top-notch precautions, not only for the safety of the driver, but for everyone around them. In addition to prominent “HOW’S MY DRIVING?” signs, each Casmin truck is equipped with a set of four sequential lights that flash alternately the same way an emergency vehicles lights flash. Each truck is also fitted with an oscillating amber light that attaches magnetically to the rear of the vehicle as an extra warning on over-sized loads.

You’ll also notice, if you happen to get a delivery of Casmin’s components, that they readily use WTCA warning tags at key positions on their products to alert the installation crew to various safety information. And, as previously

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WTCA™ OPERATION SAFETY

Interested in how you can improve the safety culture at your company but don't know where to start? Start with WTCA's Operation Safety Program, designed specifically to help component manufacturers achieve a culture of safety and meet crucial safety standards.

Operation Safety consists of four main sections (the first three are also available online) in the eight section binder. Included with the WTCA Operation Safety binder are 20 Employee Safety Handbooks, eight plant warning posters and a CD that contains all of the safety modules, presented both as PowerPoint® slide decks as well as published training sessions that include pre-recorded audio narration, animated video effects and short video demonstrations where applicable. The CD also contains all of the printed materials, including a customizable binder saved as a Microsoft Word® document and printable checklists/downloads available for use in conjunction with the program. All of this information is also centrally located online at www.wtcatko.com/training/safety/index.php.

The first section is focused on safety culture and is intended for Safety Coordinators and Company Management. It outlines the program and its online courses and resources, and is meant to help management determine where the company should focus its efforts.

Also intended for management is the second section, Management Guidelines. This section is designed to guide management in the program's implementation with the use of the safety binder, online courses and other various resources.

Employee training is covered in the third section. Geared toward individual employee education, this section incorporates many critical safety topics.

The final section of the program involves certification. Not only can your plant achieve Operation Safety Certification, but individuals like Safety Managers and shop employees can also seek certification. This section outlines the specific criteria necessary for maintaining your plant's certification, such as daily and quarterly checklists, posters highlighting safety tips, safety meeting forms, policy checklists, employee training records, recordkeeping information and much more.

Where else can you find all of these effective ideas and helpful tools focused on the structural building components industry in one place? WTCA's Operation Safety Program makes your transition into a culture of safety easy by compiling resources, setting a practical and feasible plan to achieve a safe and healthy workplace, and offering a certification program. For more information about Operation Safety, visit www.wtcatko.com. SBC

In October of 2005, Casmin's President, Mark Casp (left) accepted the Liberty Mutual Gold Safety Award from Jack Farley (right), a loss prevention agent for Libery Mutual. One of just four plaques awarded in the entire country that year, Casmin was presented with this honor for improving it's EMR by 500 percent.

More than Magic

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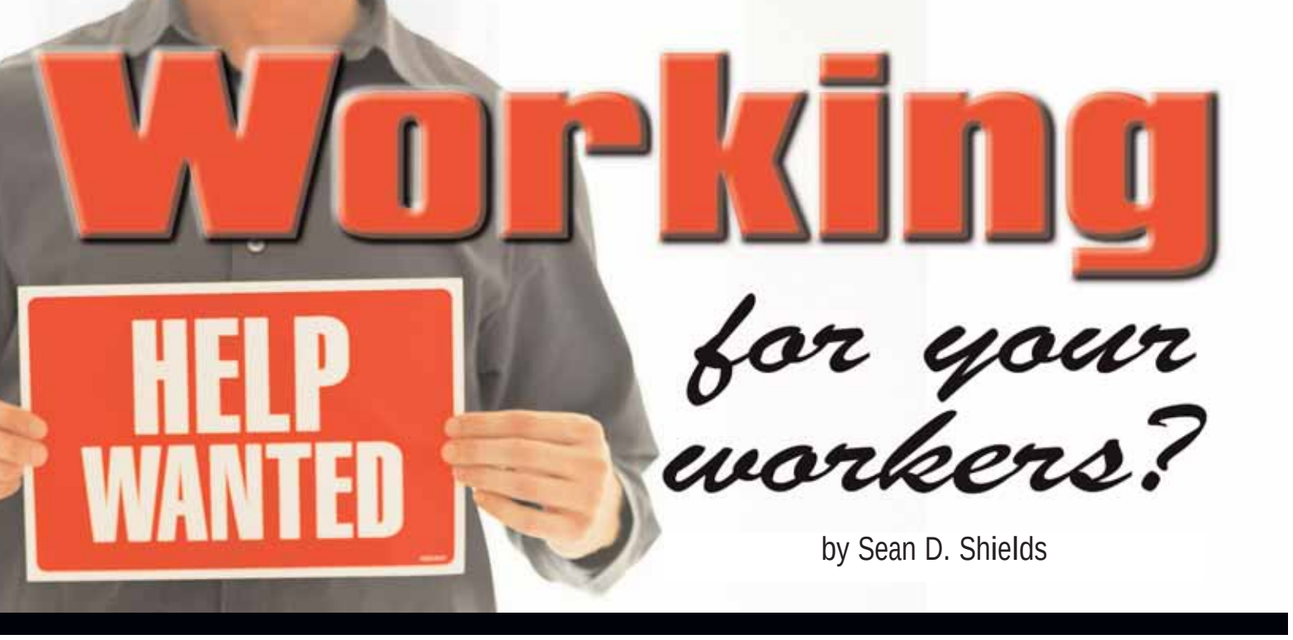
mentioned, their composite banding material ensures that not only no one in-house, but also no one on the jobsite, gets injured when the trusses are removed from their bundles.

Taking It Seriously

Touring the plant with the safety coordinator is a great way to get the inside scoop on Casmin's safety program, but you have to wonder—is it hard to be the safety director? Dan and the management team at Casmin have made a commitment to a safe and healthy workplace, and that means that you're not always everyone's favorite person, especially when they don't want to wear their safety goggles. "Actually, I really enjoy my position," Dan related. "Occasionally I get a sideways glance, but it's not like they're muttering under their breath 'Oh brother, here comes the safety guy.' In fact, more often than not, if I'm out in the plant, someone will come up to me and point out a safety concern that I need to assess. It's become a team approach from the top down."

Armed with an exceptional safety coordinator, an active safety committee and an exemplary company-wide safety culture, the pièce de resistance will come as no surprise. In October of 2005, Casmin's President, Mark Casp, accepted the Liberty Mutual Gold Safety Award. One of just four plaques awarded in the entire country that year, Casmin was presented with this honor for improving it's EMR by 500 percent, bringing the once extreme 1.47 down to under .9—a remarkable achievement.

Establishing a solid safety program and safety culture that's woven into the fibers of your company's core corporate values is the happiest ending you could hope for in a fairytale. And, through time and devotion, that is exactly how this component manufacturer's story ends. To this, the plaque's final words ring true, "Liberty Mutual Group proudly recognizes the employees of Casmin, Inc. for Outstanding Safety Performance," and...so do we. SBC



Working for your workers?

by Sean D. Shields

A growing—if not booming—construction market requires skilled labor, and plenty of it. But why is the industry facing a chronic shortage and what is causing it?

at a glance

- Growth during a period of declining supply of workers in the manufacturing and homebuilding sectors has propelled the work force shortage.
- Younger generations do not see that manufacturing or construction jobs are capable of fulfilling their career goals.
- Our industry has many foreign-born citizens, and regardless of their country of origin, they seem to excel at building component manufacturing jobs.

As you know, a skilled and productive work force is important for maintaining a competitive edge in the manufacturing sector. Not having the designers, production foreman and line workers you need prohibits you from meeting your customer's requests, not to mention dampens your prospects for further expansion. Even worse, it threatens to erode your competitive advantage in the marketplace that you serve.

"When business is booming, like it is right now, the greatest limiter I face is not materials or capacity, it's manpower," says Terry Lillard, Sun State Components, Inc.

Component manufacturers, like most other manufacturing businesses across the country, are experiencing work force shortages, and the pool of qualified job candidates appears to be shrinking, due primarily to a perception about manufacturing businesses. Every area—from entry level workers, operators, and assembly line workers to technicians and office staff—is affected. While WTCA is undertaking a number of efforts to assist you in addressing this problem, none of them will succeed without significant participation (read: work) by manufacturers like yourself.

This article will explore the systemic causes of the work force shortage facing the structural building components industry, and set the stage as ***SBC Magazine*** explores this very important issue over the coming year in an effort to give you tools and ideas to fill your employment needs.

Component Manufacturer Struggles

Late last year, over 100 component manufacturers responded to an industry work force survey and every one of them responded that they were currently hiring for more than three positions and were planning on hiring between ten and 45 employees over the next six months.

In a more recent phone survey, only one manufacturer had not witnessed at least a 20 percent increase in the size of his work force over the last calendar year. These are strong indicators of the industry's direction: strong housing starts, more components, more opportunity for growth.

However, as companies look to expand their production capacity, they must also strive to fill the resulting new positions. That, more than the initial capital expenditure for expansion or new construction, can be the most challenging part. "I'm not confident I'll be able to meet my projected hiring needs over the coming year," said Steve Spradlin, Capital Structures. "Particularly in the area of production, there's just not enough availability."

Yet, for most manufacturers, production can be the least of their worries. Instead, it's a lack of qualified individuals to fill truss technician positions. In that same industry work force survey, 80 percent said truss technicians were the highest priority of their hiring efforts. Both Spradlin and Kendall Hoyd, Idaho Idaho Truss & Component Co., agreed that "finding and correctly identifying adequately educated individuals with an aptitude for truss design is very difficult."

For some, like Rick Parrino, Plum Building Systems, the biggest hurdle faced in putting together a sufficient work force is all the time and money it takes to get each employee in the door. Parrino said, "The cost of advertising, time devoted to interviewing, screening current employees, the list goes on and on—it's not only hard to find qualified individuals, it's expensive!"

The underlying problem is two-fold: awareness of the availability of jobs and the lack of people willing and able to work in the structural building components industry. To understand why that is, we need to first look at the systemic causes of this work force shortage.

Why Is There a Shortage?

In the 1980s, the federal government and various think tanks began exploring changes in America's demographics. Most of the studies concluded that work force shortages in manufacturing would begin to appear in the mid-90s. Their predictions came true, not only because of structural demographic changes, but because of a booming economy. More jobs were being created than could be filled by the available work force. It is a classic example of supply-demand economics. Too much demand, and not enough supply.

Today, that work force shortage continues to aggravate employers, even in a slower economy. The major factors to blame are economic restructuring, age distribution resulting from lower birth rates and educational attainment—all of which will continue to pose a significant challenge to this industry going into the future.

Economic Factors: The housing market is a cornerstone of both national and many local economies. That fact is not lost on most government officials, who are doing everything in their power to make it as easy as possible to build and own a home. From local property tax rates that rely heavily on commercial sources for revenue while sparing residential property, to federal tax breaks on everything from mortgage interest payments to credits when selling your home (which encourages an upgrade to a newer, bigger home), our government wants its citizens to own a house. Continued on page 54

Working for Your Workers?

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Undoubtedly, you are aware of the consequences of this fact. Regardless of the current slowing economy, and even a recent mild recession, housing starts have continued to surge. Fortunately, this has allowed the structural building components industry to expand and prosper while many other sectors of American business faced cutbacks or, at best, lean profits. However, continued growth during a concurrent period of declining supply of workers entering the manufacturing and home building sectors, has served to exacerbate the work force shortage.

Age Distribution: Baby Boomers. It is easy to lose perspective on why the generation of babies born in the forties and early fifties got that name. Sociologists point out that as GIs returned from European and Pacific front lines, and as America emerged as an industrial and economic giant at the conclusion of World War II, feelings of hope and optimism produced an unprecedented surge in the U.S. birth rate. Today, the Baby Boomer generation remains the single largest in our nation's history.

Odds are good that if you are reading this article and are concerned with this issue, you are a member of this generation. It is also likely that many members of your generation are beginning to contemplate, if not actually enter, the waning years of their careers. The exodus of the Baby Boomers from the active work force not only creates a vacancy larger than the available pool of workers to fill it, they are taking with them all of the advanced experience and leadership they possess. The later fact is possibly the most significant concern of those monitoring our nation's work force trends.

Educational Attainment: Add to this the intrinsic changes that have occurred since the Baby Boomer generation joined the rolls of the employed. It is almost a parental instinct to provide a better life for your children than that which you experienced, and in the case of Baby Boomers it has resulted in record enrollment in colleges and universities. A majority of Gen Xers and Yers treat a college diploma as the norm and a virtual requirement just to enter the work force.

One consequence of this shift beyond high school diplomas to college degrees relates to societal culture and perception. Regardless of whether it's manufacturing or construction, these younger generations do not perceive these jobs as sexy or capable of fulfilling their career goals. Parents, primarily Baby Boomers, also play a big role in perpetuating this assumption, and encourage their kids to pursue "white collar" jobs presuming them to be preferable career choices.

Can the Work Force Adapt?

Some analysts argue the U.S. pool of labor has a great ability to adapt and, in the long-run, adjusts to gaps between employment supply and demand. These analysts point to immigrant labor, people who are willing to work beyond the

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gardless of their country of origin, these individuals appear to embrace and excel at building component manufacturing jobs. As a result, they appear to have taken advantage of the industry's competitive wages and opportunities for economic and social advancement.

However, this alternative relies heavily on a continuation of the current open door policy the U.S. has with regard to immigration. If H.R. 4437, a bill recently passed by the U.S. House of Representatives that threatens to heavily curtail employer's access to immigrant labor, is an indication of Congress' view on immigration, this is not a viable long-term solution to the work force shortage facing our industry.

Is There a Solution?

Yes, but not an easy or simple one. Over the course of the next year, a new column in ***SBC Magazine*** will explore various aspects of the work force shortage facing our industry, and examples from within the industry of what can be done to begin systematically addressing it.

These aspects will include: homegrown technicians; promotion of the industry within local communities; building local relationships with high schools, technical colleges and other educational institutions; adapting to immigration reforms; fostering cooperative agreements with local work force boards sponsored by the Department of Labor; boosting retention through building a sense of collaboration and team amongst your employees; and, striking the right balance of employee benefits to lure potential employees and keep them. A short summary of these topics can be found in **Support Docs** at www.sbcmag.info.

Working for Your Workers?

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traditional retirement age, and disabled workers who can now contribute due to technological advancements. The problem is that, except for immigrants, these types of workers will contribute fairly little to the overall shortage facing our industry.

Others point to the increasing availability of immigrant labor as a viable source to fill short-term employment shortages. Our industry has taken full advantage of this opportunity, employing significant numbers of foreign-born citizens. Regardless of their country of origin, these individuals appear to embrace and excel at building component manufacturing jobs. As a result, they appear to have taken advantage of the industry's competitive wages and opportunities for economic and social advancement.

However, this alternative relies heavily on a continuation of the current open door policy the U.S. has with regard to immigration. If H.R. 4437, a bill recently passed by the U.S. House of Representatives that threatens to heavily curtail employer's access to immigrant labor, is an indication of Congress' view on immigration, this is not a viable long-term solution to the work force shortage facing our industry.

Work, Work & More Work!

Nothing gets done if you don't have the manpower to accomplish it. The current work force shortage facing the structural building components industry acutely makes that point. Having enough skilled and unskilled workers is not only vital as you try to grow and expand, it is necessary just to survive in such a competitive marketplace.

Join ***SBC Magazine*** over the coming year as we explore new ideas and industry best practices to gain and maintain a superior work force, so that you can sustain success into the future. Think of it as working for your workers! SBC

Coast to Coast

50 out of 50

For the past seventeen years, Lakeside Trailer has been leading the way in the component trailer industry with innovative ideas to ensure your delivery operations remain efficient in today's competitive market. We know there is no such thing as a "small problem" when it comes to completing your contract with a builder. That is why Lakeside has perfected ways to reduce or eliminate your transportation concerns such as loading, off-loading and wide loads.

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Tackling the not-so-simple question of what to do with injured employees.

PUT LIGHT DUTY weight subject

by Marisa Peters

Working in an industry that requires physically taxing work—such as heavy lifting, leaning over truss tables, repeating motions for entire shifts and so on—means that injuries are going to occur. Regardless of what safety programs are implemented, this is reality, and it must be dealt with in one way or another. The question is how it's being dealt with, and the goal is for each company's policy to be as effective as possible.

When employees are injured and cannot continue to do their normal jobs, one of two things usually happens. They may be sent home while recovering and collect workers' compensation during that time. Or, they may be given a variety of different, temporary jobs that meet doctor recommendations while they heal. This is called **light work duty**. The key is for these light duty jobs to indeed comply with physician recommendations—a requirement that isn't always easy to fill due to the rigorous nature of most jobs relating to component manufacturing.

Light Duty or No Duty

It's because of this requirement that many employees are simply sent home, which some believe pleases neither the employee nor the employer.

"The average person—[he or she] wants to come back to work," said Bob Kalina, human resource manager at Space Coast Truss in Cocoa, FL. "Most can't live on two-thirds pay (workers' compensation rate in Florida), even if that amount isn't taxed."

Where all requirements can be met, putting injured employees on light duty work instead of telling them to stay home can benefit manufacturers in different ways. In a recent ***SBC* One Minute Poll** (OMP), respondents listed saving on workers' compensation premiums and continuing to get at least partial productivity out of employees as reasons to put injured workers on light duty. There is, however, an opposite view.

Simon Evans, CEO of Bay Truss in Richmond, CA, said his employees stay home while recovering from injuries. Two of the most popular light duty jobs, office work and janitorial work, are not viable options at Bay Truss. Evans said office work isn't possible because his injured workers usually speak little to no English. Janitorial work isn't a viable option because Bay Truss already has a janitor, and Evans doesn't consider that work to be that light anyway. Therefore, Bay Truss tells its injured employees to stay home.

"This has two benefits," Evans said. "They (injured employees) get bored really fast, and will do everything they can to get back to their normal jobs. Also, it is better for the rest of the staff's morale."

However, only 3.4 percent of poll respondents said they do not put employees on light duty—meaning 96.6 percent choose light duty. The bigger question seems to concern the type of light duty work assigned, and why.

Debating Convention

Janitorial work is a common choice for light duty, with 29 percent of OMP respondents reporting they assign only janitorial work to light duty employees. The other 71 percent either do not ever assign janitorial work, or they assign a variety of jobs that may or may not include janitorial tasks.

OMP respondents who stick to janitorial light duty work for injured employees cited a variety reasons for doing so. Some said it is the only work they have available to offer that also fits doctors' parameters. Others said providing the incentive to get well is the primary motivation behind assigning janitorial work; employees tend to recover more quickly if they're given light duty jobs they don't particularly enjoy. And still others said janitorial work was the only light duty work most injured employees are qualified to do.

Tim Rouch, president and manufacturing manager of Gang-Nail Truss in Visalia, CA, is one of the CMs who does not include janitorial work in his light duty program. One reason Rouch gave for this policy is that janitorial work sometimes includes lifting, which may worsen some injuries. Another reason he mentioned is that janitorial work at times is perceived as punishment for getting injured, and this could negatively affect an employee's recovery time.

"The employee's physiological and psychological reaction to his medical treatment can be enhanced by the attitude his supervisor displays during the rehabilitation process," Rouch said. "Watching someone perform in a janitorial capacity is poorly suited toward that end."

Instead, Gang-Nail Truss assigns other temporary jobs, such as pairing plates—a favorite option of Rouch's, he said.

Burton Lumber and Hardware in Salt Lake City assigns office work to recovering employees about 80 percent of the time, and janitorial about 20 percent of the time, said Debbie Israelson, general manager. She also said people's reactions to janitorial work vary.

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at a glance

- When employees are injured and cannot continue to do their normal jobs, they are either sent home or placed on "light duty."
- It is important for light duty jobs to comply with physicians' recommendations.
- The key to successful recovery is to develop a program that makes employees feel valuable even if they are injured.

light duty jobs

The following list of light or modified duty jobs was compiled with One Minute Poll responses and interviews with sources.

janitorial

- Clean bathrooms, offices, the break room, the training center or the parking lot
- Sweep plant using a push broom

maintenance

- Paint metal rollers, awnings or line stripes
- Check fire extinguishers
- Yard work

office

- Sales/other professional positions
- Customer service
- Update insurance certificates
- Operate switchboard
- Technical support

other

- Perform safety audits
- Operate racker controls
- Light duty in the saw room
- Saw catcher
- Light duty at tables
- Cut small bulk for floor trusses
- Drive forklifts
- Put stickers under banded units of trusses
- Stack trusses
- Take empty lumber carts back to saw room
- Light assembly
- Sort
- Pack
- Visit jobsites
- Light duty helper on manufacturing floor
- Drill
- Block
- Run errands
- Deliveries

Light Duty, Weighty Subject

Continued from page 61

"I think some people definitely do have a problem with janitorial," Israelson said. "I think a good number of people are simply happy we would go to the effort of keeping them working. [To those who oppose janitorial work], I usually explain that they are the highest paid janitorial specialists I know."

Golden State Lumber, in Stockton, CA, also assigns both janitorial and office work to employees on light duty. Ralph Panttaja, wall panel manager, said he thinks some people feel more valuable when assigned office work as opposed to janitorial—but that this isn't the case for everyone.

"For some people that is true, but others cannot stand working inside so they would rather do [outdoor] janitorial work," he said.

Value & Variety

Nancy Frush, founder of Frush Ideas (a company dedicated to managing human resources, safety, workers' compensation programs and/or facilities), believes the key to a successful light duty program is developing one that makes employees feel valued. In fact, she said she prefers the term "modified duty" because, in her opinion, "light duty" sounds like it's not real work.

Frush was previously vice president of administration for H.M. Stauffer & Sons in Leola, PA, and one of the things she did for them was develop a modified work program that brought injured employees back to the plant as soon as possible.

"I wanted to develop a program that made the employees feel like they were still valuable even if they had an injury," Frush said. "I wanted employees to feel like they were respected and important."

Frush said companies should evaluate the skills and abilities of employees when choosing modified work for them to do. Looking at their résumés for past jobs, or even hobbies, may be helpful in assigning modified duty jobs. "We need to eliminate pigeon-holing people," she said.

One thing Frush recommends is having people from each department brainstorm and think of modified duty jobs they could offer injured employees. That way, those ideas and suggestions would be available the next time an employee is injured.

Duane Yurek, personnel director at Littfin Lumber Company in Howard Lake, MN, has a list of modified duty jobs requiring different degrees of physical exertion that he uses when assigning light duty work. The jobs are divided into four groups according to how physically demanding they are. Although not each listed job is always available, the detailed list serves as a good jumping off point, as well as a way to involve employees in the process.

"When we show this list to the employee, and make strong practical suggestions, they can pick things they feel capable of doing," Yurek said. "That empowerment gets them involved, and that helps it work."

The Second Generation of Light Duty

Many OMP respondents listed light duty jobs other than janitorial work that they assign to recovering workers. Among the most popular were:

- Light duty in the saw room
- Pair/pick/pull connector plates
- Escort wide load deliveries

For more light duty tasks, please see the sidebar on page 61.

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Light Duty, Weighty Subject

Continued from page 62

A few of Frush's suggestions were performing safety audits, checking fire extinguishers, operating switchboards or doing customer service work. Frush said that with the downsizing and consolidation happening at some companies, there's usually plenty of work to do. "You just need to evaluate what work needs to be done, and determine who's going to do it," she said.

Charitable Choice

And perhaps that work doesn't even need to relate to the industry. For example, Kalina is in the process of putting together a program for light duty that takes advantage of a vastly untapped work source—charities and non-profit organizations. He would send employees to volunteer at such places, and pay them their full wages for doing so. This way, employees could continue to get paid full wage, and the company can even take advantage of the fact that donating time to charities is tax deductible.

While this solution must be carefully considered from a state law and taxation perspective, it could be valuable in some cases. "It benefits us, it benefits the community, and I think there's a benefit to the employee," Kalina said.

In the past, Space Coast Truss has had to send employees home because no tasks in the plant met physician requirements. Then, as Kalina said, the employees are sitting at home and only getting paid two-thirds of what they normally make. "Light duty to a doctor often equates to no duty in a truss plant," he said. "The work is hot, heavy and hard."

One example Kalina cited is the 15-lb. rule. That is, if a doctor calls for no lifting over 15 pounds, it often means there's nothing in the plant the injured employee can lift. But that doesn't mean they need to sit at home. "They may not be able to lift a 2x4, but they can do other work," Kalina said.

Attempting to assess the situation and create some type of light duty program could be useful for at least one reason: a way to aid in controlling workers' compensation premiums.

Work such as answering phones, writing down appointments or people's names, or unpacking clothes—to name a few. So, Kalina has been contacting organizations like local blood banks, the American Red Cross and any other charitable organizations that would appreciate volunteers. So far, reactions have been positive. "I haven't established a program yet, but the response I'm getting is that it looks like it will fly," Kalina said.

No Easy Answer

As is evident from OMP results, there are many different ways of looking at light duty and how it affects employees and companies. An added complication is that a lot can depend upon an injured worker's perspective and attitude. This means it can be quite difficult to make anyone—let alone everyone—happy.

However, attempting to assess the situation and create some type of light duty program could be useful for at least one reason. As Yurek said, providing modified work duty for employees is a way to aid in controlling workers' compensation premiums.

"Even though we are maybe getting only 50 or 30 percent productivity from a recovering employee, that is direct savings in our workers' comp premium," he said.

If component manufacturers do decide to implement or continue with a light duty program, Frush said one thing that should be kept in mind is that companies will have to pay employees no matter what type of work they assign.

"You're going to have to pay them either way—if you accommodate them with work that makes them feel useful and like they have a purpose, or if you don't," she said. "So you might as well make the best use of employees." SBC

Thanks to Herb Hildebrand, Chuck Stillwaggon, Mike Stover, and Dan Kleczka of Casmin, Inc. for suggesting that SBC research and report on this topic.

Automation

by Jerry Koskovich, P.E.

straight talk

Where the industry is.....where it's going.....what it means to you.

This is the first in a series of informative articles on automation focused specifically on manufacturing structural building components. The articles will be authored by Jerry Koskovich, an automation forefather in our industry, with contributions from other automation specialists. The intent of the series is to provide manufacturers with greater background on manufacturing automation concepts and trends and how they impact our industry, and most importantly, how fabricators can determine their best automation path.

at a glance

- ❑ This is the first article in a year-long series by Jerry Koskovich on automation.
- ❑ It takes many, many years to perfect a machine, according to Koskovich.
- ❑ As the industry progresses in automation, some suppliers may have to change in order to properly accommodate our needs.

What started out as an automated simmer a few decades ago has now—by most anyone's definition—reached full boil. If you attended the BCMC show in October, you could almost see the steam—most every booth seemed to have the word "automated" in its sign, ours included.

While I've played a part in automation since the introduction of our component saw in 1985, I don't pretend to know exactly where the industry is. Or exactly where it's going. Or even exactly what the industry is right now—because of the kind of changes in industry fundamentals that are taking place.

But I will put all the automation cards I know down on the table and look at them together with you. This much is for sure—automation has brought about huge changes in the building components industry. And, at a minimum, fabricators are almost compelled to at least know what's going on if they're to survive, let alone prosper.

My concentration will be on automated plant equipment and largely as it applies to production and assembly of structural building components. I'll call on others within the industry to assist with these articles, certainly when it falls out of my area of expertise. Indeed, I may even call on some folks outside our industry—especially when they're in a manufacturing sector that has already gone through the transition to automation that we're going through now.

The Fully Automated Plant

For starters, I'll give you my definition of automation: any computer controlled machine or device that makes the process of producing and assembling building components more efficient. In addition, we may take a look at ANYTHING that makes the process faster, easier, safer, more accurate, or reduces the amount of labor required to do it—ideally, all of the above.

The ultimate, fully automated plant would operate something like this. A customer of yours would electronically transmit building plans to your sales and design office. With a push of a button or a click of a mouse, your design software would enable you to automatically translate the builder's plans to structural components, satisfying all the necessary engineering and building codes in the process.

The translated information would be electronically transmitted to your fabricating plant where computers would orchestrate most everything. Automated saws would cut and ID-code the components, automatically picking and feeding themselves the necessary material. Components would then be delivered to assembly stations via an automated conveyor system network which would sort and direct the components to the appropriate work station by reading their ID codes.

Having downloaded the component IDs and truss configuration to the press work station, an automated jigging system would quickly move pucks into position outlining the truss. An overhead projection system or laser would show workers exactly what size, orientation and position the plate was to be applied at every panel point.

With today's materials the following isn't practical, but in the ideal automation world, a robotic arm could pick and position the components and plates for assembly.

Once assembled, the finished trusses would be transferred to a stacker and banding location. Ideally the bundle would go directly onto the delivery truck bed, thereby creating a true just-in-time scenario. The truck would be equipped with a dash mounted GPS navigation system, giving complete routing directions. Since the site is likely a new address, it may only get the driver into the immediate area, but certainly he'd be no worse off than he currently is.

The business side of the software that monitors all of the preceding steps would then report back exactly how much the job cost and simultaneously generate an invoice for your builder-customer as the delivery truck pulled out of the yard.

All of this may sound somewhat futuristic, but there's little that I've just said that isn't already being done in this or

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Automation Straight Talk

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other industries. I've over-simplified everything, of course, and certainly there are many challenges to be overcome. Indeed, there will likely be other automated ways to accomplish the same things...but it's all possible.

Where We Are Now

Near as I can figure, less than half of the fabricating plants in our industry have even begun automating. Many plants are being "consumed" by larger conglomerates—sometimes, it would seem, just for their customer base.

I can't statistically support the notion that the larger plants or conglomerates are more automated. But I can say that most of those I see doing the consuming are seriously into automation or strongly considering it—even if it's by default—when purchasing an automated plant.

Truth is, to be competitive and profitable, most plants must invest in some automated equipment. When properly used and maintained, it's not just more efficient, in general it's dramatically more efficient. It is the one factor the user can control. Let's face it, most truss plants have certain fixed costs and then there are other costs that fluctuate with market demand.

Due to the factory facility and employees, overhead is more or less fixed. Every company has them and needs them. The other market-driven costs are lumber, truss plates, production labor and certain other commodities that vary with demand. Again, for the most part, unless you are a very large consumer, you probably won't have much of an advantage over your competition. That's where automation comes in.

Generalizing, whatever the automated machine, it likely does it faster, better and safer than the manual function/machine it was designed to replace.

Regardless of size, the truss and wall panel plants that are correctly using automated machines can produce more product faster. As a result, production per man hour will be far better. In other words, the cost per truss or wall will be greatly reduced.

A fringe benefit of automated equipment is it will probably put out a noticeably better product—components are cut more accurately, everything is professionally marked and fits together like it should.

The caveat is, all other factors being equal, automated plants can deliver jobs quicker, provide a higher quality product which enhances future business, and best of all, can bid jobs more competitively or, more to our liking, make greater margins. Conversely, less efficient plants will find it increasingly hard—overwhelmingly harder at some point—to compete against their more progressive competition.

The good news is that, again, due to the unique nature of how automation impacts the processes of our industry, even

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a small plant—say under a few million dollars in sales (we've equipped start-ups and plants with less than a million dollars in sales)—will find that they can pay for their automated equipment in labor savings alone in under 18 months. Often under 12 months. With larger operations as fast as nine months.

> It takes years to perfect the machines that are being (or have been) developed.

How Do You Get There?

When do you as a fabricator decide to take the plunge into automation? Unlike the electronics industry where today's TV is next month's obsolete model, our industry doesn't move that fast. Speaking from experience, it takes years to perfect the machines that are being (or have been) developed. Most never do truly attain perfection and that includes those we've developed over the decades.

When people ask me why we didn't have some newly introduced function on a machine they bought a few years earlier, I remind them that the new Lincoln doesn't look much like Henry's Model T. Yet both machines did what they needed to do when they were presented to the market.

My point is, if you're waiting for the perfect machine, you are likely going to be disappointed. Worse yet, you'll be losing market share while your competition is working with a less than perfect machine.

We, as well as most other manufacturers, try to make our what-to-innovate-next decisions based on where we'll achieve the biggest gains in efficiency for our customers. Once designed and proven out, we go ahead and get the equipment to the market—and design additional new features as we go, typically offering them as field upgrades.

We make sure the foundation equipment we're putting in the field performs, but we don't wait until we have every feature nailed down. And we certainly don't wait until we have every complementing piece of automated equipment we're planning designed and manufactured. We just make sure what we're doing today will fit into our fully automated plant plan of tomorrow.

And that's the first recommendation I'd make if you're waiting to automate. Don't wait until you have the time and money, or worse yet, for the perfect machine, before you start to automate. At a minimum, start educating yourself on what's available. Take a good hard look at your plant and identify the worst bottleneck. Then research automated ways to relieve it. Go for where you'll get the greatest efficiency for your investment dollar.

What Automation Means to You & Your Plant

There are the obvious benefits I've touched on—dramatically increased production, less labor required to do it, a higher quality finished product, and of course, a much improved bottom line. But the less obvious—like eliminating hazardous functions that might exist with pull saws and chop saws—are just as important, if not more so.

Employee motivation is probably the most obscure, but can have the greatest impact on your overall operation. Generally, employees like to do a good job, produce and sell an exceptionally good product, and have everything run smoothly and predictably. In order to assure that, you'll likely need to have at least one staff person to handle the TLC and troubleshooting when something goes wrong on your automated machine. Note: I said "when," not "if."

Then there are things like lumber optimization, made practical with automated equipment that can almost instantly cut lumber costs by six to eight percent. Even workers' compensation rates can be positively impacted by automation.

There are negatives to automation, too. Aside from the need for a qualified troubleshooter, you have to be prepared to look at your entire operation differently. For example, you can't double or triple your cutting efficiency and expect your assemblers to do so overnight (although we've found that production will typically increase by about twenty percent due to component accuracy).

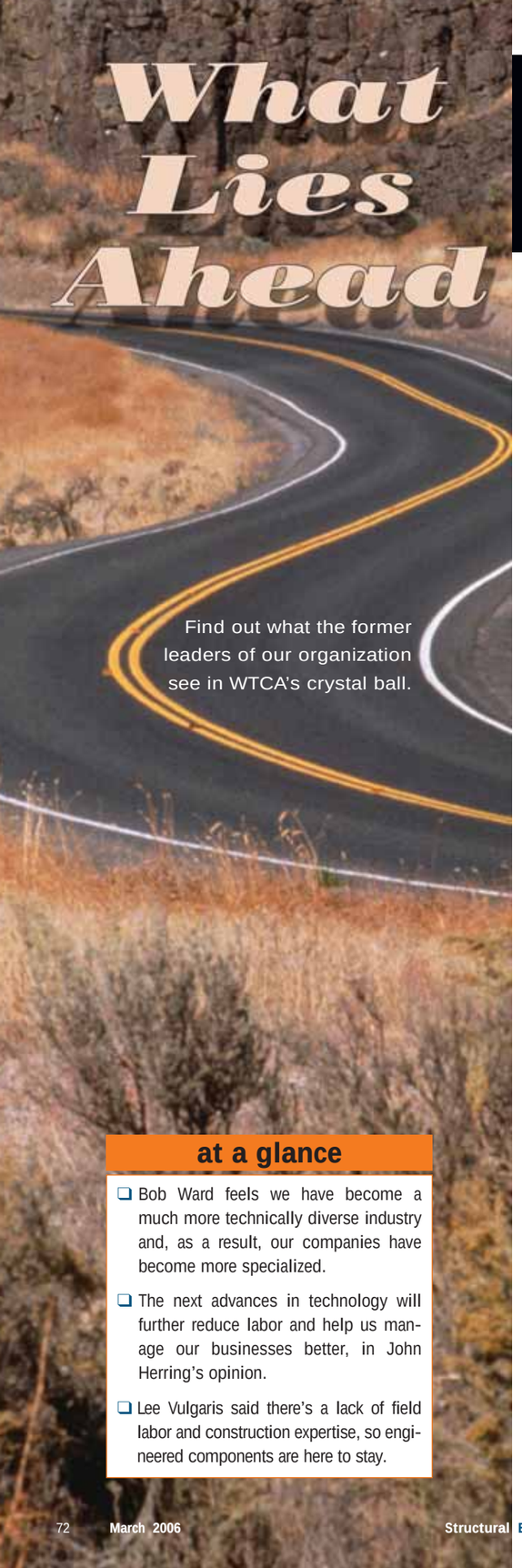
You probably shouldn't be buying the very cheapest grades of lumber and expect your automated equipment to handle it. As noted previously with robots, automated machines like a semblance of uniformity in the stock they're required to handle. However, if you evaluate all of the benefits of an automated material handling system you'll find that you are money ahead as compared to the dollars saved by using the lowest grades.

Indeed, as we progress down the automation path, some of the suppliers that serve our industry—like lumber suppliers—may well have to change their ways to properly accommodate our needs. Such things have happened in other industries.

I've barely scratched the surface of the topics I'll cover in this series. Look for future articles that will address some of the questions and solutions I've alluded to in greater detail: everything from how to evaluate automated equipment to figuring payback. Laying out new plants for automation and re-shuffling existing plant layouts to accommodate automation. Even ways to help you generate new customers like you never have in the past.

If there's an issue regarding automation that you'd like to see explored, just email ***SBC*** your request and—to the degree I'm capable (or with the help of others)—we'll try to tackle it. SBC

Jerry Koskovich is President of The Koskovich Company in Rochester, MN.



WTCA Presidents Foresee Technology, Software in Industry's Future

by Emily Patterson & Libby Maurer

At times, industry advancements and innovations are so fast and furious that it's difficult to imagine what else lies on the horizon. ***SBC*** asked WTCA Past Presidents to share their perspectives on the industry, look into their crystal balls and tell us what they see in the future for the structural building components industry. Here, they share their insights on what's to come.

Technology

First and foremost, the past presidents surveyed pointed to technology as one of the industry's driving forces both today and looking into the future. "Technology is big, especially in equipment," said 1999 President Richard Brown (Truss Systems). 1991 President Bob Ward (Southern Components) noted technology's far-reaching impact on the industry and its potential to touch every facet of the business. "I think we have become a much more technically diverse industry and, as a result, more specialized in our companies. Technology is being applied to every part of the manufacturing operation, not just the office area," he said.

Looking at the breadth of recent developments in technology, 1996 President Merle Nett (Richco Structures) noted that advancements in production will continue to push the envelope of efficiency and productivity. "I see paperless processes, and the continuation of the computerized world in saws and material handing," he said. "I think we've only scratched the surface," Nett added.

One area where many past presidents saw potential for component manufacturers to lead their operations to greater heights was software. "People are a lot more aware of costs. Emerging trends in software are providing more feedback much more quickly," said 2001 President Mary Pat Keller (Gateway Building Components). Noting how far the industry has come from designing on paper to fully integrated computerized design and manufacturing operations, many see software advancements carrying over further throughout the truss plant. "Technology is taking a big step," said 1990 President John Herring (A-1 Building Components). "It started out in software—those changes in the industry have been phenomenal. Now we're seeing it in automation and fabrication," he said.

Labor

With so many technological advances on the horizon, Herring noted the influence technology will have on labor needs in the industry. "I think the next part [of technology] will further reduce labor and help us manage our businesses better," he said. Nett echoed Herring's sentiments regarding the role technology will play in responding to labor demands in the truss plant. "With labor and employees, as it becomes more difficult to hire, retain and train, automation needs to have a major presence in our industry," he said.

Indeed, a number of past presidents said that finding the right balance between man and machine will be an important facet of how technology is implemented in the truss plant. "We'll need fewer people, but smarter people working in the plant," said Brown, implying that smarter technology requires more tech-savvy operators. "We need to continue to emphasize advances on the technology side, and we'll see even greater growth."

Codes

Along with advancements on the shop floor, past presidents also forecast an increased demand for roof trusses, floor trusses and wall panels. Herring pointed to changes in the building codes as an indicator that demand for structural building components will only increase in the future. "I think as codes become more homogenous, trusses will become more required—more of a culture and standard," he said. "Back when I was president, you really had to sell trusses versus stick framing. Now, it's in the codes. I think this will give trusses the opportunity to stand out and perform," he added.

Acknowledging that it can be laborious to interpret the various building codes, Herring stressed that getting to know the codes could be well worth the effort. "Dealing with all the regulations is tough, but it's also an opportunity," he said. That opportunity may also lie in providing input to the code community, according to Brown. "We can enhance our position and emphasize that area to take advantage of our knowledge. Every day, we see that governing bodies will come up with some odd ideas and go off the deep end without involving the agencies that will be affected by a change. Unless we take a strong hand in influencing agencies, this could negatively impact the industry," he said.

Testing

Looking into the future, past presidents expressed excitement over plans for WTCA's new research and testing facility, noting a multitude of benefits component manufacturer members will reap from an industry-run research program. "WTCA's new research and testing initiative should open new areas of marketing opportunities for our industry," said Ward.

Remarking how testing can impact every facet of the component business, from developing industry standards to helping to lower insurance premiums, 1992-1993 President Don Hershey (Alliance TruTrus) stressed the important role that testing will play in furthering the entire industry. "We need to get heavily involved in testing for the following reasons: to provide the membership the most cost effective methods for assembling our structural components; to provide the engineering community, building code bodies and building inspectors uniform industry standards; and to promote our quality assurance and safety programs for our membership to reduce their insurance liability," he said.

Construction & Whole House Design

When past presidents looked at the health of the industry in years to come, they forecast a positive prognosis. "Looking back on 40 years of construction, I think the industry is primed to gain a larger portion of the construction industry overall. I don't see how it cannot," said 1994 President Lee Vulgaris (Reliable Truss). "I think the industry has matured and it can get nothing but stronger due to the need for manufactured products like roof trusses and other components. There's a definite lack of field labor and construction expertise, so engineered components are here to stay."

Past presidents also raised the issue of whole house design and how it will influence, and in some cases, may revolutionize the structural building components industry. "The technology has gotten to the point where whole house designing is as easy as designing one truss," said 2000 President Roger Gibbs (SpaceJoist TE). "Software is running the ship right now and influencing people to make decisions. It's getting to the point where you can have one whole component—roof, wall and floor truss—versus three individual components," he said.

Speaking about whole house design, Keller noted that indicators are evident that this design method is on the rise. "Software is moving in the direction where you can design full houses," she said. Discussing the implications of whole house design on component manufacturers, Keller predicted it will impact a manufacturer's responsibilities on a project. "I think we'll take on more responsibility in terms of construction on a project, as customers look to us to be their single source for components, sheathing, decking and more. I don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing, but I think we're moving in that direction," she commented.

Keller also highlighted the likelihood that whole house design will bring additional changes to the structural building components industry and possibly even change the way that trusses are produced. "I think the industry will become more complicated as materials within a structure become more innovative. We may also see new materials used," she said.

Component Framing IS the Future

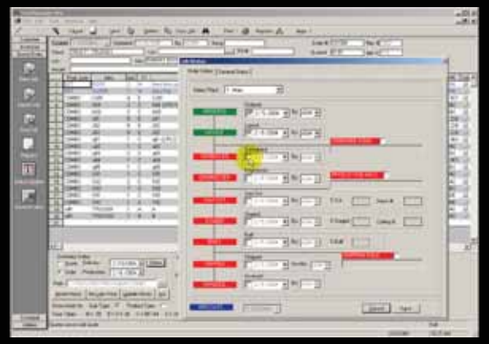
Whatever the future holds, the structural building components industry has a solid foundation from which to face challenges and create successes, thanks in large part to the dedication of WTCA's past presidents. In sharing their expertise, they've shown how far the industry has come and the many opportunities that tomorrow holds for component manufacturers. Or, as 2005 President Kendall Hoyd (Idaho Truss & Component Co.) summed it up, "Component framing IS the future." SBC

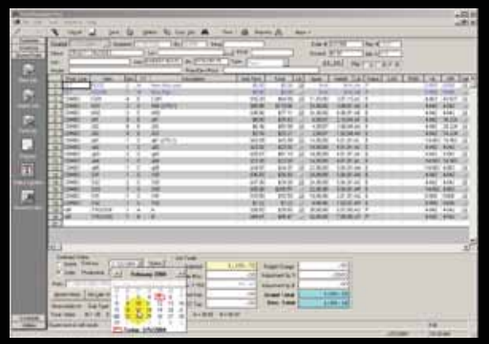
at a glance

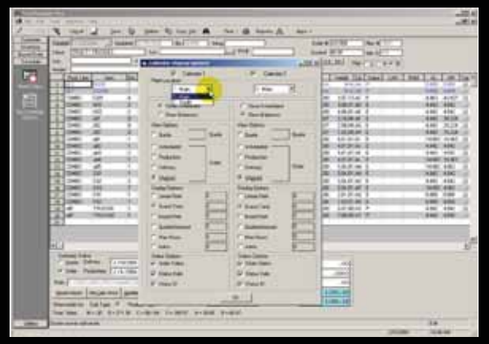
- Bob Ward feels we have become a much more technically diverse industry and, as a result, our companies have become more specialized.
- The next advances in technology will further reduce labor and help us manage our businesses better, in John Herring's opinion.
- Lee Vulgaris said there's a lack of field labor and construction expertise, so engineered components are here to stay.

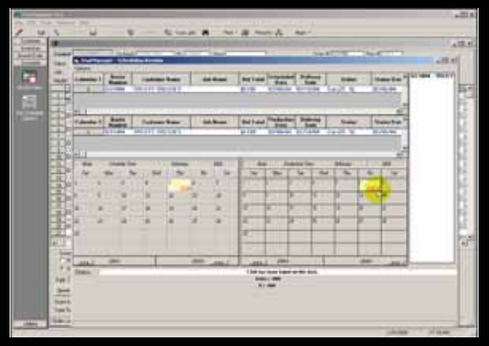
Our Genuine Innovation: Your Successful Future

"Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower."
–Steve Jobs, CEO, Apple; CEO, Pixar









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Advocating Congress: Taking on the "Little Legislatures"

by Sean D. Shields

When it comes to political advocacy in the structural building components industry, time is of the essence and resources are limited. Within those constraints, our advocacy efforts are rendered useless if we spread them out over all 535 members of Congress. Fortunately, it is possible—and prudent—to adopt a "divide and conquer" approach by targeting only the key committees with jurisdiction over the legislation affecting our industry.

Before we get into the committees on which manufacturers should focus their efforts, let's discuss the legislation/committee connection. Consider that Congress overall deals with close to three thousand bills and resolutions during each two-year session, and almost five hundred of those measures make it through the committee process.

In fact, it can be said a lion's share of the work accomplished in Congress is done through its committees. Sometimes referred to as "little legislatures," every member of Congress belongs to at least one committee, and in the Senate, Senators may serve on up to three.

Every bill introduced by a lawmaker is assigned to one or more committees, which form, for lack of a better metaphor, the first line of defense against bad legislation. In theory, the level of scrutiny a specialized committee of legislators (the Senate Judiciary Committee, for example) can bring to bear on a measure (an immigration bill) should be adequate to find its flaws and either fix them through amendments or defeat it.

For the structural building components industry, the committees to focus on in 2006 are dictated by our issues. Immigration reform is likely to be our top issue this year, and as a consequence, members of the House and Senate Judiciary Committees will be prime targets for our legislative advocacy efforts.

Another key issue for 2006 will be reform of regulations affecting small businesses and their employees. The committees with likely jurisdiction over legislation on this issue are the House Committee on Small Business; House Committee on Energy & Commerce; Senate Small Business & Entrepreneurship Committee; Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee; and Senate Health, Education, Labor & Pensions Committee.

Finally, reform of our nation's health care system in order to make health insurance more affordable for employers to offer employees will be an issue at the forefront of Congress' agenda this year. Due to the nebulous nature of this issue, it is difficult to predict where the key bills affecting our industry will end up. However, a good place to start is the same list of committees with jurisdiction over small business reform in addition to the Senate Finance Committee.

By targeting a few measures dealing with each of these issues, and the committees they're assigned to, we can bring our perspective to Congress by talking to only 20-30 lawmakers for each bill instead of lobbying all 535. That's only five percent of the whole, and a realistic goal for our industry.

The bottom line: If you live and work in any of the states listed on page 77, you are the constituent of a key lawmaker in our advocacy efforts this year, and your industry needs your help! Consider registering and attending the ***SBC*** Legislative Conference in Washington, DC (May 10-12), scheduling a meeting or plant tour with your lawmaker while they are in town, or engaging in your lawmaker phone call and letter writing efforts through the Legislative Action! emails.

Of course, *no matter what state you live in,* active participation is the key! In the April issue, this column will explore why developing relationships with lawmakers is beneficial to you beyond influencing public policy. SBC

a note on committees: There are four basic types of committees: standing, select/special, joint and conference. Each of these committees, no matter the type, is given jurisdiction over a scope of issues, which is generally described by the name of that committee. In other words, the House Committee on Transportation & Trade considers legislation that broadly addresses either transportation or trade issues.

Standing committees are permanent and consist of only lawmakers from that chamber (i.e., Senate committees only have Senators). Select/special committees are created by their respective chambers for specific purposes. While they are not considered permanent upon their creation, many of the ones that exist today, like the Special Committee on Ethics, appear to be around for good.

As the name suggests, joint committees have a mixture of Senators and Representatives to address administrative issues and conduct studies. Finally, conference committees also consist of a mixture of lawmakers and are quickly formed and disbanded to work out disagreements between differing versions of the same bill passed by the House and the Senate.

Alabama:
Senator Jeff Sessions (Labor, Judiciary)
Representative Spencer Bachus (Judiciary)

Arizona:
Senator Jon Kyl (Finance, Judicial)
Representative John Shadegg (Commerce)
Representative Jeff Flake (Judiciary)

California:
Senator Diane Feinstein (Judiciary, Energy)
Representative Henry Waxman (Commerce)

Idaho:
Senator Larry Craig (Energy)
Senator Michael Crapo (Finance)
Representative Butch Otter (Commerce)

Iowa:
Senator Charles Grassley
(Chair Finance, Judiciary)
Senator Tom Harkin (Labor)

Kentucky:
Senator Jim Bunning (Finance, Energy)
Representative Ed Whitfield (Commerce)

North Carolina:
Senator Richard Burr (Energy, Labor)
Representative Howard Coble (Judiciary)

New Mexico:
Senator Jeff Bingaman (Finance, Labor, Energy)
Senator Pete Domenici (Chair of Energy)
Representative Heather Wilson (Commerce)
Representative Tom Udall (Small Business)

New York:
Senator Charles Schumer (Finance, Judiciary)
Representative Eliot Engel (Commerce
Representative Vito Fossella (Commerce)

Ohio:
Senator Mike DeWine (Judiciary, Labor)
Representative Steve Chabot
(Judiciary, Small Business)
Representative Patrick Tiberi (Workforce)

Oregon:
Senator Gordon Smith (Finance, Energy)
Senator Ron Wyden (Finance, Energy)
Representative Greg Walden (Commerce)

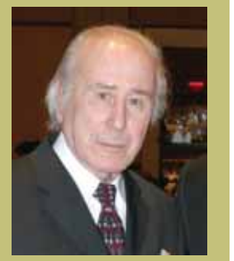
Tennessee:
Senator Bill Frist (Finance, Judiciary)
Senator Lamar Alexander (Labor)
Representative William Jenkins (Judiciary)
Representative Marsha Blackburn (Commerce)

Utah:
Senator Orrin Hatch (Finance, Labor, Judiciary)
Representative Chris Cannon (Judiciary)

Wisconsin:
Senator Herb Kohl (Judiciary)
Senator Russ Feingold (Judiciary)

In Memoriam

Robert E. Mort



Robert (Bob) E. Mort, 84, passed away at his residence in Hermitage, PA, on December 12, 2005, after an extended illness.

Mort was born on March 17, 1921, in Poland, OH. He was an alumnus of Poland Seminary High School, the U.S. Army Midwestern Signal School, Youngstown State University and Swartz School in Pittsburgh. Mort married wife Donna R. Haessly in 1947.

Mort spent much of his career in the steel products and construction industry, and was considered an icon. He was the president and chief executive officer of Inter-Lock Steel Co. He held the same titles at sister companies Unity Machine Tool and Die Co. and Standard Aluminum Company of America. Together, these companies supplied industrial machinery and other steel products to the construction industry. Inter-Lock was eventually sold to MiTek Industries. Mort was one of the founding members of the Truss Plate Institute (TPI) and the Component Manufacturers Council (CMC). He served two terms as TPI president (1977 and 1991).

Mort was a decorated war veteran, having served during World War II with the 232nd Signal Company on detached service with the 7th Australian Infantry Division and other combat units throughout the Pacific theater of operations on detached service.

Throughout his life and especially in his retirement, Mort was an active community leader. He founded the Shenango Valley Urban League and Hickory Business and Professional Men's Association and was instrumental in raising funds for the establishment of Shenango Valley Osteopathic Hospital. He was a member of Free and Accepted Masons Lodge 686, the Zem Zem Shrine of Erie and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Mort was also a member of the First Presbyterian Church of Sharon, PA.

Beyond his dedication to community service, Mort's hobbies included flying and sport fishing. He wrote two books chronicling his early life, World War II experiences and children's stories.

He is survived by his wife; three children, Patricia Mort, Thomas Mort and Mary Haessly; eight grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his beloved son, Robert E. Mort Jr., his parents, five brothers and two sisters.

A funeral service for Mort was held on December 17, 2005, at the J. Bradley McGonigle Funeral Home Inc. Large attendance numbers revealed just how missed Bob will be. Bob's son Tom Mort was touched that so many of Bob's friends and acquaintances attended the funeral. Tom commented on why his father was liked by so many. "Bob was genuine and acted with integrity in both business and in personal relationships. What you see is what you got with Bob," he remembered.

Memorial contributions may be made in his memory to Prince of Peace Center, 502 Darr Ave., Box 89, Farrell, PA, 16121; or to Keystone Kids Program in care of Keystone Blind Association, 1230 Stambaugh Ave., Sharon, PA, 16146.

Watch for an in-depth account of Robert Mort Sr.'s contribution to the industry in an upcoming issue of ***SBC Magazine.*** [Source: The Sharon Herald, Sharon, PA] SBC

Submissions to "In Memoriam" can be emailed to editor@sbcmag.info. Photos are encouraged and will run as space allows. Submissions may be edited for grammar, length and clarity.

Housing Starts

Housing starts increased 14.5% in January to 2.276 million (SAAR), the highest level since March 1973. Weather was the primary reason for the surge as the unseasonably warm January encouraged more starts than normal in the northern half of the country. The single-family sector was up 12.8% to 1.819 million SAAR, and multi-family increased 21.9%. Permits, which are less affected by weather, were up a more modest 6.8%.

U.S. Housing Starts

Millions - Seasonally Adjusted Annual Rate (SAAR)

U.S. Totals	Jan	Dec(rev.)	% Change
Starts	2.276	1.988	14.5%
Permits	2.217	2.075	6.8%
Single Family			
Starts	1.819	1.613	12.8%
Permits	1.685	1.645	2.4%
Multi Family			
Starts	0.457	0.375	21.9%
Permits	0.532	0.430	23.7%
Starts and Permits By Region:			
NE Starts	0.217	0.168	29.2%
NE Permits	0.212	0.207	2.4%
MW Starts	0.371	0.300	23.7%
MW Permits	0.391	0.339	15.3%
S Starts	1.177	1.083	8.7%
S Permits	1.080	1.019	6.0%
W Starts	0.511	0.437	16.9%
W Permits	0.534	0.510	4.7%

Analysis & Outlook: Although actual starts in January were up a substantial 11.3%, the seasonality factor made the increase look even stronger. All this is just to point out that monthly starts can fluctuate significantly, and that means we should focus on trends: (1) Interest rates are going up with the 30-year mortgage averaging 6.15% in January, compared with 2005's average of 5.86%. NAHB expects the 30-year mortgage to average 6.5% in 2006. This will increase the monthly payment on a typical mortgage by a little less than $1000 per year, which will drop a growing number of first time buyers from the market. This should show up in better multi-family starts over the next two years. (2) The key to housing is jobs, income and interest rates. Rates are driven by inflation expectations, which in turn are impacted by risk or uncertainty. While we expect inflation to remain relatively tame, one must consider the risk associated with geopolitical concerns that add "risk premiums." With terrorism remaining a concern, any up tick increases risk and that usually translates into problems for the world economy. (3) New home price gains are starting to moderate with the median price increasing 7.4% in 2005, down considerably from the 13.3% increase in 2004. The inventory of new and existing homes for sale are at all time highs, which make the market more vulnerable to sudden shifts in demand–something to monitor. (4) Builders should get a break in building material prices for wood products in 2006 as demand capacity ratios fall in response to increasing supply in the face of moderately lower housing demand. In summary, as long as the "wild cards" don't come into play, housing should remain healthy in 2006—single-family will pull back some while multi-family is expected to make modest gains. 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.

Builder Banter

Rural Builders Going to Town

As cities continue to grow and expand into the countryside, builders who work on farms and rural housing projects have to adapt to working in the city. Power lines, gas lines, trees, landscaping, neighbors, and more zoning restrictions and building codes are all issues that rural builders are learning to manage.

Elliot Christensen, a sales consultant for Morton Buildings in Monticello, MN, has witnessed the differences that accompany city building. "When you do work in town there are more inspections, more zoning concerns, and more meetings to go to, but we take these projects because, these towns are within our sales territory. Second, the countryside is shrinking. And, finally, construction projects in towns can provide some of our high-dollar commercial jobs."

Building in town can also be more complicated due to restrictions inhibiting maneuvering room and space to store materials. On the other hand, building in the city requires less travel to the jobsite, lumberyards and material suppliers. [Source: *Rural Builder,* Dec 2005, p.20-23]

The Power Behind Cordless Tools

Power tools may soon be getting an exciting new makeover in the power department. Lithium-ion technology, more commonly associated with laptops, cell phones and digital cameras is showing promising results for power tools. High-voltage batteries often have weight and safety restriction and never seem to last as long as needed, but the size and weight of compact lithium-ion batteries present endless possibilities and can deliver more cycles than current power tool battery technology. "With this technology, you can beat the cord; that is, you can get more power from a battery than from the outlet in the wall," said Ric Fulop, co-founder and vice president of A123Systems. "It's time for the construction world to get excited about the innovation this technology will make possible." [Source: www.jlconline.com]

Builder Confidence Unchanged in February

Indicating stabilizing conditions in the nation's single-family housing market, home builder confidence remained unchanged in February from levels gauged in each of the past two months, according to the National Association of Home Builders/Wells Fargo Housing Market Index (HMI), released on February 15.

February marks the third consecutive month in which the HMI has held at 57, and the second consecutive month in which there has been no change posted in the index component that gauges current single-family home sales.

"After several record-breaking years for home sales, builders are anticipating a return of the market to a healthy and steady pace," said David Pressly, a home builder from Statesville, NC, and NAHB president. He noted that any number above 50 on the index indicates that more builders view conditions as good than poor in their markets. [Source: NAHB Press Release, 2/15/06, www.nahb.org.] SBC

Email ideas for this department to builderbanter@sbcmag.info.

Housing Market Index 2005-06 (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.

Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan06	Feb
70	67	70	72	70	67	65	68	61	57	57	57

Source: National Association of Home Builders

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

Upping the Ante: The Iowa Chapter's Carbeck Challenge

by Anna L. Stamm

Since 2002, the Iowa Chapter has challenged all WTCA Chapters to match its contribution of $1,000 to the Carbeck Structural Components Institute and this year it upped the ante. To mark the 4th anniversary of the challenge, the Iowa Chapter has made a $1,500 donation to Carbeck and urges all chapters to follow suit.

Many chapters have responded to the Iowa challenge in the past, including Arizona, Illinois, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, Northwest, Southern Nevada, South Florida and Texas. With the Arizona Chapter already contributing $1,000 and the Northwest Chapter contributing $2,000, this may be the most successful year yet! In addition, chapters are encouraged to take the challenge one step further and conduct local educational efforts. The goal of Carbeck is to educate firefighters across the country, improve fire safety and present the facts, not myths, surrounding the performance of structural building components. Carbeck's "The Fire Performance of Wood Trusses" CD has been a great success since its creation in 2002. With a new CD being created that is completely revising the existing training programs and adding great new content as well, this CD and our Carbeck online training course will be available by March 15.

As stated by the Iowa Chapter:

> "Please accept the enclosed $1,500 check from the Iowa Truss Manufacturers Association to the Carbeck Structural Components Institute to be used to further the initiative to educate firefighters across the country. It is our sincere hope that we will achieve the goal of improving fire service knowledge and safety when it comes to the performance of metal plate connected wood trusses in a fire situation. We would also appreciate your extending a challenge to the other WTCA Chapters across the nation to consider a contribution to the Carbeck Institute so it can afford to increase its efforts in this area of fundamental importance to our industry."

Whether it is financial support or local training with the fire service, the WTCA Chapters can and will make a difference. Together, we will foster greater marketplace knowledge and ensure our industry's future is even more successful than it is today. SBC

Chapter Highlights

Colorado Truss Manufacturers Association

The Colorado Chapter held its annual holiday party and meeting on December 14 in Denver. Members and their spouses received updates on news from WTCA and chapter activities, including a presentation to 20 building officials in Westminster in November. The slate of chapter officers and board was discussed, and it was agreed that Dennis Wilson would remain Chapter President and no changes would be made this year. The 2006 chapter meeting dates were confirmed for March 14, June 13, September 12 and December 12. Last but not least, the attendees enjoyed after dinner entertainment by an illusionist.

Midwest Chapter Meeting

On January 18, the Iowa Truss Manufacturers Association (ITMA) and the Missouri Truss Fabricators Association (MTFA) were pleased to sponsor a special Midwest Chapter meeting. Held at Prairie Meadows Racetrack & Casino in Altoona, IA, this meeting welcomed WTCA Legal Counsel Kent Pagel as guest speaker. Kent delivered a presentation on "Successfully Negotiating an Acceptable Customer Contract," which focused on general considerations to follow when reviewing a customer's proposed purchase order or subcontract agreement, a review of problematic provisions from a sample agreement, and guidelines on how to address all of these issues. In addition, Kent provided an overview of WTCA's newest online training and certification program—ORisk: Online Risk and Liability Management. This program will address four primary areas: risk management techniques, insurance, customer contracts, and claims and litigation handling. Many attendees were amazed by the information they were not taking into consideration and everyone agreed it was an afternoon well spent.

Following Kent's presentation, the Iowa Chapter conducted its regular January meeting complete with officer elections. Tom Lambertz of Roberts & Dybdahl was elected as the new Chapter President. Remaining in their positions were David Mitchell of Engineered Building Design as Vice President and Ray Noonan, Jr. of Cascade Mfg Co as Secretary/Treasurer. The members authorized their annual Carbeck Challenge (see the Chapter Spotlight at left). They also discussed their winter TTW schedule. The 2005/2006 Education Committee is focused on presenting Fire Performance of Wood Trusses workshops to the Fire Service in Iowa. Thanks to the efforts of Al Esch and Senator Tom Hancock, there are plans for eight regional and one Ames presentations in conjunction with the State of Iowa Fire Service Training Bureau. Additionally, presentations to three volunteer Fire Departments are planned. Members were very pleased to hear more details on the upcoming February presentation at the Ames Fire School since Ames represents approximately 800 fire fighters throughout the region.

ITMA's next meeting will be its annual legislative meeting, so state and local representatives will be encouraged to attend. Since turnout for this meeting is generally better on Mondays, the date was changed to March 20.

Missouri Truss Fabricators Association

Despite the snow, the Missouri Chapter held its winter meeting as planned on December 8 in Columbia. Chapter members John Hogan and John Fitzgerald delivered an update on the meeting they and WTCA/MTFA staff had in late November with Gary Marker, Division Manager of Plans Review for Kansas City, on their point of view regarding sealed placement diagrams. They will continue to monitor this situation and work with staff until there is a resolution. Also highlighted at the chapter meeting was the request for a truss education program at the Johnson County Contractor's Licensing Spring Educational Seminar during its semi-annual conference February 15-17 at the Overland Park Convention Center in Kansas City. Its fall seminar hosted more than 5100 student seatings in nearly 70 classes over 5 days, so this promised to be a great opportunity for the chapter. In addition to sponsoring publications for the seminar, the chapter agreed to purchase its own laptop and projector so that all chapter members would be able to deliver educational presentations on behalf of the association.

Under chapter business matters, Jasper Diedericks of Heartland Truss was recognized as the new Chapter President following an electronic balloting of the membership. The attendees also discussed their upcoming joint meeting with the Iowa Chapter (see "Midwest Chapter Meeting"). The next Missouri Chapter meeting was set for March 9.

Southern Nevada Component Manufacturers Association

The Southern Nevada Chapter held its January meeting at its new location, Memphis Championship Barbecue on Rainbow Blvd. The Code Committee reported that the first draft of the areas of responsibility document for the Structural Engineers Association (SEASoN) has been reviewed and commented on by WTCA/SNCMA staff. The Code Committee reviewed WTCA's response and will have the changes incorporated into the first edition of the final draft. Members reported no further issues with the City of Las Vegas regarding sealed hanger connection schedules, submitted separately from placement plans, outside of inconsistency from City of Las Vegas plans examiners.

Under new business, the chapter elections were held. The nominations were Glenn McClendon for President, Ron Barrette for Vice President, Glen Redmond for Secretary and Art Ramirez for Treasurer. All nominees were approved by the members.

Rich Menge and Bill Bolduc reported on their educational presentation to the City of North Las Vegas (CNLV) building department to address a list of topics and questions the CNLV had presented concerning manufactured trusses. A follow up meeting was scheduled for February 2 to further discuss and clarify the CNLV concerns and questions. Bill Bolduc also informed members that he recently attended a Southern Nevada Home Builders Association (SNHBA) meeting in which local jurisdictions presented various amendments to current codes, with one amendment in regard to truss loading requirements (concurrent vs. non-concurrent). Members agreed to request that this amendment not be adopted at this time, rather include it in the adoption process of the 2006 Code. Rich Menge will work with WTCA/SNCMA staff on an industry response to SNHBA.

Members briefly discussed developing an educational program to present to framing contractors on the handling and bracing of trusses. The location, time and materials were not determined, but the matter would be discussed at the upcoming board meeting and the group will work with WTCA/SNCMA staff on implementation. All members were encouraged to attend the monthly chapter board meetings, held on the third Thursday of the month. The next general membership meeting will be held on April 20. The chapter will also hold a golf tournament on June 1 at Las Vegas Paiute Resort.

Truss Manufacturers Association of Texas

Turnout was off the charts as the Texas Chapter held its January membership meeting at La Margarita Restaurant in San Antonio. Always a popular destination well known for its excellent food, the restaurant hosted a lively chapter meeting. The slate of chapter officers for 2006 was recognized by the membership: President Ben Doyle, Vice President Paul Johnson, Treasurer Shaun Allen and Secretary Gary Walls. Outgoing President Al Sifuentes also passed the torch to Ben on the Annual WTCA Membership Drive. The Texas Chapter has won the last two years in a row and has its sights set on keeping possession of the #1 Chapter trophy for another year. Since it has already been very successful recruiting local supplier companies into the chapter, there is no guarantee that they will succeed in a "three-peat," but they are committed to winning.

Because the Texas Chapter is hosting the March WTCA Open Quarterly Meeting, the meeting attendees were treated to a presentation from Frank Klinger that he will deliver at the Board Meeting in San Antonio. Following the precedent set by the Colorado Chapter last year, the Texas Chapter is pleased to welcome the WTCA Board and Committee members to their state and would like everyone to get a taste of the industry in Texas.

With this year's Building Component Manufacturers Conference in Fort Worth, the Texas Chapter members are eager to be very supportive our industry's show. Several ideas were discussed on activities or sponsorship opportunities for the chapter to work on with the BCMC Committee. More information will be gathered before a decision is made.

Under chapter business, preparations were discussed for the chapter's annual participation in the building officials show (BPI, formerly BOAT) being held at University of Texas-Arlington this spring. The date for the next chapter meeting and golf tournament was set for April 20 in Spring Branch at the River Crossing Golf Club.

Wood Truss Council of the Capital Area

For its January meeting, the Capital Area Chapter welcomed two guest speakers on code changes and quality control: Charlie Goehring, Director of Inspection for TPI, and Tony Piek, In-Plant WTCA QC Project Leader at WTCA. Mike Cassidy, Executive Director of TPI was also in attendance. Charlie discussed the most recent TPI Board meeting decisions and 2006 priorities including an update on the TPI inspection program, lumber inspections by TPI, the creation of the third party inspection standard and the use of WTCA QC by TPI as part of its inspection process. Tony covered the most recent work by the WTCA Quality Control Committee and the anticipated 2006 priorities, including how WTCA QC is being used as a management information system and helping plants improve their operations, the latest on plant certifications and best practices, online training for inspectors and third parties, truss builder training and how the QC and Safety programs provide the foundation for this, and the development of a lumber standard for tracking lumber quality within WTCA QC. The attendees asked several pertinent questions and the meeting was enjoyed by all.

Under upcoming events, the next chapter meeting will be held on April 12 at the Hyatt Dulles in Herndon, VA. The members are also considering ways to participate in the Annual Legislative Conference, May 10-12, in Washington, DC, on such as hosting a reception for the WTCA attendees and legislative guests.

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retirements

Jerry Robertson • Orgain Components

After more than 33 years of contributing to the truss industry, Jerry Robertson of Orgain Components in Clarksville, TN, retired on December 31, 2005.

In 1972, following three years of training as a carpenter's apprentice, Robertson went to work for Old Hickory Lumber. He set up "dealerships" for roof trusses and other lumber, acting as a broker for truss manufacturers to sell to lumber yards. After three and a half years, Robertson left Old Hickory Lumber to become a dealer for Kirkpatrick Components in Nashville, TN. There he sold components to lumber dealers, one of which happened to be Orgain Components. In April 1978, Jerry became an estimator for Orgain, a position that he would hold for the next eight years.

In early 1986, the owner of Orgain asked Robertson if he would be interested in helping to open a new truss plant. Robertson accepted the proposal and began researching and visiting potential suppliers. The plant was built and truss production was up and running by October 1986. Jerry recalls the early days of the new plant: "We started with one truck, one table and five employees and totaled $250,000 in sales in our first year." Since then, Orgain has grown to three roof truss lines, a floor truss line, a fleet of five trucks, 40 employees and now totals over $5 million in sales.

Robertson feels it is beneficial to be involved in state and regional chapters of WTCA, and actively participated in his local chapter, the Tennessee Truss Manufacturers Association (TTMA). "My involvement with TTMA has really helped me in the past when I've needed advice about an issue," he remarked. Robertson was vice president of TTMA for two years (2001-2003), and then served as president from 2003-2005. "One of the things I was able to help with was improving the quality of meeting locations and speakers. I felt that really improved turnout at the meetings," he stated. Bobby Tomer will be Orgain's new representative to TTMA. The new TTMA president is Ted Kolanko of 84 Components.

Even though Jerry is retiring, there will still be two Mr. J. Robertsons at Orgain. Jerry's two sons, Jeff and Jeremy, have both worked at Orgain for twelve years. Jeremy is taking over his father's position as Component Division Manager after starting in the saw shed and working his way up through each department. Jerry's other son, Jeff, is Orgain's head designer. As for Jerry, he is looking forward to having more time for his favorite hobbies, which include traveling cross-country on his Harley, seeking refuge on his 60-acre farm and spending time on his house boat. "[They] say I'll be bored, but for now I'm enjoying my freedom."

That isn't to say that he won't miss his work. "I was lucky to be with Orgain for as long as I was," Robertson said. "I'm going to miss the friends I've made through my involvement in WTCA and TTMA."

Calvin Bole • MiTek Industries, Inc.

On December 31, 2005, after 18 years of contributing to MiTek's success, Calvin Bole, director of business development, retired.

Cal's primary focus has always been gaining new accounts for MiTek. Since starting with the company in 1987, Cal has ushered more than 150 new customers into the MiTek family, which is a company record. Over the years Cal has also closed numerous machinery deals with the company. Prior to becoming director of business development, Cal was a regional sales manager with responsibility for nearly 150 existing customers in addition to the many prospects that he was always working on. Prior to discontinuing it, Cal had received the "Salesman of the Year" award for four consecutive years.

Known for his tireless, customer-sensitive work ethic and large geographic territory, Cal has a passion for cold-calling and developing relationships with MiTek customers. "I'm proud to have brought in new accounts, both big and small," he said. "My specialty was making cold calls to gain more customers."

Cal's philosophy on sales was also a highlight of his career. The salesperson holds a very fundamental place in a company, he said, a responsibility he took very seriously. "I enjoyed working above and beyond eight-hour days and five-day weeks to serve my customers," he said. "During my career, I understood that the customer was ultimately paying the check."

Beyond his career with MiTek, Cal greatly enjoyed getting to know manufacturers and suppliers involved in WTCA, and at various times helped at the BCMC show.

Although Cal has retired from MiTek, he is looking forward to pursuing part-time work as a consultant for new operations. In addition Cal is eager to develop new hobbies in retirement, after an intense career of serving the industry. "All I have ever done is work, so I'll have to learn something else now," he said. Cal and his wife Donna plan to continue to make the Phoenix area their home base. They are looking forward to more of the vacation-type traveling that they have enjoyed together and will be getting a bit more serious about the elusive game of golf. Cal is also involved in his local church as a deacon. SBC

Thanks to Tom Manenti of MiTek for contributing to this piece.

submissions:

Retirement submissions can be emailed to editor@sbcmag.info. Photos are encouraged and will run as space allows. Submissions may be edited for grammar, length and clarity.

Calendar of Events

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

March

- 8: Chapter Teleconference. All members are welcome to participate! For more information, contact Anna at WTCA-National, 608/310-6719 or email astamm@qualtim.com.
- 8: Southwest Florida Truss Manufacturers Association (SWFTMA) Chapter Meeting. For more information, contact Chapter President Jim Swain at 239/437-1100 or jimsw@carpentercontractors.com.
- 9: Alpine Educational Workshop, St. Charles, MO. For more information please visit www.alpeng.com.
- 9: Missouri Truss Fabricators Association (MTFA) Chapter Meeting. For more information, contact Dani at WTCA-National, 608/310-6735 or dbothun@qualtim.com.
- 9: Wood Truss Council of Michigan (WTCM) Chapter Meeting. For more information, contact Anna at WTCA-National, 608/310-6719 or email astamm@qualtim.com.
- 14: California Engineered Structural Components Association, Southern Region (CalESCA-South) Chapter Meeting. For more information, contact Anna at WTCA-National, 608/310-6719 or astamm@qualtim.com.
- 14: Colorado Truss Manufacturers Association (CTMA) Chapter Meeting. For more information, contact Chapter President Dennis Wilson at 303/307-1441 or DWilson@HomeLumber.com.
- 15: California Engineered Structural Components Association, (CalESCA-North) Chapter Meeting. For more information, contact Anna at WTCA-National, 608/310-6719 or astamm@qualtim.com.
- 15: North Carolina/South Carolina (WTCNC & SCCMA) Joint Chapter Meeting. For more information, contact Anna at WTCA-National, 608/310-6719 or astamm@qualtim.com.
- 16: South Florida WTCA (SFWTCA) Chapter Meeting. For more information, contact contact Dani at WTCA-National, 608/310-6735 or dbothun@qualtim.com.
- 21: Central Florida Component Manufacturers Association (CFCMA) Chapter Meeting. For more information, contact Dani at WTCA-National, 608/310-6735 or dbothun@qualtim.com.
- 24: WTCA Regional Workshop & Conference, New Orleans, LA. (Date changed from March 17.) All members are welcome to participate! For more information, contact Anna at WTCA-National, 608/310-6719 or astamm@qualtim.com.

April

- 7: WTCA Regional Workshop & Conference, Las Vegas, NV. All members are welcome to participate! For more information, contact Anna at WTCA-National, 608/310-6719 or astamm@qualtim.com.
- 11: Georgia Component Manufacturers Association (GCMA) Chapter Meeting. For more information, contact Chapter President Bob Burkett at 770/534-0364 or bob.burkett@gamtn.com.
- 12: Chapter Teleconference. All members are welcome to participate! For more information, contact Anna at WTCA-National, 608/310-6719 or email astamm@qualtim.com.
- 12: Southwest Florida Truss Manufacturers Association (SWFTMA) Chapter Meeting. For more information, contact Chapter President Jim Swain at 239/437-1100 or jimsw@carpentercontractors.com.
- 12: Wood Truss Council of the Capital Area (WTCCA) Chapter Meeting. For more information, contact Anna at WTCA-National, 608/310-6719 or astamm@qualtim.com.
- 13: Alabama Component Manufacturers Association (ACMA) Chapter Meeting. For more information, contact Dani at WTCA-National, 608/310-6735 or dbothun@qualtim.com.
- 13: West Florida Truss Association (WFTA) Chapter Meeting. For more information, contact Chapter President Rick Cashman at 727/585-2067 or rcashman@ffptruss.com. SBC

Industry News & Data

Visit **www.sbcmag.info** for additional industry news & announcements!

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. Oct	Nov	Dec	Compound annual rate 3-mo. ended Dec 05
All Items	.2	-.6	-.1	-1.6
All Items Less Food & Engery	.2	.2	.2	2.8

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Unemployment Rate

Oct	5.0%
Nov	5.0%
Dec	4.9%
Jan06	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.	Dec	Annual	Jan06
Eng. Wood Mem.	122.2(P)	121.6(P)	122.4(P)
LVL	126.4(P)	125.1(P)	126.4(P)
Other	121.4(P)	121.1(P)	121.9(P)

(P) = preliminary

Truss Mfg.	Dec	Annual	Jan06
Truss Mfg.	122.3(P)	119.6(P)	122.4(P)
Wood Trusses	119.9(P)	116.9(P)	120.2(P)
Primary Products	119.9(P)	116.9(P)	120.2(P)
Secondary Products	113.7(P)	112.3(P)	107.8(P)

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Producer Price Index General

% changes in selected stage-of-processing price indexes

Month	Total	Ex. Food & Energy
Oct	0.8(r)	-0.3
Nov	-0.4(r)	0.1
Dec	0.6	0.1
Jan06	0.3	0.4

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%).

May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan06	% +/-
103.1	106.2	103.2	105.5	87.5	85.2	98.9	103.8	106.3	2.4%

Source: www.consumerresearchcenter.org

U.S. Prime Rate

Month	2006	2005	2004
Oct 1	-	6.75%	4.75%
Nov 1	-	7.00%	4.75%
Dec 1	-	7.00%	5.00%
Jan 1	7.25%	5.25%	4.00%
Feb 1	7.50%	5.25%	4.00%

Source: Federal Reserve Board

JANUARY 2006 ISM BUSINESS SURVEY AT A GLANCE

	Series Index	Direction Jan vs Dec	Rate of Change Jan vs Dec
ISM Manufacturing Index (formerly PMI)	54.8	Growing	Slower
New Orders	58.0	Growing	Slower
Production	56.6	Growing	Slower
Employment	51.3	Growing	Slower
Supplier Deliveries	55.3	Slowing	Faster
Inventories	46.5	Contracting	Faster
Customers' Inventories	46.0	Too Low	Faster
Prices	65.0	Increasing	Faster
Backlog of Orders	53.5	Growing	From Contracting
Exports	58.5	Growing	Faster
Imports	57.0	Growing	Faster

For an in-depth explanation of this summary, go to www.ism.ws/ISMReport/ROB022006.cfm.

Stay Connected!

Chapter Teleconferences are a great way to keep informed about issues that affect the industry as well as to network with other component manufacturers. Join these upcoming calls:

March 8 • April 12 • 1 pm ET

Call Anna for details at 608/310-6719.

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)

	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan06
Industrial Production Total Index (% change)	1.1(r)	1.1(r)	0.9	-0.2
Capacity Utilization Total Industry (%)	79.9(r)	80.6(r)	81.2	80.9

Source: Federal Reserve Board

Announcements

STONEBRIDGE PARTNERS SELLS ALPINE ENGINEERED PRODUCTS, INC. TO ILLINOIS TOOL WORKS INC.

On February 9, Stonebridge Partners announced the sale of Alpine Engineered Products, Inc. to Illinois Tool Works Inc. Alpine represents the latest of a string of very successful recent exits for Stonebridge that includes the sale of Hunter Fan Company to Lehman Brothers, which resulted in a 65% IRR, and the sale of Delta Plastics, Inc. to Rexam PLC, which generated a 56% IRR. Including Alpine, these three recent exits have provided the firm's limited partners with a blended IRR of 98%. All three transactions were acquired on a direct negotiated basis through the Firm's proprietary broker network. [Source: News Release, 2/9/06, stonebridgepartners.com]

DIGGES MORGAN NAMED SFPA PRESIDENT

At their recent Annual Meeting, the Southern Forest Products Association (SFPA) named Digges Morgan as its new president.

Mr. Morgan began his SFPA career in January of 1984 as assistant vice-president of public affairs. The following year, Digges was promoted to vice-president of government affairs, a position he held for 17 years. During this period, he routinely met with key decision-makers on Capitol Hill, representing the interests of SFPA members and creating positive legislative changes that advanced the forest products industry. In June of 2002, Digges was promoted to director of administration and corporate secretary, and served SFPA in these capacities until his recent appointment to president.

A native of Tulsa, Digges is a graduate of the University of Oklahoma, where he earned a BA in journalism in 1976. Digges began his professional career in Washington, DC with the U.S. Senate, handling various assignments under the direction of key political leaders. During the Reagan Administration, Digges was the congressional liaison officer for the Economic Development Administration at the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Moving ahead, Digges states that he is excited about working closely with the SFPA Board of Directors and membership as the association plans its future direction during the upcoming Strategic Planning meeting. [Source: News Release, 1/23/06, www.sfpa.org]

CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT: WOOD PROTECTION 2006

A conference on wood protection will be held March 21-23 at the Omni Royal Orleans Hotel, French Quarter, New Orleans, LA. The 2-1/2-day conference will feature an international slate of speakers, including researchers, material and equipment suppliers, manufacturers, and end-users, who will present the most up-to-date research and developments related to the protection of wood and wood products. For further information, email conferences@forestprod.org or visit www.forestprod.org. The conference program and registration information is available on line at www.forestprod.org/confwoodprotection06.html. [Source: News Release, 1/12/06, www.forestprod.org]

Trends

MANUFACTURING SECTOR GROWS FOR 32ND MONTH

Economic activity in the manufacturing sector grew in January for the 32nd consecutive month, while the overall economy grew for the 51st consecutive month, and the PMI came in at 54.8 percent, say the nation's supply executives in the latest Manufacturing ISM Report On Business. The report was issued by Norbert J. Ore, C.P.M., chair of the Institute for Supply Management Manufacturing Business Survey Committee: "The manufacturing sector had another good month during January, as measured by the ISM data. Both New Orders and Production remain relatively strong, and the panel of respondents is generally upbeat about their business. It appears that the sector has recovered from the disruptions and dislocations caused by the hurricanes in the Gulf Coast. The Prices Index rose slightly during the month; however, the list of commodities

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Chapter Corner

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WTCA-Arizona

At its January meeting, the Arizona Chapter discussed its work with the ITT campus in Tempe and working with WTCA/WTCA-AZ staff on work force development issues. Very active in education and workforce issues, the Arizona Chapter continues to build strong relationships with local schools. Members also discussed ways to better utilize the WTCA/WTCA-AZ Work Force Development (WFD) web site in the local market. WFD will fill a need when speaking at schools, careers fairs, with building officials and the like. The members proposed adding a short presentation on the WFD site that gives an overview of the structural components industry since many job seekers are unfamiliar with all that our industry has to offer.

The members approved a $1,000 donation to the Carbeck Structural Components Institute. Furthermore, the chapter left open the possibility of additional donations this year for specific projects that may be of particular interest to them. This includes testing on sawdust as well as projects associated with the new research and testing facility under construction in Madison, WI.

The chapter officer elections were postponed until the spring meeting. More information on the summer golf tournament will be available then too. The next meeting date was confirmed as April 19.

WTCA-Illinois

The Illinois Chapter held its winter meeting on December 12 in Springfield. For this special "downstate" meeting, the chapter encouraged companies from southern Illinois to attend this meeting and network with the companies that comprise the former "Greater Chicago Area Chapter." This meeting marked a significant step in the integration of all Illinois WTCA members into the expanded chapter. The guest speaker was Bryan Eldred of the Commercial Motor Vehicle Division of the Illinois Highway Patrol. The presentation featured the rules of the road and emphasized several pertinent issues including oversize loads and strapping requirements. The chapter thanks Bryan for his informative presentation and lively question and answer period.

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Chapter Corner
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At the meeting, Chapter President Mike Karceski also delivered an update on the Governor's task force on a uniform building code for the State of Illinois, which was expected to make an official recommendation in support of a statewide code. In addition, Mike gave an update on the chapter-sponsored presentation to the Illinois Society of Fire Instruction delivered by John Vardian, Phoenix Fire Dept Fire Captain. The presentation went very well and many attendees requested copies of the Carbeck CD on fire performance. Chapter members also discussed their experiences with local plant tours and agreed to continue providing tours to contractors and any other groups interested in attending. The next chapter meeting date was set for March 7. SBC

For more information, about WTCA Chapters, 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.

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Industry News

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reported 'Up in Price' is significantly reduced from December.'' [Source: 2/1/06, www.manufacturing.net]

SBA BREAKS DISASTER LOAN RECORD; MORE THAN $4 BILLION APPROVED IN THE GULF REGION

The U.S. Small Business Administration has approved more than $4 billion in disaster loans to homeowners, renters and businesses affected by Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma, surpassing the previous record set after the Northridge Earthquake in 1994.

In just over five months, the SBA has approved $4.12 billion in disaster loans to more than 58,700 residents and business owners in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Texas and Florida. In comparison, a total of $4.052 billion in disaster loans were approved in the 12-month period after the Northridge Earthquake.

"The SBA has been approving disaster loans at an unprecedented pace," said Administrator Hector V. Barreto. "Never before in our history has the SBA been asked to respond to a disaster of this magnitude, and our people have worked tirelessly, compassionately and with urgency to meet the needs of the people affected by these hurricanes. Our results beat by more than six months the time it took SBA to reach $4 billion after the Northridge Earthquake, which was the only other disaster to surpass the $2 billion mark in our 52-year history." [Source: 2/7/06, www.sba.gov] SBC

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Parting Shots

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Somebody Call the Safety Police!

It's hard not to look at photos like these and chuckle. The phrases "oh my goodness" and "how on earth" quickly come to mind. Of course, from a publishing standpoint, the knee jerk reaction is to recommend a "stunts performed by professionals, do not try this at home" caption, but reality tells another story. The forklift photo can be traced on the internet back to the Czech Republic and the scaffolding (we use that term VERY loosely) photo came to ***SBC*** in a goofy "Safety at Work" PowerPoint. It was a lucky dentist in Littleton, CO, that found the source of the toothache Patrick Lawler was complaining about on the roof of his mouth: a four inch nail he had unknowingly embedded in his skull six days earlier. Thankfully Patrick is okay, aside from his rather substantial hospital bills, but in light of these funny and scary safety snippets, an old proverb sums it up the best: ***Better a thousand times careful than once dead.*** SBC

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