

STRUCTURAL BUILDING COMPONENTS MAGAZINE

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Frequently Asked Questions

Do-It-Yourself Trusses by Rachel Smith

We may be called the Wood Truss Council of America, but sometimes we have to be clear that we represent metal plate connected wood trusses (MPCWT). I occasionally hear from callers looking for heavy timber truss designs or from do-it-yourselfers looking for hand-built truss designs. These are two examples of wood trusses, but they do not use metal connector plates. The answers that I usually give to these FAQs are as follows:

QUESTION:

I am an advanced “do-it-yourself” homeowner. I need a couple of trusses designed that I can build for the carport structure. Where can I find someone to help me design the trusses?

ANSWER:

We recommend using trusses designed and built by a truss manufacturer. Hand-built trusses are certainly an option, but the local code official may require “proof” that the trusses will work. This generally means an engineer will be needed to provide calculations and a professional stamp or seal. If this occurs, your hand-built trusses will most likely end up costing considerably more in time, money and aggravation. MPCWTs usually come with engineered calculations and a seal as part of the truss package.

Mid West Plan Service has a publication titled “Designs for Glued Trusses,” which includes information on hand-built trusses. The truss designs listed in this publication have very simple configurations and may not meet your design requirements. In addition, the publication has not been revised to account for the most recent changes in lumber design values. Mid West Plan Service is located in Ames, Iowa (800/562-3618).

QUESTION:

I am building a custom home and am trying to find a truss manufacturer that specializes in trusses built of solid timbers. Do you have any suggestions on how to find such a company?

I am looking for a retailer that can supply me with split ring connectors that are used in bolted connections of lumber. I’m constructing a large wooden truss and need this item as a way to counter shearing forces.

ANSWER:

We suggest you contact an organization that specializes in heavy timber truss construction. The Timber Frame Business Council (603/643-5033, www.timberframe.org) and APA—The Engineered Wood Association (253/620-7400, www.apawood.org) have members that produce these products.

Cleveland Steel Specialty (800/251-8351, www.clevelandsteel.com) is the only manufacturer of split ring connectors in the country. They may also be able to put you in touch with some of their professional design customers in your area.

To view other questions visit the [WTCA website](#)

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