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"Jobsite Submittal or Delivery Packages: Part 2" by Kent J. Pagel

As I discussed in part one of this Jobsite Submittal or Delivery Packages series (May 2000 *WOODWORDS*), the majority of truss and component related accidents occur through no fault in truss design, manufacturing or delivery. However, as component manufacturers seem to be automatically blamed whenever their manufactured products topple or collapse, it becomes quite important for the component manufacturer to develop a program or policy that should be strictly followed to minimize exposure to liability that arises out of poor jobsite storage, handling, installation and bracing practices.

Imagine for a moment that your company is named in a lawsuit filed by a jobsite laborer who sustained serious injuries resulting from a truss collapse. During that time of your company's history, management deemed it unnecessary to provide any type of guidelines or instructions with the delivery of trusses as such matters were considered the erector's responsibility. The allegations assert the injury-causing incident was a direct result of the negligence and carelessness of the component manufacturer from failing to: (1) advise of the proper manner of handling, erecting and bracing the trusses; (2) advise of the necessity of having an engineer or architect specify the manner in which the trusses should be handled, erected and braced; (3) provide the erector and/or general contractor with industry guidelines regarding handling, installing and bracing; and (4) warn of the hazards associated with the trusses.

It would seem such a lawsuit would be easily defended if you could prove the direct cause of the accident was either improper installation or bracing, but unfortunately that result is not typical. Even if the component manufacturer carefully stipulates its scope of work in its bid and customer contract to exclude any responsibility whatsoever regarding handling, installation and bracing, the lawsuit which never should have been filed is much more easily defended if the component manufacturer can demonstrate that it provided installation and bracing guidelines or instructions to the jobsite and that such documentation was received. If such guidelines or instructions had been provided in our hypothetical situation, each one of the asserted allegations would simply go away.

Many, if not most, component manufacturers currently provide some kind of documentation to the jobsite, although what they provide and how they provide it differs by company and sometimes by geographic region. Below is a list of what I have seen provided as part of a delivery package:

- WTCA's Jobsite Warning Poster.
- Component Manufacturer's Product Placement Plan.
- Component Manufacturer's Truss Design Drawings.
- WTCA's 1-1995, Standard Responsibilities in the Design Process Involving Metal Plate Connected Wood Trusses.

- WTCA's video, Handling, Installing & Bracing Wood Trusses.
- WTCA's Partition Separation brochure.
- Material Safety Data Sheet.
- TPI's HIB-91 (or most likely the HIB-91 Summary Sheet), Commentary and Recommendations for Handling, Installing & Bracing Metal Plate Connected Wood Trusses.
- TPI's HIB-98 Post Frame Summary Sheet, Recommendations for Handling, Installing & Temporary Bracing Metal Plate Connected Wood Trusses Used in Post-Frame Construction.
- Installation Guide for Plated Truss Constructions Connectors, published by Simpson Strong-Tie.

I have also seen numerous component manufacturer-prepared/customized warning, stacking, handling, installation and bracing sheets or brochures. These sheets cover the gamut—some are quite good and others could use some work. One quite effective sheet was prepared by a California manufacturer that essentially sets out some quite important do's and don'ts in a warning or caution format.[1]

Many of these jobsite guidelines, instructions and warnings are printed on various colored pages (at times a jobsite package can look like an elementary school's art room) and repeatedly use words such as **WARNING, CAUTION** and **DO NOT**. They are usually delivered in envelopes, zip lock bags, or even in a notebook form. They are sometimes delivered independent of the trusses and sometimes attached to the truss bundles. Many manufacturers provide their documents with each truss bundle and others provide one set for each job. At times, such documents are delivered both to the customer and to the jobsite. Some component manufacturers require that jobsite personnel sign for the documents. Other component manufacturers either have their drivers record the delivery of the documents or require that their drivers take pictures to reflect that the documents were received at the jobsite. Each method has its positives and negatives, but what is most important is that the component manufacturer is able to demonstrate a consistent method of how they provide such information and that such information was duly received by the erectors for each building that is constructed with manufactured trusses and components.

With respect to the jobsite documents that are currently being used, there appears to be a consensus among component manufacturers that all the information exists within these documents to enable qualified laborers to safely handle, erect and brace trusses, thereby preventing any topples or collapses.

On the other hand, many erectors are critical. They regularly claim that the documents are either not routinely received or are not received in a timely manner by those individuals who need to see them. They furthermore claim that those component manufacturers who do provide jobsite guidelines and instructions are simply engaging in what I would call a "document dump" (legal jargon, but I think you get the idea) by providing documents which are duplicative and which may contain much more than what is actually needed. They are also critical that the documents are not presented in a way that allows for easier use. Erectors also comment that the documents do not rank in any way the notes and cautions, that what is set out would require far too much time and too much labor to perform, that the warnings and notes are excessive—that generally there is too much "Cover Your Assets" going on.

I personally believe that many of the criticisms are not legitimate; and those that are can be

resolved perhaps with some modifications to some of the documents that are currently being used and with a more consistent and thought out approach on the part of the component manufacturer.

WTCA is continuously working on preparing information, through its Truss Technology for Builders series, for use by all truss manufacturers to meet the specific needs of framers in the field. Contact WTCA to find out more about the latest TTBs and warning tags produced or in process. Any assistance you would like to provide in this area would be greatly appreciated. Please send your ideas in and they will be worked on to the benefit of all members.

Next month, I will discuss some additional thoughts on what component manufacturers may want to consider with respect to these issues.

[1]If I have failed to mention a guideline or instruction that your company is currently using, please let me know. I would also appreciate any of your comments or thoughts on whether such guidelines and instructions are effective. You can send me a note at kjp@pdhlaw.com or to my address at 1415 Louisiana, 22nd Floor, Houston, Texas 77002.

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