

STRUCTURAL BUILDING COMPONENTS MAGAZINE

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WTCA Chapters in 2002 by Anna L. Stamm

In general, the WTCA Chapters have gained in strength and momentum over the last few years. They are taking on, and winning, serious challenges. They are providing top-notch education to groups that are seeking ever more information. Internally, the chapters are increasing their size and organization. This year is shaping up to be another good one for the chapters.

CHALLENGES FACED

Building Codes: As states across the country adopt the IBC, there are a number of potential areas of conflict. For example, the Michigan Chapter (WTM) is currently working to define what an attic is. Though others outside this business might find that humorous, we all realize that the definition of an attic will have a direct effect on the resulting load requirements for roof trusses. Importantly, the manufacturers in Michigan have a united chapter to seek a resolution of this issue at the state level. By working in concert and drafting a White Paper, chapter members are taking care of the situation and working with the State of Michigan to institute clear guidelines for building officials to use.

Transportation: Changes to transportation regulations cannot always be predicted, but they must be confronted when problems arise. For example, the Capital Area Chapter (WTCCA) found itself having to comply with a restrictive wide load regulation following a shocking highway fatality. It seems that when public pressure demands a governmental response, too often the remedy is broader than necessary to address a specific issue or accident. By quickly seeking cooperative relations with the Virginia Department of Transportation, WTCCA established a dialogue. By working as a united group, the chapter has its best shot at changing these regulations.

Mold: Mold is turning into a classic hot-button issue. Because there have been news stories about rare, nightmare scenarios, mold seems to be on the minds of every builder in an ever increasing way. When people don't understand the facts, it is too easy to label all building materials that may contain mold as dangerous and demand action. Many builders and customers are now calling for mold-free lumber at all times, but they do not realize the logistical and economic costs involved. Instead, chapter members must work together to fend off these demands. Chapters must monitor their markets and act collectively to make it clear that mold can be acceptable and natural, and that to take action in every case is costly and over-reactive. For example, the Greater Chicago Chapter (GCTMA) sent WTCA's position letter to every member of the local home builders associations along with a copy of the Truss Technology in Building sheet, "Facts Regarding Mold on Lumber." This is helping to change the dynamics in the local market.

Other potential challenges: We are not so gifted that we can predict the next crisis issue, such as mold. Sometimes, we can't even foresee how the new building codes will be interpreted in a particular state until the adoption process has begun. All of these situations teach us, however,

that we must be prepared to take action as soon as problems arise. By working together in a chapter during good times, we are ready to come together when things get tough. Chapters, along with the support system that WTCA provides, are the best way to stay prepared for the next challenge.

AREAS TO WATCH

Education: The requests from building inspectors and fire officials for information and education keep coming, and the best way to handle the requests is through the chapter because of the local nature of the questions and needs. Each WTCA Chapter provides a focal point for this process—outside parties know who to contact and the members in the area have the perfect vehicle for organizing the necessary response action or program. What's more, as chapters are customizing WTCA's Truss Technology Workshop programs, they are making these available to their fellow chapters by including them in the three-CD set. There's no better way to put a human face on the component industry than to develop and participate in these grassroots initiatives to educate our communities.

Risk Management: Especially in the area of risk management, it pays to be prepared before trouble happens. Not only has WTCA expanded its line of products designed to help you protect yourself, such as the Warning Poster and Truss Technology in Building sheets, but the WTCA Chapters have also started taking advantage of the WTCA Risk Management Seminar. In January, the Arizona Chapter (WTCA-AZ) sponsored a very successful risk seminar. Now, the New York (WTCA NY), Northeast (WTCA-NE) and Mid Atlantic (MAWTC) Chapters decided to sponsor their own regional seminar in April. By joining forces, these chapters will be able to the lower the cost of the seminar for their members as well as anyone else who is able to attend. The Southwest Florida Chapter (SWFTMA) is planning to sponsor a regional seminar later this year. All WTCA Risk Management Seminars are open to everyone.

Legislative Activities: Not only are local chapters the best group for monitoring local legislative developments, but also chapters can act collectively to take on issues in their areas. For example, the Kentucky Chapter (WTCA-KY) has developed a White Paper on Smart Growth. Even though the term "smart growth" is usually used to "stop growth," the chapter is trying to keep this issue on track by stating the facts. This White Paper explores a sensible and legitimate approach to land-use planning. Because a united group has more clout than individuals acting alone, chapters are a strong voice in the political and legislative arenas.

Membership Development: The WTCA Chapters are also a great vehicle for recruiting new members. Being on the front lines in their communities, chapter members understand the issues confronting their fellow manufacturers, and they can show non-members what they're missing by not joining WTCA. For example, the new California Chapter (CaIESCA) has as one of its primary goals recruiting new members. Chapter members will personally contact companies to show them the value of joining both WTCA-National and CaIESCA. Not only do efforts such as these grow the chapter, they also foster the strength of purpose of our entire organization to impact our members and our industry.

By speaking with a united association voice, WTCA Chapters are a great vehicle for advancing the component manufacturing industry. By providing education and information to members and

outside parties, chapters are growing the marketplace to everyone's benefit. Regardless of why a chapter forms, once established a chapter will always have something to offer. Chapters provide tangible services as well as camaraderie and networking. Chapters are the best way to confront critical issues, to seize opportunities and to strengthen your business so that it can better serve your employees and customers.

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