

# STRUCTURAL BUILDING COMPONENTS MAGAZINE

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## Frequently Asked Questions

### Jobsite Inspections by Rachel Smith

Consider this statement from a set of construction contract documents: "The Truss Manufacturer is responsible for inspecting the truss installation, bracing, anchorage and bearings and preparing a letter of verification stating that trusses are installed and braced properly."

At first glance, it may seem that the Truss Manufacturer is the most logical party to perform such an inspection. They are the truss experts, are they not? But on second thought, why is the Truss Manufacturer singled out to perform installation inspections of their products when they have no control over the installation process? Is the same service required from the window supplier, the concrete supplier or the plumbing contractor?

There is no good reason for a Truss Manufacturer to supply framing inspections. If the justification for the request is the lack of knowledge on the part of the end user or building inspector, then education is in order instead of more risk exposure for the Truss Manufacturer. Consider the following question and answer the next time you are asked to provide a jobsite inspection.

#### QUESTION:

By sending an independent engineer to inspect trusses, beams, and hardware that we, the Truss Manufacturers, supplied, could we be held responsible for other components of the building or the entire building itself? Also, where would the responsibility of our inspecting engineer end if he or she noticed, for example, a column supporting a girder was not adequate?

#### ANSWER:

Aside from a truss collapse or claim relating to your trusses, from a risk management and liability standpoint, it is not recommended that the Truss Manufacturer undertake jobsite inspections, through a professional engineer or otherwise. If the requirement to inspect is already part of your contractual obligation and cannot be avoided, then the inspector must do the job thoroughly and comply with the obligation stated. Otherwise, if you choose to inspect, it is important to clearly define the scope of your investigation and any limitations. For example, the report should clearly define what was inspected and what was not. If you are named in any possible future construction defect litigation, a well defined scope of inspection may be the only thing that will protect you against assertions of a failure on your part.

If the inspector is an engineer, he is likely to be obligated to report any condition that may involve an issue of life safety. Another problem with supplying an inspector is there may be no

contractual obligation on the part of the inspector or framer as to who will do the work to comply with the inspection recommendations. A better solution is for the builder or framer to hire the inspector who then reports to them. Ultimately, the local building official is responsible for the framing inspection and ensuring it is in compliance with the plans and the code.

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