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Cutting Edge QC by Tony Piek

Looking for a way to speed up your QC process? Handheld Pocket PC technology is making data-keeping for quality control purposes easier and more efficient than ever.



It is amazing to think about all the technological advancements that have occurred over the last few decades. The building components industry has always been pushing the envelope by using sophisticated software, automated machinery and in some cases lasers to speed up design and fabrication. Modern technology can even be used in one of the most unlikely places—a component manufacturer's quality control program. Quality control inspections can now be done with a software program that runs on a Pocket PC handheld computer. It serves as a companion to the desktop database program In-Plant WTCA QC.

Why should you consider spending resources on more computers that could already be the leading cause of your gray hair? Let's first discuss the program itself. In-Plant WTCA QC is a program created to help truss manufacturers monitor the quality of trusses they build. The program consists of both truss inspection and data collection. The data is then entered and stored into a database software program, which produces reports used to assess plant quality. The benefit of this program is that it is an ongoing management information system that provides you performance feedback on your production crews, production machinery and the

quality of the finished product. You can actually see trends in different aspects of your manufacturing process, make corrections before a crisis occurs.

Implementing a rigorous in-plant quality control program does involve a time commitment. However, the current In-Plant WTCA QC inspection is more efficient and well-rounded than any previous version. By the very nature of the new ANSI/TPI 1-2002 consensus standard, the inspections are quicker. Most of the component manufacturers that are using the new Joint QC Detail are already saving inspection time. The Pocket PC gives you another tool to save time; this time on data collection. Current In-Plant WTCA QC users report saving an average of 15 to 20 minutes entering each inspection.

How many times have you seen an inspector chasing paperwork across the plant? Has your data entry person ever given you the evil eye to come up with that missing inspection form? The Pocket PC minimizes paperwork, allows the inspector to be proactive and should eliminate the need for another person to enter their inspection data. Beth Rutenber of Stark Truss Co., Rockledge, FL, whose plant is In-Plant WTCA QC certified and uses the Pocket PC on a regular basis had this to say: "I recommend the WTCA Pocket PC program. No more lost paperwork or transposing the info from paper to computer. It has drastically reduced the amount of time spent on paperwork, which translates into more time for inspections."

If you are looking for a proactive step to take in terms of improving your manufacturing information feedback system to help you manage all facets of your production, please check out the In-Plant WTCA QC program and the Pocket PC QC program. You might find yourself pleasantly surprised at the extent research and technology have advanced the process.

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