



WTCA Recognized for Work on NAHB-RC Quality Program

by Kirk Grundahl

WTCA has received recognition from NAHB-RC for its help in creating a valuable certification program, based largely on In-Plant WTCA QC.

TIn late 1997 or early 1998 WTCA staff met with then NAHB-RC President Liza Bowles and a few of her staff to discuss the concept of developing a certification program for carpenters modeled after the quality control certification program that WTCA was developing for truss manufacturers. This led to the creation of a joint NAHB-RC/WTCA proposal to the Department of Housing and Urban Development on August 29, 1998. The proposal stated:

Framing accounts for 15 to 20 percent of the total cost of the house. It is one of the most critical construction factors—affecting cost, cycle time, quality, and durability. If a house is framed right, the installation of windows and doors, cabinets and floors is much quicker and easier. If framed correctly, houses will have much higher survivability in natural disasters. The NAHB-sponsored Housing Affordability Through Design Efficiency (HATDE) project has spent 3 years researching hurricane and earthquake failure modes to develop optimum, damage-resistant framing designs. A high priority objective of the HATDE project over the next several years is to assure that these design concepts are implemented correctly during the construction process. Also, wood truss manufacturers want to assure that the quality of the trusses they build is not compromised by field practices—storage, handling, installation, temporary bracing, application of connection systems and permanent bracing—all of which can easily cause damage to the product and some can lead to injury and death if not performed properly.

In a 1998 Technology Roundtable for builders and manufacturers, builders voiced their frustration with the framing quality that was available in the marketplace. Skilled labor is hard to find and retain. Errors and defects in framing are frequent and costly. Undetected or uncorrected errors create severe problems with finishing the house. They said they alternate between hiring framing contractors and bringing the framing “in-house” but neither approach solves the problem.

Although ISO-9000 practices are well established in conventional, in-plant manufacturing, they are not common in the home building industry. However, recently the NAHB Research Center has been successful in adapting ISO 9000 quality management for trades and in the site-built home building industry, and those builders who have implemented these practices have experienced significant improvements in their operations and in the quality of their houses. A pilot project in cooperation with the Wood Truss Council of America can be pivotal in establishing the value of quality management in this critical area of the home construction—framing. A second valuable output of the project is a set of tools that could be used by framing contractors across the country for implementing quality management.

at a glance

- ❑ WTCA helped NAHB-RC develop the Certified Trade Contractor Program, the first such program to develop quality assurance standards for the framing industry.
- ❑ WTCA's goal in contributing to the Certified Trade Contractor program was to be able to ensure that reliable construction begins at a home's foundation.

Statement of Work

With the cooperation and involvement of the Wood Truss Council of America and other stakeholders we propose to establish a project to form a quality alliance including one or more builder(s), manufacturer(s) of structural components, and framers who would work together on implementing ISO 9000 practices in the framing process. Other stakeholders in the construction process will also be involved. Local code officials will be encouraged to participate—we plan to investigate a variety of self-inspection options. The NAHB Research Center's recently formed Residential Engineers and Architects Council for Housing (REACH) will recruit local architects and engineers. We will also work with the local NAHB Home Builders Association to recruit small builders to provide their very important perspective to this pilot project.

The Certified Trade Contractor Program was the first program of its kind for the building industry seeking to set quality assurance standards for home framing. While framing isn't exactly on every new homebuyer's mind, framing quality issues from productivity and construction defects, to litigation and code inspections can mean big headaches to homebuilders, contractors and framers.

The current program is the culmination of a great deal of work done in the background by NAHB-RC, Mr. Jalsa Urubshurow President, All-Tech (a large New Jersey framing company); Mr. Craig Steele, President/CEO of Schuck and Sons Construction (a large framing company and WTCA component manufacturer member); and Mr. Jim Hoffner, Regional Quality Assurance Manager for K. Hovnanian Companies NE. Each of these individuals, along with WTCA, served on the original Board of Directors of NAHB-RC's National Housing Quality Certified Trade Contractor Program.

WTCA's goal with the Certified Trade Contractor program has been to be able to ensure that there is reliable construction beginning at a home's foundation. This will make the application of components easier, reduce construction defects and call-backs, allow us to quickly optimize the structural elements in the building, and make the code approval and inspection process much more streamlined. All this will be made possible because of an increased reliability of the installation process.

A March 2005 letter to WTCA Executive Director Kirk Grundahl from Robert Hill, Director of Laboratory Sciences & Certification Programs, and Frank Alexander, Director of Quality Programs, thanked the association for its role in the creation and growth of the program. "The NAHB Research Center would like to recognize and thank you for your participation as a founding member of the NHQ Advisory Council and for your contributions to the development, initial implementation and expansion of the NHQ program. We believe that this program will continue to grow and is chang-

ing out industry for the better. Your voluntary participation is to be commended." **SBC**

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