



Technical Q & A

Wall Panels & Sealed Engineering

by WTCA Staff

For the wall panel industry, added interest draws additional questions. Read the most common FAQs.

Wall panel manufacturing is by no means a new idea—instead it seems to be catching on. Many truss manufacturers are seeing the benefits of adding wall panels to their product mix and customers, too, are seeing the benefits—buildings go up more quickly and thus more units can be constructed with no increased need for labor. As the market for wall panels grows, so do questions from the field. Here are two of the most common questions we receive.

Question

Why are wall panel designs not prepared and sealed by a professional engineer?



Answer

It's pretty simple—wall panel designs are not engineered. When walls are built on the jobsite they follow prescriptive provisions in the building code, eliminating the need for site-built walls to be engineered. Wall panels are built to the same prescriptive requirements. The big difference is they are built in a controlled environment and delivered to the jobsite as opposed to being built in an uncontrolled environment and tilted up on the jobsite. This fact does not make wall panels subject to different or additional requirements.

Question

Some walls are engineered, such as shear walls. Why doesn't the wall panel manufacturer provide sealed designs for those?

Answer

It's true some walls do not fall within the building code's prescriptive requirements and must be engineered. In that case, the Building Designer will provide detailed instructions on how the wall panels are to be constructed to render the wall panels to be engineered. The framer, in the case of site-built walls, and the manufacturer, in the case of manufactured walls, needs only to follow the Building Designer's instructions for the walls to be rendered engineered.

At some point in the future, it certainly is conceivable that shear wall design process will mimic the current roof and floor trusses process; that is, component manufacturers will produce sealed shear wall design drawings. **SBC**

To pose a question for this column, call the WTCA technical department at 608/274-4849 or email technicalqa@sbcmag.info.

at a glance

- ❑ As wall panels gain popularity, questions pertaining to sealed engineering requirements have increased.
- ❑ Can walls built in the shop rely on the prescriptive provisions of the building code?
- ❑ In the future, it is possible that component manufacturers will be responsible for providing sealed design drawings for their wall panel designs.

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