Human Faces

SNCMA & SEASoN Work Together to Resolve Truss Design, Specification Issues

A WTCA Chapter in one of the most highly regulated building markets forged a relationship that proved invaluable when design responsibilities and code issues surfaced.

by Emmy Thorson-Hanson & Libby Maurer

When is membership in a chapter worth its weight in gold? When valuable relationships that benefit everyone involved are formed. And that's just what happened when the Southern Nevada Component Manufacturers Association (SNCMA) became involved with the Structural Engineers Association of Southern Nevada (SEASoN).

Finding Common Ground

Smack dab in one of the country's hottest building markets, the manufacturers who make up SNCMA first connected with SEASoN over building code issues. Chapter President Glenn McClendon (Sun State Components, Inc.) says, "Codes brought us together. When everyone was adopting the codes, there were different interpretations. We all came together under the guidance of the Southern Nevada Homebuilders Association to reach an agreement. Out of that, SEASoN formed a truss committee." McClendon adds, "We all have a common goal, which is to build houses, and to do it right and conform to the codes."

With greater understanding comes greater acceptance of trusses—something from which we could all stand to benefit.

SNCMA's Bill Bolduc (A.C. Houston Lumber Company) and Rich Menge (Sun State Components, Inc.), both professional engineers who were also members of SEASoN, were immediately involved on this "truss committee" due to their familiarity with truss design and the engineering process. Menge suggested that the committee act as a liaison between the two groups and "bring issues to the table before they became problems," he recalls. Bolduc explains why it has been so important to be involved with SEASoN at the committee level: "Due to the highly regulatory environment in southern Nevada it is always in our best interest to work closely with the building designers."

Close ties to SEASoN have opened the channels of communication, giving the SNCMA and SEASoN a natural platform to discuss broader industry issues, questions and concerns. So when issues surrounding truss design and specification came to light many times over the last several years, the relationship paid off in spades.

Understanding Uplift

Bolduc recalls one of the issues that surfaced was how to handle uplift reactions in truss design drawings. "There was a lot of confusion about it, and some building departments were asking the Engineers of Record to provide hold-downs to meet the uplift numbers listed on the truss designs," he says. "Some of the engineers thought that the numbers were excessive, and in some cases they were," says Bolduc. There was real confusion on how to specify drag loads and other lateral loads on trusses.

The committee developed some examples of how to specify drag loads on trusses that work for many common cases. On the uplift issue, they determined that uplift reactions could be reduced in many cases by using a "hybrid" wind analysis, a blend of "components and cladding" and "main wind force-resisting system" wind loading. The committee is publishing a white paper that will provide educational information and recommendations on many of the issues that the committee addressed. WTCA staff also contributed to the review and edit of this white paper.

The challenges facing the two groups didn't end with uplift reactions and drag loads. Because design responsibilities were an ongoing issue, it's no surprise that the topic continued to surface at meetings. Clark County (which covers the Las Vegas area) has its own document that helps define design responsibilities, similar to WTCA/TPI 4-2002 for component manufacturers. Once again, the white paper will discuss this relationship and provide better exposure to WTCA/TPI 1-2002. The SEASoN white paper will help the local building design community better understand the relationship and responsibilities of all the parties involved.

SNCMA wasted no time in asking WTCA staff to assist in the review process. In addition to Bolduc and Menge, several staff members and legal counsel Kent Pagel reviewed the current work, providing feedback and adding language from WTCA/TPI 1 Chapter 2 so it was consistent with the state-of-the-art language. Before the formation of SEASoN's truss committee, "everyone was on a different page," Bolduc says. With the experience of working together over the last year, McClendon says the time and effort put forth was well worth it. "This [resulting document] will make life easier for everyone. When the different areas of responsibilities are clear cut from the start, you won't get to a certain point and realize they aren't clearly defined, and have to sort it out then," he says. Bolduc adds, "having a good working relationship with the building designers will continue to benefit all of us and result in less confusion and misunderstandings in the preparation of the truss designs for review."

Conclusion

The benefits of establishing a relationship like that of SNCMA and SEASoN are many. Because southern Nevada is a highly regulatory environment, Bolduc says, "we are forced to work together. And in most cases we work well together and the result is a better built building." McClendon finds great value in the relationship from a communication perspective. "It's important because as new code changes come about, that line of communication is open now; we will be able to tackle issues before they become problems," he explains. "We learned a valuable lesson. By working together, those problems won't become issues again," he says.

And possibly the greatest gain of all, Bolduc says the alliance "will promote a better understanding and working relationship between the truss industry and engineers." With greater understanding comes greater acceptance of trusses—something from which we could all stand to benefit. SBC

Do you have a story of teamwork, cooperation or overcoming challenging situations? Email your story idea to **editor@sbcmag.info.**

at a glance

- SNCMA joined forced with the Structural Engineers Association of Southern Nevada (SEASoN) by forming a truss committee within the engineers' group.
- Using teamwork, the two groups successfully resolved issues surrounding drag loads and uplift.
- Most recently, SNCMA and WTCA staff provided content for SEASoN's design responsibilities document based on language in WTCA/TPI 1 Chapter 2.

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