

# STRUCTURAL BUILDING COMPONENTS MAGAZINE (FORMERLY WOODWORDS)

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## Member Perspective

"Year 2000 Issues for the Truss Industry" by A.C. Mendiones:

Yeah. We know. The Y2K "Crazies" are now out howling in front of every TV camera they can get in front of.

But, what does Y2K really mean for the truss industry?

What follows is what we've done so far within the WSI Group. We operate a network consisting of almost 120 PCs in three locations. We run the following software: Windows-95, Microsoft Office 97 Standard Edition, WRQ Reflection (VT-100 terminal emulator), MiTek-2000 SR2, MiTek Steel, and either TJ Expert or Georgia-Pacific EWP Suites.

### FIRST: LOOK AT THE HARDWARE

Starting back in July, we downloaded a number of Y2K test programs from the BIOS manufacturers and NIST. To our amazement, 80 percent of our Pentium class PCs purchased in 1996 and 1997 FAILED THE Y2K test! Doing a flash upgrade on the BIOS was a relatively simple, but time consuming process. In some cases, it created other (not totally unexpected) problems. The problems in a nutshell were:

- Video settings problems.
- Hard disk/LBA mapping problems.
- Default CMOS settings changed to their slowest (safest) settings.

Now, all our Pentium class machines are Y2K compliant - and we're replacing the 486 class machines with faster, cheaper, new PCs.

### SECOND: TAKE A LOOK AT THE SOFTWARE

Note: The important point here is to factor in the time for software re-training.

Windows 98, with all of its current updates installed, is Y2K compliant. Windows 95 is, as Microsoft puts it, "compliant with minor issues." This means:

- If you have DOS-based programs, your programs will need to add 1980 to the year.
- You'll need to apply the COMMAND.COM patch available from Microsoft.

- There are six more potentially benign things that could affect you if you use Windows 95. Check with your local computer dealer on whether these things will affect you!
- Microsoft Office 97: If you apply SR1, then SR2 as we did, you're both Euro safe and Y2K safe.
- WRQ Reflection: We don't care if this software is Y2K safe or not.
- MiTek 2000 Version 4.0 Service Release 2 (June 1998): MiTek has tested this software and all modules passed its Y2K tests.
- Virtek: In conjunction with Windows 98, and Trussline 4.0, and a Virtek supplied PC represented to be Y2K compliant, Virtek has completed preliminary testing and concludes that "in all material aspects, the software functioned in accordance with published specifications."
- TJ Expert: We have a similar letter stating either "total commitment to addressing the problem" and "our software doesn't care when you take a chain saw out to cut our product."
- GP: I have yet to receive a formal letter from anyone important (VP level) stating "total commitment" and a timetable. The issue is when? We really need Y2K fixes starting this month- we're not going to introduce new software into production during our "busy season," which means that belated Y2K software pushes our work closer to late fall 1999, which does not give us much time to test or train.

### **THIRD: PRODUCTION EQUIPMENT HAS COMPUTERS IN IT TOO!**

What about the PLCs in the saws?

As it turns out, we've been led to believe that the PLC code in our three saws is "Y2K oblivious." However, the Win-95 program, which drives the saws, is still being inspected for Y2K issues.

### **FOURTH: SERVERS**

On the server side: We finally blew away NetWare 3.12 and all of its arcane "DOSosity."

We also blew away cc:Mail. We now run Windows NT Servers for file serving, print serving, web serving and e-mail. All the Microsoft server-side stuff is good until the year 2036.

Our current DEC Alpha/VMS "monolithic" order entry/shop floor scheduling/ time and attendance system is scheduled for an upgrade in order to concurrently run both our existing software and test the new Y2K compliant software.

But Wait! There's more!

- Time clocks....
- Bar-code readers....
- Fax machines....
- VCRs.....
- Insurance policies (does your policy cover Y2K mess ups? Does your policy have a pesky new Y2K exclusion clause?)....
- Your lumber supplier's Y2K readiness....
- The railroad.....
- The power company....

- The phone company....
- The bank(s)....
- All routers and managed hubs....
- Your Internet connection provider....
- Your PBXs/Voice mail systems....
- Some beepers, some cell phones.....
- Your payroll service....

## ONGOING

So, now you've got your internal "house" in order. You're all set, right? Maybe not. We are organizing Y2K readiness days with all our EDI partners. More on this in a subsequent article.

## IN SUMMARY

I'm proud to say that we're in a minority of companies in Maine and Alabama that have awareness and a plan for Y2K.

Our goal is to be operationally Y2K compliant by April 13th, 1999.

We implore our software vendors to make their Y2K release schedules public as soon as possible. In a perfect world, we need Y2K fixes on our machines by Calendar Quarter 1 1999. Vendors need to understand that we do a month's worth of internal testing. Scheduling and implementing training can take weeks. Having the right software at the right time is critical to our industry and serving our customers. We truly need to be partners in this process or we could be fighting some battles that we would rather not fight.

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A.C. Mendiones, CIO, is with The WSI Group Inc. in Biddeford, Maine. You can call him at 207/282-7556.

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