

STRUCTURAL BUILDING COMPONENTS MAGAZINE (FORMERLY WOODWORDS)

June/July 1999

"More on Truss Industry Repairs" by Charlie Hoover, Jr., P.E.

Repairs are a significant cost to everyone involved in the chain of construction commerce. We at Alpine are planning to focus on this issue this year to see if we can help ourselves and our customers reduce the quantity and the cost of repairs.

I know this may sound pedantic or trivial to others; however, to me, it is not. As an industry, we need to differentiate between repairs and modifications. Repairs are those situations that arise due to broken truss parts, missing plates, etc. Modifications are those situations that require a flat bottom chord truss to have to become a vault or scissors, a common truss to be field-modified into an attic, or having to move chases in floor trusses, etc.

I distinguish between the two because of the economic side of this issue. Repairs get caught up in the politics of customer relations and charging the customer for these types of mistakes. Modifications are much more significant and costly, and in most cases arise from changes by someone else that are never communicated to the truss manufacturer until it is too late. This type of change should really be chargeable work (i.e., the truss manufacturer should have a billing rate structure for this type of occurrence).

Fundamentally, the industry needs to find out why we have so many repairs. Is it a lack of training of our people in asking the right questions or understanding plans and specs? Is it because we will not address the issue with our client due to their business or economic leverage as a customer and, as a consequence, we indirectly reward this behavior? If so, will they not continue to set trusses backward and upside down and believe that commons changed to scissors in the field is written into the contract price? Is it because some manufacturers are dollars-produced driven, and believe it is better to have standing repair crews to make it right later if they get caught?

Until we deal with these basics, we are really not dealing with the issue of why we even have repairs. Yes, I can learn and put educational processes in place that allow us to do repairs faster and cheaper. However, my experience proves that this only allows the quantity of repairs to escalate. Then, at best, you break even and have not gained real economic benefits or solved the true problem.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Charlie brings up excellent points in this brief article that are worthy of industry consideration. WTCA has factored repair education into our Truss Technician Training™ programs as a start to dealing with this problem at two levels:

- How to most effectively deal with the repair process and repair design considerations.
- An in-depth Truss Technician Training course called Plan Reading and Take-offs: This course covers plans and specifications with the goal of reducing the errors made that should, in turn, reduce the field repairs that are needed.

Thanks, Charlie, for the insightful thoughts!

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