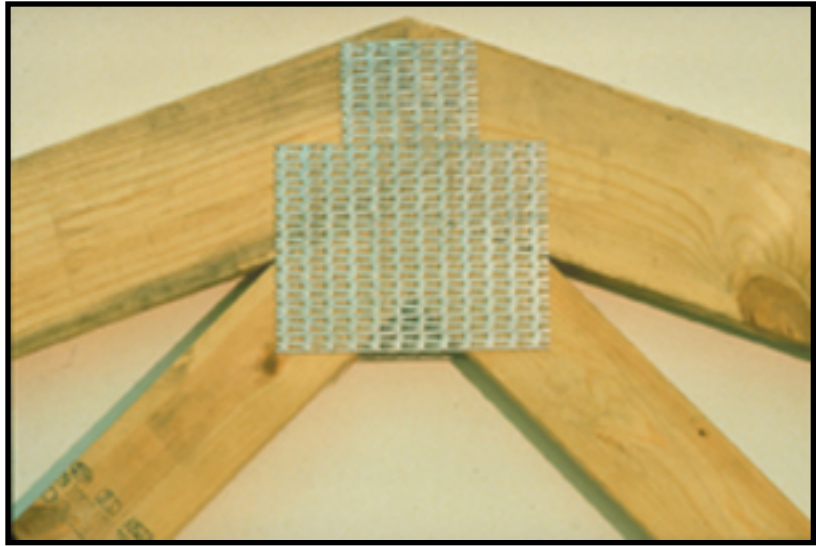


STRUCTURAL BUILDING COMPONENTS

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"Quality Control in the Real World: An Interview with Real People Whose Jobs Revolve Around Quality Control" by Melinda Caldwell

WOODWORDS editorial staff recently interviewed two individuals from Richco Structures in Haven, Wisconsin, who practice quality control measures, *WTCA QC* in particular, every day. Rich Pearce is the Production Manager for Richco and Dave Rondeau is the Quality Control Inspector who implements QC. Richco Structures currently runs eight production lines for roof and floor assemblies.

WOODWORDS: How much of your day is spent doing quality control? Specifically, what percentage of your time does WTCA QC require?

Dave Rondeau: Really my whole day involves quality control functions of one sort or another. I train new employees, troubleshoot problems, help with set-ups, go through job sheets before they get to the line, highlight anything that might be unusual for the day. It's really QC before the fact. As for WTCA QC, I spend about 10% of my day executing the inspections and filling out the paperwork necessary to keep the database up to date and provide accurate reports as to our performance.

WOODWORDS: How many crews from how many shifts do you inspect and how often?

Dave: WTCA QC calls for inspection of five trusses per crew per week. What I usually do on a daily basis is look at four roof production lines on the first shift and three or four lines on the second shift. Usually first thing in the morning I check work from the second shift that was completed the night before to ensure quality before it leaves the yard.

WOODWORDS: About how much time do you spend on an inspection (Effective teeth and/or Truss Assembly in the case of WTCA QC)?

Dave: Truss Assembly inspections usually take 10 to 15 minutes. The three for effective teeth usually take about 25 minutes depending on how fast the workers are running the line. Our clerical staff enters the data into the computer, which probably takes them less

than five minutes a sheet. So WTCA QC isn't terribly time-consuming considering the savings elsewhere in the production process because of it.

WOODWORDS: *If the goal is that the time spent doing inspections saves time later in repairs or callbacks, how much time do you think Richco saves because of doing QC?*

Rich Pearce: *It's difficult to put a hard and fast number on it, but it has without a doubt resulted in fewer callbacks and has saved time and frustration for our customers and our employees. WTCA QC does a good job of enhancing our in-house quality control program by quantifying things in such a way that it points out the tangible problems and then makes it clear when improvement occurs.*

WOODWORDS: *Do you think the people on the assembly tables have become more knowledgeable about the production process because of Richco's using WTCA QC?*

Dave: *Yes, I think it has helped a lot. Now we can use numbers to back us up when we point out a problem or talk to someone about a mistake. WTCA QC gives us the ability to put things in concrete terms and show our employees how their work can effect the finished product in a more tangible way.*

Rich: *Using WTCA QC has given Dave [as our quality control person] an "off the top of his head" ability to make decisions—the right decisions—that keep our production lines moving more efficiently. He's developed the knack for being able to see what has room to move and what needs to be exact. He can make decisions more quickly and with fewer arguments from the guys in the shop because he has the proof of the numbers to back him up.*

WOODWORDS: *What are some things that you have spent or now spend time educating people about?*

Dave: *We still focus on the basics of truss assembly, but we do it with a closer eye. We work on getting chords and splice joints straighter to avoid customer complaints.*

Rich: *Part of QC at Richco is educating people about how to balance the technical aspects (things that can be quantified with WTCA QC) with customer expectations (things that tend to be more intangible). In the end, what the customer is looking for is a truss that will do what it is designed to do. The implementation of QC in our plant has given us the confidence we need that the trusses we deliver to our customers will be structurally sound and will do the job without any problems.*

WOODWORDS: *Another one of the goals of WTCA QC is that the process becomes more efficient as the workers become better educated. Have you noticed a change in the number of mistakes made or the time you spend educating people on QC from the time you started to now?*

Dave: *Our crews have come a long way and are doing a great job. From a dimensional*

standpoint they rarely need to pull anything apart and start over. They're getting things right the first time on a regular basis. They realize that their work is being monitored and it makes them more conscious of possible mistakes. It also makes them take more pride in a job well done.

WOODWORDS: Do you have any other comments you would like to include about your overall impression of WTCA QC as it has affected either your job in particular, or Richco Structures as a whole?

Dave: As the person doing the QC inspections on a daily basis, I would have to say that the support and cooperation of the upper management and foremen in the shop have made all the difference. Because I have access to a system of quality control that quantifies problems in an objective way, I have been empowered to make things right without having to consult with half a dozen other people. This allows me to do my job much more quickly and effectively.

Rich: What QC really boils down to is a commitment to taking the time to do things right the first time. It's that kind of commitment that will pay off in the long run as our customers keep coming back to us because they know they are getting a quality product every time.

Dave Rondeau has been with Richco for 11 years, 7 years as a QC inspector.
Rich Pearce has been with Richco for 15 years, 13 in Supervision.

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