

ASSOCIATION FOCUS

Q&A with APA President Ed Elias

by Sheila Cain

At APA – The Engineered Wood Association's Annual Meeting in San Antonio, Texas, in November, APA President Ed Elias spoke to the General Session attendees about the association's recent activities and plans it has for the future. The *Engineered Wood Journal* recently caught up with Elias and asked him to share more about APA's partnerships, market segment focuses and trade missions. Here's what he had to say.

Engineered Wood Journal:

You mentioned that APA has been working with several associations — including EWTA — on a number of issues. Which associations have you been partnering with, and what's emerging?

APA President Ed Elias:

Expanding strategic alliances are one pathway for the future success of this industry, but only if these partnerships support and leverage the goals of this association more effectively than alternative approaches. APA has sought to identify partners who provide complementary strengths, common underlying culture, strong commitment and offer financial stability. During 2015, several new initiatives are being implemented by APA in this regard.

For example, members of APA, the Engineered Wood Technology Association (EWTA), the American Wood Council (AWC) and the Composite Panel Association (CPA) share the common goal of reducing the risk for product challenges in the market place, often from regulatory constraints. These organizations have a much stronger collective voice when topics such as product labeling for formaldehyde and other VOCs are being debated at state and national levels. We are able to coordinate the messaging and testimony during public hearings and provide cost efficiencies when lobbying or supporting testing is



APA President Ed Elias, left, visited USDA Forest Products Laboratory Assistant Director Mike Ritter at EWTA's Info Fair in San Antonio, Texas, last fall.

required. In 2015, EWTA, the USFS Forest Products Laboratory (FPL) and APA are collaborating on quantifying selected benchmark VOC emission levels from structural wood-based panels and engineered wood products, as manufactured in North America.

APA, AWC and the Canadian Wood Council (CWC) also share the common goal of providing complete building solutions and improving the engineered value of our members' products versus the non-wood competition. Future expansion of the building codes in North America to recognize wood frame construction opportunities beyond four stories is one example. This goal includes not only coordination through the building code process but also the testing, development and promotion of new wood solutions like podium and mass timber options to designers, specifiers and builders. As an example, APA partners with WoodWorks, in both the U.S. and Canada, to deliver this message through their popular Wood Solutions Fairs.

Partnerships also provide the opportunity to offer new or expanded services. In 2015, APA will also be expanding our influence in the Canadian code and regulatory community through partici-

pation on the Technical Priorities and Strategy Committee of CWC. Additionally, through access of the technical and promotional staff of CWC in Ottawa, APA will expand services in the French Canadian language both in publications and response from our two respective help desks.

EWJ:

APA has been working hard this past year to develop and maintain markets. What market segments have been your focus, and what's been accomplished?

Elias:

APA has an industry-wide Strategic Marketing Plan that is developed and prioritized annually through our member-directed advisory committee process. Strategic direction for market access and development as well as program metrics are provided in four major market areas: residential, nonresidential, industrial and international. The following highlights only a few of the accomplishments against these many trade goals.

Protection of the single-family home wall sheathing market share at 80 percent has been of focus of the association for several years now and continues to be

Photo courtesy of APA – The Engineered Wood Association

a high priority. On the defensive front, the Coalition for Fair Energy Codes (CFEC) was formed to address competitive threats emerging for changes to the national and state energy codes. CFEC, a partnership between APA, AWC, EWTA and the National Association of Home Builders, has been successful in influencing over a dozen key states to ensure that they do not discriminate against wood products and systems as they adopt and revise current energy codes. During 2015, key states such as Texas and New York are being targeted in this regard. On the offensive front, FPL and APA are also coordinating several research projects to analyze building envelope assemblies and develop recommendations for new designs that combine structural and energy efficiencies of wood-based wall assemblies for future promotion.

Several collaborative efforts on market education also exist for engineered wall and floor assemblies. In 2014, APA, the International Code Council (ICC), CWC and the Canadian Construction Materials Center (CCMC) reaffirmed through

testing at APA the engineering design capabilities and design configurations for structural wood I-joists in both the U.S. and Canadian codes. This information will be translated as revisions to AWC's ANSI Standard for Seismic and Wind Design and promoted through their code directed seminars. Additionally, APA and the ICC jointly published a wall bracing guide that will continue to be distributed through a series of seminars presented by both organizations.

Fire resistant floor assemblies built with structural wood I-joists and wood-based panels is another high profile market segment targeted by APA. Concern related to the fire performance of code-compliant wood assemblies is the threat addressed here. We have recently issued our new APA Systems Report 405, which provides five practical solutions that can be used by builders to comply with the requirements in the International Residential Code for single-family house construction. Our first webinar on this topic drew over 600 participants and SR-405 has been our most requested pub-

lication from the APA website, drawing more than 1,000 downloads during the first three months of its introduction. In 2015, we will be expanding our promotional program of literature, webinars and trade servicing with the goal of making it easier for designers, specifiers, builders and firefighters to understand the merits of these systems.

EWJ:

APA has spearheaded some trade missions into the international market. Explain the growth of these markets and the successes APA has realized.

Elias:

Trade missions are an important component of APA's strategic direction in our international program. They provide an opportunity for APA member companies to meet with the distribution trade and specifiers in targeted overseas markets. In 2014, 15 member companies participated in 51 events in 16 countries overseas. These missions are coordinated across

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the industry through partnerships with the Canada Wood Group, Softwood Export Council, Southern Pine Council and the American Hardwood Export Council.

In 2014, more than \$426 million of North American structural panel and engineered wood products were exported overseas; our second best year this decade. This performance is all the more remarkable when viewed in light of the weakening economies of many of our targeted export destinations: Japan,

Australia, Mexico, China and Russia. However, we are also seeing new opportunities in emerging markets of Korea, Central and South America and renewed interest in the Caribbean. Larger shares of OSB application are being reported in structural panel shear walls in Japan as a result of recent code expansion activities conducted by APA. The application of radiant barrier sheathing is also being realized outside of North America, and the expansion of wood product assemblies in elder care facilities is taking hold.

The latter capitalizes on the longer spans afforded by lightweight wood frame assemblies.


EWJ:

APA has always made it a priority to educate its members. How have changes to the APA website helped educate and guide new business to members?

Elias:

In October 2014, APA introduced our newly renovated website, www.apawood.org. Financial support for this renovation included assistance from the USDA Forest Service Forest Products Laboratory. A primary objective of this renovation has been to improve our ability to direct trade leads and inquiries for specific products directly to our appropriate members. The site receives over 1.9 million unique visits each year – over 5,200 each day! Every aspect of this website is directed at the continued education about and specification of APA trademarked material or redirecting the clients directly to our members' individual websites for product procurement. And referrals to APA member sites from only one section of this site, www.performancepanels.com, set a new record this year, growing by 56 percent.

A new feature on this website relates to technology transfer, and in particular projects prioritized and supported directly by contributions from the membership of EWTA. The information here provides supporting technical information and tools that allows our members and their customers to have confidence to design, specify and install APA trademarked product correctly and in compliance with referenced codes. The information in this section is not restricted to APA research but also includes supporting material from our research partners.

In closing, I look forward to working in partnership with the membership of EWTA, as we direct our combined energies towards the continued financial success of this industry. 

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