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"Jobsite Submittal or Delivery Packages: Part 1" by Kent J. Pagel

As we know, truss performance depends not only on proper design and fabrication, but also installation vertically, in-plane, and at specific spacing, and braced. Through experience and data, WTCA and most truss manufacturers have learned that a majority of accidents involving trusses occur because of mistakes occurring as a result of poor installation and bracing. This opinion is further confirmed in HIB-91, Commentary and Recommendations for Handling, Installing and Bracing Metal Plate Connected Wood Trusses, where TPI reports that the majority of truss related accidents occur as a result of:

- Inadequate and/or improperly located temporary bracing.
- Inadequate and/or improperly installed bracing connections.
- Inadequate and/or improper connection of trusses to the supporting structure.
- Overloading before permanent bracing and/or sheathing have been installed or after installation is completed.
- Improper field alterations.
- Installation of damaged trusses.
- Improper truss alignment before bracing.

All these problems can be avoided if proper construction techniques are followed. And let's not forget that loss avoidance should be the primary objective of the truss manufacturer from a risk management and liability avoidance perspective. It is only through loss avoidance that the truss manufacturer can be assured that a lawsuit will not be filed.

Consider that, in March of this year, the Wall Street Journal reported that small and midsize companies are facing boosts of up to 15 percent for their workers' compensation, automobile and general liability insurance protection. This projected increase comes after a long period where insurance premiums continued to decline for most manufacturers across the country—which meant dollars falling directly to the bottom line. Insurers have grown tired of decreasing earnings and many must increase premiums simply to avoid continuing financial setbacks. The Wall Street Journal article pointed out that companies with revenues of less than \$10 million were expected to bear the brunt of the price increases as they simply lack financial clout. Therefore, it is essential for those truss companies that fit this profile to do everything they can to improve their risk profile from an insurance company perspective; although implementation of risk management practices is recommended for a vast number of other reasons ranging from "it is the right thing to do" to "I need to do what I can to protect the investment of the owners of the company."

The truss manufacturer must develop a program or policy that should be strictly followed to minimize its exposure to liability arising out of jobsite storage, handling, installation and bracing practices. To accomplish this objective, the following should be considered:

- Carefully review customer contracts and do not unnecessarily assume contractual responsibility.
- Transmit valuable jobsite information to your customer and the truss erector.
- Consider disclaimers and warnings on your placement plans and truss design drawings.
- Keep good records of the purposes of any inspection and/or recommendations made to your customer or the truss erector.

Aside from carefully preparing and negotiating customer contracts, which is extremely important, a proper jobsite submittal or delivery package, and the ability to document that it was duly received by your customer and the truss erector, is the one risk management practice that, in my opinion, will best serve the truss manufacturer. In the next one or two upcoming issues of *WOODWORDS*, I will discuss the jobsite submittal or delivery package in some detail.

One effective way to submit a jobsite package is through the use of a form letter that either serves as the cover of a jobsite packet or is included within a jobsite packet (which could be, for example, either an envelope, zip lock bag or even a notebook—all of which have been used successfully by many truss manufacturers). The form letter can include blanks for the date and the name and address of the project. The form letter can also be customized to include items unique to the particular manufacturer.

The form letter should also reflect a check-off system to enable the company to check-off the items or documents that are enclosed. The letter to the right is an example of a complete form letter that can be used for this purpose.

Date: _____

Job Description: _____

Dear Truss Erector:

Enclosed please find: [We will discuss in next month's article what possibly should be included.]

These documents have been prepared by leading industry technical personnel, including the Truss Plate Institute and the Wood Truss Council of America, and are offered as minimum guidelines. We urge you to examine these documents and to disseminate the information contained in them to all appropriate personnel.

With respect to the products delivered, the truss erector shall be responsible for: (a) inspecting for defects in quality; (b) handling and storing; (c) installing, bracing, bracing connections, and connections to the supporting structure; and (d) inspecting the products after installation and/or verifying the dimensions or adequacy of work done by other trades that may relate to the products. Please note that the majority of accidents involving wood trusses and components occur during installation and result from improper handling,

erection, anchoring and/or bracing of the trusses.

Nothing contained in this letter or in these documents, however, should be construed in any manner as expanding the scope of responsibility of, or imposing any additional liabilities on Anytown, U.S.A. Truss Company.

Very Truly Yours,

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