

January/February 2001

## Human Faces

### "Cooperation in Florida Leads to Truss Cover Sheet Rulemaking Victory" by Melinda Caldwell

More than two years ago, the West Florida Truss Association, a Chapter of WTCA, formed a committee to work on getting approval for truss engineers to sign and seal a cover sheet that indexes the truss specification sheets instead of having to sign and seal each individual specification sheet. This group, consisting primarily of Doug LaChapelle of West Coast Truss, Tom Albani of Robbins Engineering, Terry Burcaw of 41 Truss, Ralph Delvalle of Builders FirstSource and Joe Heidenrich of Florida Forest Products, began their initiative by contacting a handful of major building departments in West Florida. Positive response to the proposal led the committee to pitch the idea to the Suncoast Chapter of Building Inspectors, which covers the West Coast of Florida. This group was also accepting of the proposal, so truss manufacturers in western Florida began using this single-sheet approach.

Shortly thereafter, the Florida Director of Building Inspectors suggested getting this practice approved for the entire state of Florida. This suggestion was discussed at the SETMA meeting with the Executive Director of the Building Officials Association of Florida. Subsequent to the SETMA meeting, an interpretation of the Florida Professional Engineering laws was made by the Executive Director of the Florida Board of Professional Engineers on the validity of cover sheets for truss engineering. Unfortunately, these two events caused the proposal to get side-tracked and manufacturers in West Florida had to revert to their former way of doing things.

Tom Albani, P.E., Vice President of Operations for in Tampa, was not about to let all of the work that had been done up to that point be defeated so easily. In an effort to combat the interpretation issues surrounding this, he arranged a meeting with the Chairman of the Board of the Florida Society of Professional Engineers (FSPE) and presented the proposal to them. The meetings that were held on this issue resulted in some suggested changes to the truss cover sheet by the group of engineers to improve the usability of the form. After Albani incorporated these suggestions into the existing cover sheet, the FSPE agreed to allow the use of the single sheets statewide in Florida.

The attorney for the Florida Board of Professional Engineers has submitted modifications to Rule 61G15-31.003 to allow for the signing and sealing of only the cover sheet of a set of truss design drawings, provided the package is for a project with the scope clearly identified in the cover sheet. Notice of this proposed rulemaking was published in the November 17 issue of Florida Administrative Weekly. Based on the Board's schedule for such rulemaking, it will take roughly three months from the first published notice until the final rule can be adopted. The rule will most likely specify that the cover sheet include the following information:

- Project identification, applicable code, loading, identification of the attached truss layout plan, and name of the authority having jurisdiction.
- A truss layout plan showing the location and designation of each component, which is the responsibility of the Engineer of Record (Building Designer) along with the review of the Truss Designer's work.
- Name and version or revision date of the computer program used.

After this process is complete and the final rule is officially accepted, truss manufacturers in Florida will enjoy a simplified process for signing and sealing truss design drawings. This continues to show the value of the grassroots efforts of many individuals in our industry who take the time to make contacts and champion important industry issues.

A special note of thanks needs to go to Kari Hebrank of the Florida Building Materials Association for working with our industry on this issue. This is a perfect example of how the role—to focus on the legislative and code sector where many constraints and economic burdens exist in the use of wood trusses—that FBMA plays for our industry inside Florida works very well.

WTCA has long been a proponent of sealed cover sheets as all state professional engineering laws allow this to be done in some form or fashion. ([See sidebar article in the January/February 1999 issue of \*WOODWORDS\*.](#)) The real issue is the interpretation that is made about the law and how it can be applied. This was learned first hand in the state of Florida and is another great example of how individuals and our Chapters can make a big difference by putting a human face on the truss industry.

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