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## NAHB Research Center



"Certified Framing Contractors First Step in Research Center Trade Certification Program" by NAHB Research Center Staff

Framing is a critical factor in home construction—it determines the strength and durability of a home and accounts for 15 to 20 percent of the total construction cost. It is crucial to builders, contractors and consumers that framing is done correctly and efficiently the first time, every time. For this reason, the NAHB Research Center has established the National Housing Quality (NHQ) Certified Framing Contractor Program.

This new program marks an important milestone in the quality journey for wood framing in this country, according Ed Caldeira, director of quality services at the Research Center. The certification brings quality management practices to the home building industry in a new and useful way, by setting out a system that:

- Ensures qualified personnel perform framing work.
- Controls materials, tools, work procedures and equipment that affect quality.
- Verifies compliance with regulations, product specifications and builder requirements.
- Takes action to prevent recurrences of defects.
- Assesses and improves the effectiveness of the quality assurance system.

"Integrating a quality assurance system into any company can reduce costs and can help builders and framers better satisfy home buyer quality demands," said Caldeira.

To become certified, a framing contractor must pass an extensive qualification audit and undergo annual audits to verify compliance with certification requirements. The three framing companies that worked to assist in the development of the program, and then became certified under the NAHB Research Center program are: All-tech Construction Contractors of Jamesburg, NJ, Del Webb Contracting Services of Sun City, AZ, and Schuck and Sons Construction Company of Glendale, AZ. These companies were featured during an educational program at the 2001 International Builders' Show in Atlanta.

When asked why implementing a certification program for his framing contractors was important, Craig Steele, president and CEO of Schuck and Sons and Wood Truss Council of America (WTCA) member, said, "We're always looking for things to makes us better at what we do." Steele saw participation in the NHQ program as an avenue to have a third party look at

what they do and provide suggestions on how to improve. He also said that having certified framers work on a job would give his customers a better product.

Steele also asserted that he thinks a quality assurance program like this with its built-in checklists and improvement processes will help to improve the industry in the long run. He said, "There's a tendency in the construction field that if a guy isn't at a level that he claims he was when you hired him, you terminate him. And this [certification program] gives you some tools to say he's probably going to make a good employee but he's a little deficient in this area so you provide him the training. In most cases, they do become a good employee and they appreciate the training."

The framer certification program, which is sponsored by the Partnership for Advancing Technology in Housing (PATH), the NAHB Research Center, the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) and WTCA, was developed as a part of a pilot project to integrate quality assurance practices into the wood framing industry. The certification of framing contractors is only the first step in this NHQ program. Members of the PATH Quality Working Group agree that the initial success of the framer program is paving the way for other trade contractor certification programs. Their mission is to create an alliance of quality-driven construction organizations to champion a national trade contractor quality assurance program to:

- Improve housing quality and customer satisfaction.
- Improve productivity and cycle time.
- Reduce exposure to construction defect litigation and insurance costs.
- Streamline the code inspection process.

Some large, national builders are looking to promote the NHQ certified trade contractor programs among their subcontractors. In its Northeast operations, K. Hovnanian Companies is already starting to specify certified framing contractors, namely, All-tech, Inc. "We've seen significant improvement in [All-tech's] customer satisfaction rating internally," said Jim Hoffner, K. Hovnanian's Northeast region director of quality assurance. "We have superintendents that absolutely want All-tech to be their framing contractor because of the reduction in callbacks that they have to deal with." This kind of reaction is a strong motivation for builders to move for certification of their other contractors, as well.

For more information on the NHQ Certified Framing Contractor program, plans for other trade contractor certification or other builder quality programs, contact the NAHB Research Center at 800/638-8556, or email [ecaldeira@nahbrc.org](mailto:ecaldeira@nahbrc.org).

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The NAHB Research Center is the not-for-profit research arm of the National Association of Home Builders, and is located in Upper Marlboro, MD. In its nearly 40 years of service to the home building industry, the Research Center has provided product research and building process improvements that have been widely adopted by home builders in the United States.

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