

STRUCTURAL BUILDING COMPONENTS MAGAZINE

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A Call to Action Issued in New York State by Sid Ketchum, WTCANY President & Stan Sias, WTCA Staff

On Tuesday, November 5, 2002, several New York Chapter members met to review the repercussions of the events of the prior week's meeting and conference of the Capital Area Building Officials.

During that conference there were two live burn fire demonstrations that cast trusses in a negative light when compared to conventional wood framing. These presentations were orchestrated and staged by the local fire service to leave the building officials with the impression that trusses will fail much sooner than conventional framing when exposed to fire load. The demonstrations did just that. Although the presenters stated that the demonstrations were not scientific, the results were very predictable, and all went as they had planned. The trusses failed first and then the fire was extinguished. What was their perception? Trusses are more dangerous than sticks. Fire service mission accomplished.

During the lead-in to the live burns, the presenters spoke of ways trusses fail: the likelihood of trusses being damaged prior to or during the erection process, lack of draft-stops, lack of proper connections to the bearings, lack of proper permanent bracing or lack of proper connections of the permanent bracing to the trusses and/or end walls, all contributing to the truss system being less safe than other construction methods.

The presenters went on to cast negative light on the work of the Ad-Hoc Committee on Building Labeling which is working to draft workable language for the recently enacted New York State Building Labeling Law (S359-A125), again passively promoting the fire service agenda. This is especially interesting because the lead presenter was a member of this committee, in which the chapter and WTCA have actively participated as well. During the deliberations of this committee, a building labeling symbol had been created that would serve to inform the first responding fire/rescue units of "truss type construction" as had been required by the enabling legislation. Now at the 23rd hour, that sign/symbol isn't good enough. At a meeting held on December 2 to discuss these very issues, the fire service wanted to back away from this symbol because they claim that the Building Officials didn't understand it and therefore didn't like it. Let's remember that the only place this symbol has existed up until this point is within the Ad-Hoc Committee. There has not been one shred of educational effort put forth to educate the fire

MORE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

WTCA staff is presently working on making the Truss Technology Workshops (TTW) available to the public online at the [WTCA web site](#). Not only will building officials be able to obtain CEU credits when accessing the online programs, but they also can obtain them at their leisure. The online TTW's are designed to be available 24/7, with no travel or hotel cost. Just think, education available when they want it and on what they want to learn about. It doesn't get much better than that. The first four online TTWs are:

- Storage, Handling, Installing and Bracing Metal Plate Connected Wood Trusses
- Mold & Structural Components
- Fire Performance of Metal Plate Connected Wood Trusses
- Framing the American Dream

service of the meaning or location to find the symbol on affected buildings.

The message here is very clear. The fire service is in desperate need for education and training in truss performance, design responsibilities and our industry in general. Now is the time to step-up your company's efforts to reach out to the building officials and your local fire service and offer that training. Join together with one or two of your local competitors and make it truly an industry or chapter initiative. We need to get out the message that we are willing to work with the fire service in a proactive approach to firefighter and fire ground safety. We need to continue the building official training on proper bracing techniques and expand that to include Design Responsibilities per the newly adopted ANSI/TPI/WTCA 4-2002. (See sidebar for additional educational resources.)

Our response now must be to do the grassroots work by making contact with individual fire educators and building officials, using the [Carbeck Structural Components Institute's \(CSCI\) Fire Performance of Trusses CD](#), providing plant tours that result in face-to-face contact, and letting everyone make their own decisions on the facts as they are presented.

We must all get the information presented in the CD committed to memory. Once we have this fundamental knowledge base, we have what we need to go out and do this grassroots work. Plant tours are a very easy educational tool to implement. Face-to-face sales are something we do every day. Learn the information on the CD and share it with your staff. Better yet, make it required material for your technical and sales staffs.

Joe Plourde of P & R Truss, a Universal Forest Products Company, issued a challenge at the November 5 meeting. He would like to challenge everyone in the chapter to see just how many contacts can be made with local building and fire officials, how many plant tours can be given, and how many hits that we can generate on the [WTCA web site](#) to view the online TTWs. Don't hesitate to join up with one of your competitors to do face-to-face meetings for groups; there is power in numbers.

The simple fact is that there is much work to be done, and it must be done in the trenches. WTCA-National staff is here to help and has done much of the work already with the creation of the TTWs and the Fire Performance of Wood Trusses CD through CSCI. We all now need to put a "human face" on this work and our industry.

PROPOSED CHAPTER GOALS

For the Fire Service: Purchase and distribute The Fire Performance of Wood Trusses in combination with plant tours. This can be done in one of two ways. One way is to mail the CDs, follow up with personal calls to encourage local fire departments to view the CD, and offer plants tours at that time. The second option is to offer a plant tour, show a portion of the CD during the tour, and give the CD to the participants to continue watching according to their schedule. Provide WTCA with all the contact names so we can get each individual in our database and continue to communicate with them in a meaningful manner.

For Building Officials: Contact local building officials for plant tours and remind them these are

available for CEU credits. In addition, encourage them to access the online TTW programs for CEU credits. If they are hesitant to participate in the courses online, offer to conduct the educational sessions in person, but also find out why they are hesitant so that we can make the TTW online process easy for everyone to use. It will extend our reach greatly if this works well.

For the Chapter: We need to continue to update our fellow chapter members (and non-members) on our progress in these efforts. We should set a goal of completing a certain number of plant tours and sessions in 2003. Ten? Twenty? If every member plant conducts at least three tours, can we reach 50? Higher? The only limit here will be that which we set for ourselves. We will challenge the other 29 chapters to try to out-do the New York group. What do you say? Consider yourselves challenged. Let's see what we can do if we ALL really try.

Purchasing the CDs: This is a great opportunity to become an official WTCA Chapter Partner of CSCI. For a donation of \$1000, you can receive up to 125 CDs. Or, we can order CDs individually off of the WTCA order form. We just need to decide to what extent we want to pool our resources and support the foundation's ongoing research and education efforts.

Please accept this call to action. When or if you need a helping hand getting started, don't hesitate to call a fellow chapter member or WTCA staff. We're all in this together, and we'll all benefit in the end.

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