

STRUCTURAL BUILDING COMPONENTS MAGAZINE

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Learning & Networking – The 2003 WTCA Regional Workshop & Conferences by Anna L. Stamm

This year the WTCA Chapter Summits received a face-lift. The result was the 2003 Regional Workshop & Conferences. Held in Orlando and Las Vegas, the Workshops offered the opportunity for learning and networking in warm and sunny places. The objective was truly to combine business with pleasure.

The pleasure and socializing happened first. Day one gave attendees the chance to play a round of golf with their fellow industry professionals. In Orlando, golf was held on Walt Disney World's Palm course, site of the annual PGA tournament. In Las Vegas, golf was at The Falls at Lake Las Vegas, a new course designed by Tom Weiskopf. This opportunity for fun and relaxation gave everyone a needed break from their winter woes. In the evening of day one, the sponsorship reception was held. Gold and Silver workshop sponsors set up tabletop displays to show their latest products and information to the attending component manufacturers. It was a good time to speak one-on-one over cocktails. The atmosphere remained informal and comfortable, and the day paved the way to "get down to business" on day two.

On day two, the event kicked into high gear with the all-day workshop. The format was a roundtable discussion so that all topics and ideas could be discussed freely. While the lunch break gave attendees one more opportunity to view the tabletop displays by the generous workshop sponsors, the focus for the day was discussing the industry as a whole. On the agenda were several topics, and the evaluations submitted by the attendees indicated which topics were the hottest in each city.

Though the agenda included the same items in both cities, some topics were more resonant in one city than the other. In Orlando, sealed placement plans took on special meaning. Since Florida has been embroiled in a fight against sealed placement plans, this topic hit close to home for several of the attendees. In addition, they could take heart in hearing the updates from the fellow members and chapters facing these controversies including North Carolina and California. The Orlando attendees also cited bracing and design responsibilities as some of the best information exchanged. If they hadn't seen it yet, the attendees were given copies of WTCA's latest products on this subject, ANSI/TPI/ WTCA 4-2002, "National Standard and Recommended Guidelines on Responsibilities for Construction Using Metal Plate Connected Wood Trusses" and its Commentary, as well as the new English/Spanish version of "Always Diagonally Brace for Safety," the temporary bracing document also known as WTCA-B2.

In Las Vegas, several attendees welcomed the discussion on the prescriptive code changes of the IBC/IRC. Indeed, the attendees could learn much from the way fellow chapters have been responding to the changes including Michigan, New York and Wisconsin. The Las Vegas attendees also cited mold as one of the most important topics covered. Each Workshop attendee received a draft copy of WTCA's newly-revised Truss Technology in Building sheet, "Facts Regarding Mold on

Wood Structural Building Components," along with the new "Builder Advisory Checklist for Minimizing Mold on Structural Building Components." These new documents were greeted with much appreciation and approval.

In both cities, fire was frequently mentioned as one of the best discussions held. Everyone agreed that the Carbeck CD, "The Fire Performance of Wood Trusses," is an excellent tool for educating building and fire officials as well as ourselves on the facts and not the myths of fire performance. Many chapters are starting campaigns to reach out to the building and fire officials in their areas, and the attendees exchanged information and advice on the best approaches for these educational campaigns.

Last but not least, the other item mentioned frequently by attendees at both workshops was the opportunity for open discussion and networking. All too often, businesspeople must focus only on the day-to-day activities of their businesses. These Workshops gave everyone a chance to think about the bigger picture and discuss the industry with their fellow professionals. Indeed, this is what the Workshops did best—they brought people together to talk about the issues and learn from each other.

So what's in store for 2004? The number one request by attendees this year was for even more attendance and participation. That's right, the Workshops are good but they could be better if everyone reading this article considered attending next year. If you're one of the people who thought, "this sort of thing isn't for me," then let us know why you're not attending. These Workshops are for all members, and we want to know how to increase member involvement. Please think about why you didn't attend this year, and let us know how we can change your mind for next year. Simply write an email to chapters@woodtruss.com or send a fax to 608/274-3329 and state what kept you away. Were the cities too far away and you preferred something closer? Was the agenda too open and you preferred something more structured (such as last year's train-the-trainer session on day one)? Was Friday an inconvenient day for you, and you would prefer a different part of the week? Or, can you not quite put a reason on why you didn't think you should attend? Were you not quite sure if you would find value in these events? Did you never seriously consider attending? If that is why you stayed away, then we can only ask you to reconsider your reluctance.

Bar none, everyone who attends these Workshops (and the Chapter Summits before them) have found them to be well worth the time and effort to attend. If you're in doubt, give staff a call at 608/274-4849 and we'll either speak with you about what you've been missing or connect you with a member in your area who can discuss the benefits they have enjoyed by attending. Together, we will make sure that the 2004 Regional Workshop & Conferences are even better than 2003!

Thank you to everyone who attended this year's Workshops and helped make them a success! We look forward to seeing you again next year!

What the attendees are saying:

"I want to thank those who organized and attended the Orlando WTCA Regional Workshop. The benefit the Workshop gave to Chambers Truss was well worth my time and Chambers Truss expense sending me. I encourage those who did not attend this Workshop to rethink their priorities and attend the next event. You will get back more than you put in." —Bob Becht, Chambers Truss Inc., Fort Pierce, FL

"I went to the Las Vegas Workshop looking for the information and motivation I would need to restart the local chapter in my area, and I came away with my batteries recharged and my spirits high. Even though a lot of the problems we discussed are not affecting us in the Inland Empire region yet, I know they will be in the near future. We need to remain proactive, and I will bring back the good ideas I learned at the Workshop and put them to use in my chapter." —Phil Adams, Coeur D'Alene Builders Supply, Coeur D'Alene, ID

"The golf and evening reception the day before the meeting were great. They allowed everyone to enjoy some casual conversation, and for the sponsors it was a good chance to really spend some quality time on their product information. I have attended a number of meetings in the past couple of years and I thought that this was one of the best. Speaking with my fellow chapter members who traveled from Texas, we all agreed it was worth the time and money to attend, and that we would all return next year and encourage all of our chapter members to attend." — Jack Dermer, American Truss Systems, Inc., Houston, TX

"I do enjoy attending these Workshops. It is more than what is on the agenda, which should be enough to generate interest and attendance by itself. I've realized that while at these workshops, I am in the company of industry leaders. In my opinion, the people at the workshops are not industry leaders just because their businesses are successful. They are leaders because they join in these workshops and meetings to share common industry issues, problems or resolutions, with others just like themselves. They understand the 'attraction' at these meetings is not some fascinating guest speaker, or presentation by someone else. It is the people who attend and participate that make it interesting, and provide value in attendance. It is the wide range of views and perspectives from whomever is there that is valuable. We followed the 'flow' of conversation whenever possible or practical to address whatever arose as important issues to the people there. It seemed to work quite well with what got brought up during the day, and it seemed that everyone with a comment or opinion, pro or con, was satisfied. I consider that a good meeting, and I consider that a day well spent." —Mike Nilles, Raymond Building Supply Corp., North Port, FL

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