

# STRUCTURAL BUILDING COMPONENTS MAGAZINE

November 2003

Because Quality Matters: The National Housing Quality Program Raises the Bar on Quality for the Industry by NAHB Research Center Staff

*The home building industry concentrates on quality with the NAHB Research Center's National Housing Quality program!*

Recognizing the importance of quality assurance systems within the home building industry, the NAHB Research Center developed the National Housing Quality (NHQ) Program in 1993. Its primary purpose is to disseminate information on quality management principles and practices in the home building and remodeling industries, and to foster their adoption. The program is comprised of several components, all with the core goal of building higher quality homes that meet or exceed customer expectations.

NHQ Program components include:

- Quality Assurance Training
- Certified Trade Contractor Program
- Manufacturer Training Certification Program
- Certified Product Program

Before the NHQ Program's inception, the home building industry as a whole did little to address quality assurance. Though the manufacturing world had long enjoyed the benefits of applied quality management, those practices had not been translated to suit the particular needs of the home builder, remodeler, or trade contractor in the field.

The NHQ Program's quality assurance training is streamlined to minimize time away from the field. This training creates a quality culture within the organization and creates a documented quality assurance system within the company. It also streamlines business practices, provides demonstrated due diligence in legal matters and sets companies apart as quality leaders.

## HOW DOES QUALITY APPLY TO MANUFACTURERS?

Building products are required to meet or exceed various industry standards, such as the ANSI/TPI 1-2002, and product manufacturer's training programs are designed to ensure products' proper installation and use. But how can manufacturers know whether their products meet these standards with any certainty? How can they be reasonably certain that the end users are installing their products safely and correctly?

## CERTIFIED PRODUCT PROGRAM

The NAHB Research Center has been a testing and third party certification agency for building

products for over 40 years to ensure that they adhere to industry-recognized national standards. Certified products meet or exceed the requirements of the appropriate standards. This program fits well with the work WTCA is doing with its in-plant QC database program.

General building products, like insulation, are randomly selected from finished goods inventory, and shipped to the NAHB Research Center for testing and evaluation. These specimens are subjected to a stringent series of laboratory tests to determine whether they meet standards promulgated by HUD, ANSI, ASTM and/or other code-and standards-issuing bodies.

## **MANUFACTURER TRAINING CERTIFICATION PROGRAM**

The implementation of high quality training programs is valuable because the training reduces or eliminates manufacturers' exposure to litigation for faulty workmanship when installing their products. It also allows the quality of the product to stand on its own—without being compromised by installer mistakes. Additionally, trade contractors have reported that the use of manufacturers' training programs eliminates the "guesswork" and provides clearly-defined best practices for installations.

To be effective, quality training programs must reach job-level installers and product users. And manufacturers must define management and supervisory responsibilities that directly relate to the training program, carefully manage the program's overall operation, and demarcate the training responsibilities of all relevant employees. Managers should be able to collect and review evidence that the training program is effective and achieving its goals.

WTCA has a wide array of training and certification programs available to its membership to meet these goals and objectives. For more information about industry training programs, please visit [www.woodtruss.com](http://www.woodtruss.com).

For others in the industry there is the NHQ Manufacturer Training Certification Program (MTCP), which aids residential construction product manufacturers with training programs that improve the quality of their product's installation on the jobsite. It provides guidance for product manufacturers and distributors who are striving to assure consistent installation/use of their products and to achieve continuous improvement in the effectiveness of their training efforts.

## **HOW DOES QUALITY APPLY TO TRADE CONTRACTORS?**

The development of a customized, quality assurance system that is implemented throughout a trade contracting firm (like a framing contractor) provides a documented and systematic approach to achieving quality. Because work is done correctly the first time, firms experience a reduction or elimination of callbacks, an increase in productivity and builder satisfaction, reduced cycle time and exposure to litigation, and improved morale.

Doing the job right the first time requires dedication to certain key activities. These include reading product installation manuals (e.g. Building Component Safety Information (BCSI 1-2003) manual), enrolling in installation training programs (e.g., WTCA's Truss Technology Workshop on Handling, Installing and Bracing Wood Trusses), and engaging in constant communication with

the client. The focus on solving problems empowers trades to eliminate recurring problems and defects. Many of the firms who have implemented a quality assurance system have found that it provides a competitive advantage in the marketplace, even creating a “contractor of choice” role for them with builders. This type of system can also make them more attractive to insurance carriers.

The NAHB Research Center, with the assistance of the Certified Trade Contractor Advisory Council, introduced the NHQ Certified Trade Contractor Program in 1991. Advisory Council members are: Ed Caldiera, Caldiera Quality; Sean Cavanaugh, Gypsum Construction Company; Kirk Grundahl, Wood Truss Council of America; Bruce Harrell, Home Buyers Warranty; Jim Hoffner, K. Hovnanian Companies; David Simon, Don Simon Homes; Craig Steele, Schuck and Sons Construction Company; and Jalsa Urubshurow, All-tech, Inc.

To earn certification, a trade contracting firm must develop a quality assurance system, and then implement that system for at least three months. The company must then pass an initial certification audit of their office and jobsite business practices and adherence to their individualized quality manual. To maintain certification, companies undergo annual audits.

---

For more information on the NHQ Program, contact Dean Potter, director of quality programs at the NAHB Research Center, at 800/638-8556, ext. 6267. NHQ Program descriptions are also available online at the NAHB Research Center’s web site, [www.nahbrc.org/quality](http://www.nahbrc.org/quality).

---

### [SBC HOME PAGE](#)

Copyright © 2003 by Truss Publications, Inc. All rights reserved. For permission to reprint materials from SBC Magazine, call 608/310-6706 or email [editor@sbcmag.info](mailto:editor@sbcmag.info).

The mission of Structural Building Components Magazine (SBC) is to increase the knowledge of and to promote the common interests of those engaged in manufacturing and distributing of structural building components to ensure growth and continuity, and to be the information conduit by staying abreast of leading-edge issues. SBC will take a leadership role on behalf of the component industry in disseminating technical and marketplace information, and will maintain advisory committees consisting of the most knowledgeable professionals in the industry. The opinions expressed in SBC are those of the authors and those quoted solely, and are not necessarily the opinions of any of the affiliated associations (SBCC, WTCA, SCDA & STCA).