

by Stewart Garden

**MSR and MEL lumber production breaks records for the second year in a row!**

**A**nnual production of machine stress rated (MSR) and machine evaluated lumber (MEL) has once again exceeded two billion board feet. This is the second consecutive year that production has achieved this record level. The news was communicated with the release of the 2004 Production Survey at the Annual MSR Lumber Producers Council Workshop in Point Clear, AL earlier this year.

The steady production volume of MSR lumber means continued availability of stress rated lumber. This provides the opportunity for designers to substitute MSR into design plans that currently specify visually graded lumber. Component manufacturers are able to count on regular access to preferred species and grades that meet their manufacturing needs throughout North America.

Species	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
DFL	123.1	133.6	134.3	176.6	159.0	147.0	146.7	147.7	162.9	173.9
HF	34.8	44.2	60.5	66.7	67.0	57.0	63.9	62.6	56.2	60.7
SPF	652.5	714.9	758.1	889.4	954.7	1284.5	1229.7	1492.4	1497.9	1664.6
SYP	111.8	116.1	138.9	154.1	201.1	185.7	226.6	271.1	290.7	276.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>922.2</b>	<b>1008.8</b>	<b>1091.8</b>	<b>1286.8</b>	<b>1381.8</b>	<b>1674.2</b>	<b>1666.9</b>	<b>1973.8</b>	<b>2007.7</b>	<b>2176.0</b>

Table 1. Total MSR Production Volume by Species (million board feet)

Survey participants represent the vast majority of MSR producers from all regions of North America and the survey has long been considered key benchmark information for the industry. The MSR Lumber Producers Council was incorporated in 1988 and has been promoting the advantages of stress rated lumber for almost two decades. The council is one of the few industry associations effectively representing all lumber manufacturing regions of North America.

New and improved production technologies from MSR equipment manufacturers continue to be introduced to efficiently extract stress rated grades of lumber from sawmill production. The speed and accuracy of machine grading equipment has matched and complemented the development of sawmill technology such as grade optimizers and high-speed production equipment. Stress rating equipment is capable of keeping up with production in excess of 3,200 lineal feet per minute—another significant increase over last year! Equipment for geometric scanning and stiffness rating is now fully integrated for trimming decisions. Recalculation of average stiffness for any trim decision can be conducted to ensure the right product is produced at all times.

Industry consolidation has led to increases in average sawmill size in many parts of North America, making value added products such as MSR very desirable. Large mills with MSR capability are now common and this has become a standard part of many sawmill modernization projects.

### at a glance

- ❑ Annual production of machine stress rated (MSR) and machine evaluated lumber (MEL) has exceeded two billion board feet for the second year in a row.
- ❑ Stress rating equipment is capable of keeping up with production in excess of 3,200 lineal feet per minute.
- ❑ The grades with the largest production volume are 1650Fb 1.5E and 2100Fb 1.8E.

Continued on page 64

## 2004 North American MSR Lumber Production...

Continued from page 62

Additional factors that have maintained the demand for MSR lumber production include:

1. Increased and dependable availability of key MSR species and grades.
2. End users and specifiers are more educated about MSR grades and applications and are growing their uses of MSR lumber.
3. Decrease in the availability of visual grades that meet the specifiers' needs.

Once again, the grades with the largest production volume are 1650Fb 1.5E and 2100Fb 1.8E. These grades make up over two-thirds of North American production. The largest growth in demand for 2004 over 2003 was for 2100Fb 1.8E and 2400Fb 2.0E. 2x4 continues to be the width with greatest annual MSR production volume followed by 2x6 (see Table 2).

Spruce-Pine-Fir from the United States and Canada continues

Size	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
2x3	21.0	20.9	33.0	48.2	57.8	116.2	58.5	71.8	83.7	89.7
2x4	546.7	564.5	611.3	810.8	840.0	1042.1	1029.3	1200.2	1215.6	1291.5
2x5	NA <sup>1</sup>	NA <sup>1</sup>	2.9	NA <sup>1</sup>	NA <sup>1</sup>	NA <sup>1</sup>	NA <sup>1</sup>	NA <sup>1</sup>	NA <sup>1</sup>	NA <sup>1</sup>
2x6	249.3	247.8	277.7	319.8	349.9	395.9	433.4	525.4	519.8	588.7
2x8	45.4	32.7	38.5	61.6	68.1	69.9	91.3	108.3	111.3	117.9
2x10	19.5	13.1	13.9	21.5	35.7	31.7	39.5	52.9	56.9	65.9
2x12	3.3	4.3	4.5	8.3	9.3	9.7	10.0	11.6	16.8	17.2
Other	37.1	125.5	110.0	16.7	21.0	NA <sup>1</sup>	NA <sup>1</sup>	NA <sup>1</sup>	NA <sup>1</sup>	NA <sup>1</sup>
<b>Total</b>	<b>922.2</b>	<b>1008.8</b>	<b>1091.8</b>	<b>1286.9</b>	<b>1381.8</b>	<b>1674.2</b>	<b>1666.9</b>	<b>1973.8</b>	<b>2007.7</b>	<b>2176.0</b>

Table 2. Total MSR Production Volume by Size (million board feet)

<sup>1</sup>these data were combined into "Other" category

to be the largest portion of MSR production with approximately 75 percent of North American output by volume. Southern Yellow Pine, Douglas Fir-Larch and Hem-Fir follow with 14 percent, eight percent and three percent respectively. This balance of production is unchanged from 2003.

All indications are that MSR lumber production will continue to increase in the coming years, although the economy will influence most changes. The expansion of the building

components industry in North America along with the popularity of engineered wood will continue to drive this growth. Equipment producers indicate sales of their grading equipment are steady and show no sign of slowing. MSR lumber will continue to lead the way as a value added product for the lumber industry. **SBC**

*Stewart Garden is Past President and a member of the Board of Directors of the MSR Lumber Producers Council of Helena, Montana. Stewart is a sales engineer at Canfor Wood Products Marketing in Vancouver, Canada.*

*The MSR Production Survey is compiled on a confidential basis by Joratek Enterprises under contract to the MSR Lumber Producers Council ([www.msrlumber.org](http://www.msrlumber.org)). The proprietary nature of the survey requires that production data from individual respondents is not published, only the combined volumes of each species, grade and width. Neither Joratek nor the MSR Lumber Producers Council is responsible for the accuracy of the data supplied for survey.*

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