



Human Faces

Request for Bracing Education Cements Relationship

by Emmy Thorson-Hanson & Libby Maurer

Education and relationship-building go hand-in-hand for two groups coming together for a common goal.

When approached with a request to present a seminar about bracing to a group of building officials, Russell Wheeler and Scott Garber jumped at the chance. They realized the importance of answering the call to educate the marketplace about permanent and temporary bracing issues.

A sales rep for Glaize Components in Winchester, VA, Russell was approached by Mike Dellinger, Region III Vice President of the Virginia Building and Code Officials Association (and plans reviewer for the City of Harrisonburg, VA), about giving a presentation on bracing issues to officials in his region. The group wanted to better understand bracing requirements and loading requirements through reading a truss placement diagram at their early March meeting, Mike said.

The first person Russell considered to deliver the presentation was co-worker Scott Garber, manager of Safety and QC. Russell asked Scott if he could use engineering drawings to explain load issues and illustrate why permanent lateral bracing is required and what makes it so important. Scott eagerly accepted the task and immediately started preparing for the presentation.

Russell said education was the goal of the presentation. "We wanted to make sure the inspectors are looking at the installation drawings correctly. They need to understand their role versus [the manufacturer's] role and we need to educate them on what we do," he said.

Russell also noted that unseasoned building inspectors often overlook what is important and pick up on what isn't so important; they aren't necessarily given a book to guide them through the inspection process. This is precisely why Mike Dellinger started scheduling regular training sessions with local material suppliers when he was appointed to his position. "The inspectors talk about trying to read the design drawings to check the bracing, but there's so much information on them that it is confusing at times. So I called Glaize," Mike said.

Scott realized the potential impact that this presentation could have in their region. During the presentation he used various resources to point out proper bracing application to the building officials. He handed out a variety of literature from WTCA including the BCSI 1-03 booklet and two documents from the **Truss Technology in Building (TTB)** series: "How to Read a Truss Placement Diagram" and "How to Read a Truss Design Drawing," as well as the Standard Design Responsibilities document (WTCA 4-2002) and along with a letter from their software supplier about bracing responsibilities.

Buildings "Not the Same"

Scott first asked the building officials to acknowledge that structures are not as simplistic as they were 20 or 30 years ago. "We [CMs] have been challenged a lot over the years," emphasized Scott. "We are not building the 28-foot ranch home anymore." Technological advances in building design have allowed for increasingly complex roof lines, while the homebuyer demographic has shifted in the last several decades and has influenced additional structure changes.

Scott then jumped right into the more technical concepts involved in building

inspection. Discussions all centered around bracing issues, with three main topics taking precedence over the presentation.

The building officials were well informed about appropriate hangers. Uplift and toe nailing also were briefly discussed as well as rigid ceiling purlins on the bottom chord. The question that everyone seemed to want to know the answer to was "Is dry-wall considered to be a rigid ceiling?" Scott answered yes, although he advised that in a suspended ceiling, purlins need to be added. The difference between L braces and T braces was thoroughly investigated.

The discussion then turned to permanent bracing responsibilities. It is common knowledge that there is misunderstanding among building officials when it comes to permanent bracing responsibilities, and this group was no exception. When some within the group pressed Scott on which party is actually responsible for providing permanent bracing, Scott handled their inquiries with ease and was able to effectively present the industry's stance on providing only temporary bracing (as outlined in the BCSI-B2 Summary Sheet). Scott suggested that they refer to WTCA 4-2002 and refer to the Building Designer for those details. He also provided them with copies of John Meeks' Permanent Bracing booklet. He stood firm on Glaize's stance on responsibilities, "We aren't going to accept the responsibility for providing permanent bracing details because we only design components for one portion of the entire structure. But we're happy to give out a ton of different resources and assist them in any way we can," Scott stated.

Finally, Scott pointed out that component manufacturers have design and manufacturing regulations to comply with from WTCA and TPI, but there is a lot that happens between manufacturing and installation on the jobsite. By this he meant that the component manufacturer should not be held responsible for activities occurring on the jobsite after the delivery of components has been made. Building inspectors need to understand that they are "the last set of eyes and should be knowledgeable about the whole building's system. It is their job to learn about it and be the last line of defense for a safer building," he said.

Scant Resources Equal Insufficient Education

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at a glance

- Glaize Components was approached by a regional building officials group to clarify temporary and permanent bracing issues.
- Scott Garber prepared for the presentation by reviewing BCSI and related B documents, which they also distributed to the group for reference.
- Mike Dellinger, Region III Vice President of the Virginia Building and Code Officials Association commented that the presentation was very helpful.

knowledge gap among some building official circles? Scott thinks it amounts to a lack of resources. Many local jurisdictions are under-staffed and lack three vital ingredients: time, money and interest. "They are taxed to the point of being unable to provide or seek continuing education," Scott points out. "And there isn't a whole lot we can do to fix that fact."

Mike noted there aren't many resources internal to building departments that cover proper handling, installing and bracing of trusses for inspectors. "And unfortunately, the state doesn't mandate any CEU credits for us either," he added. Therefore, they are essentially on their own to request supplemental education of specific products—like trusses—from material suppliers.

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John Griffith

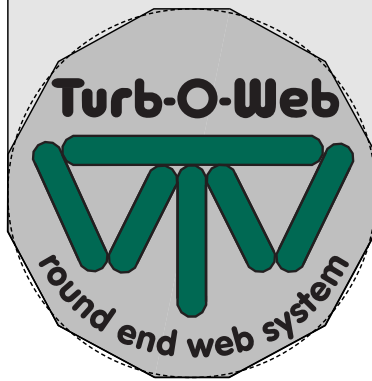
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A lot of the information presented to Region III was new to the inspectors, which Russell attributes to the fact that "nobody is giving them this information. It is available if they ask, but they haven't asked until now." And because they asked, it was especially crucial for Glaize to step up to the plate.

Mike said his department, the City of Harrisonburg, is fortunately very diligent about making sure everyone is on the same page. "And if we don't have sufficient training on a topic—like truss bracing—we ask that trade to train us," he said.

There are a variety of ways for manufacturers to get involved in educating their local building officials. One option is to become mobilized. Scott suggests that manufacturers take on an attitude of establishing your company as a reputable business within the industry and be straight with building officials. "Be forthright. If they invite you in, don't tell them any bull," he said.

Another valuable tip from Scott is to view building officials as a resource. Here is one way to think about it; the more knowledgeable building officials are about your product, the fewer calls you'll get that can potentially take away time and resources from your business. "The more we educate the end user—the officials—and everyone who touches the product and works in the process, the more our efforts are bound to help the industry in the long run." Scott says he always remembers the phrase "knowledge is power" when it comes to reaching out to educate the market—if you have knowledge, you become empowered to spread that knowledge to those around you and will become a valuable resource to your markets. "The more component manufacturers can be involved in educating the consumer, the better off we will be as an industry," stated Russell. "Anything you can do to help building officials understand how components are used per the code in each locality is a benefit—and helps everyone understand and interpret that information correctly. It is easy for everyone to misinterpret the code language so it is important to work together to avoid confusion."

Mike noted Scott's presentation was definitely worthwhile: "The inspectors took a lot away from it and learned some valuable information."

A former contractor, Mike said the next challenge is convincing contractors of the need to become educated about why bracing is so important. "I can almost guarantee that if you surveyed 100 of them, not more than five have looked at handling, installing and bracing resources. To them, time is money," he said.

By presenting a seminar on bracing to members of the Virginia Building and Code Officials Association, Glaize bridged a crucial gap in education for the building officials serving its market. Scott was glad to hear after the presentation that even building officials who have been in the industry for decades felt they had learned something. This just goes to show that when everyone involved is learning, they are also growing, which is something that benefits us all. **SBC**

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