



Chapter Corner

For more information about WTCA Chapters and how to become more involved, contact Anna L. Stamm (608/310-6719 or astamm@quallim.com) or Danielle Bothun (608/310-6735 or dbothun@quallim.com). Contributions to Chapter Corner, including pictures, are encouraged. Submissions may be edited for grammar, length and clarity.



Chapter Spotlight

Chapter Meetings Go Online with SBC Connection

by Anna L. Stamm

In 2008, a new tool was placed in motion that has the potential to help us hold a wide variety of meetings with members while having the convenience of not traveling anywhere to participate, which is particularly great for chapter meetings where the distance can be far just to attend a two-hour meeting. Called *SBC Connection*, this approach to meetings allows members and chapters to conduct meetings using internet technology that combines a teleconference with the ability to present and work with meeting materials via the internet. All attendees call into the meeting on a toll free phone number while they simultaneously log into an online meeting website. Everyone is easily able to review and discuss posted meeting materials from the convenience of their own home or office.

The California Chapter was the first to try out this new meeting technology at its March meeting. By April, the Alabama, Michigan, Kentucky and Mid South Chapters were all using *SBC Connection*—half held the online meeting in conjunction with an in-person meeting with dinner, while half used only the online meeting tool. For other chapters thinking about this new approach to chapter meetings, consider the feedback from the California Chapter meeting:

"I was quite pleased with the meeting turnout and participation... participants are more comfortable in expressing their opinions [and] if nothing else, the meetings are far less expensive to put on and consume far less time away from the office."

—Gary Sartor, California Chapter President, Stone Truss Company, Inc., Oceanside CA

"I was able to sit in my office chair rather than a stiff chair in a conference room [and] I see the potential to get other members from my location involved just by inviting them into the meeting at the time when they are needed. I also have access to my office and other files/resources that can be used to support a current meeting discussion. Overall I think this was a great idea." —Paul Semchuk, BMC West, Modesto, CA

"I believe this is an excellent format for time and money savings."

—Karen Wilson, Universal Truss, Inc., Fontana, CA

"Great idea. This makes it much easier to participate."

—Michael Fisher, Western Wood Fabricators, Inc., Elverta, CA

"Today was the first meeting I've attended. I was very impressed with the online meeting and how well it went. This is a good idea and I look forward to the next one." —Steve Fuhrman, Cordstrap USA Inc.

The message is clear: *SBC Connection* allows members to reap the benefits of attending a meeting without the hassle and related time and travel costs, while also reaching out to members who have never been able to attend meetings in the past. For your next meeting, try *SBC Connection*. **SBC**

Chapter Highlights

California Engineered Structural Components Association

In March, the California Chapter replaced its usual meetings in Riverside and Sacramento with an online meeting using SBC Connection (see also the Chapter Spotlight article). First up on the agenda was a report on the Safety Zone documents for drivers. The new four-page sheet for drivers with strong visual directions for using the Safety Zone sandwich board signage at the jobsite was displayed on-screen for members to offer comments and suggestions. A one-page checklist to follow on each delivery was also reviewed. After incorporating comments and getting needed photographs, electronic copies of the documents will be emailed to the full membership for comments.

Allen Erickson gave an update on the public hearings on the San Francisco Fire Code and building labeling proposal. Thanks go to Allen and Simon Evans for their time invested in this effort. Kirk Grundahl was also able to go over the ICC code change proposal on labeling and the recent ICC Code Development Hearings.

The members held a good discussion on the confusion in Section 17 of the International Building Code (IBC) on inspection and quality assurance requirements. WTCA staff is assisting the chapter in obtaining the proper interpretation in San Diego. Ken Cloyd and Gary Sartor would be attending the DSA hearing in San Diego on April 9.

The latest WTCA Technical Notes written at the request of California Chapter members were displayed for review and comment. The Tech Notes were written to address the following industry issues: problems with gypsum installation and taking proactive steps to prevent problems before they occur; the issue of requiring trusses to be subject to "special inspections" (IBC Sec 1704) even though they are already under the manufacturer's in-plant and third party QC procedures spelled out in TPI 1; and a series of Tech Notes on the 2007 IBC and IRC supplement that updates the newly adopted 2006 IBC in California. Members agreed that industry commentary on these issues will be quite helpful in the marketplace.

A report on the recent WTCA Board and Committee meetings in Albuquerque was given by Kirk Grundahl, including a very informative review of the WTCA budget. When the discussion turned to the QC Committee meeting, it was noted that anyone in the conversion process to IBC 2006 should seriously consider moving directly to the use of ANSI/TPI 1 2007 Chapter 3 requirements, since the latest version of Chapter 3 is the best generation of the in-plant QC standard so far and even more oriented to the component manufacturing process.

Iowa Truss Manufacturers Association

On February 26, the Iowa Chapter held a Legislative Breakfast in the Legislative Dining Room at the Capitol Building in Des Moines. Approximately 50 lawmakers attended and discussed industry issues with members of the Iowa Truss Manufacturers Association, the Iowa Lumbermen's Association and the Iowa Homebuilders Association. All agreed it was an excellent event that they would repeat next year.

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Consumer Price Index

[an index measuring the change in the cost of typical wage-earner purchases of goods and services expressed as a percentage of the cost of these same goods and services in some base period - called also cost-of-living index]

Expenditure Category	Changes from Preceding Mo.			Compound annual rate 3-mo. ended Mar 08
	Jan	Feb	Mar	
All Items	.4	.0	.3	3.1
All Items Less Food & Enery	.3	.0	.2	2.0

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Unemployment Rate

Dec	5.0%
Jan08	4.9%
Feb	4.8%
Mar	5.1%

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Producer Price Index - Customized Industry Data

An inflationary indicator published by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics to evaluate wholesale price levels in the economy.

Engineered Wood Mem. (exc. truss) Mfg.	Jan	Feb	Mar	Truss Mfg.	Jan	Feb	Mar
	Eng. Wood Mem.	89.1(P)	90.4(P)		89.5(P)	Truss Mfg.	108.8(P)
Primary Products	105.6(P)	107.1(P)	106.1(P)	Wood Trusses	104.7(P)	104.1(P)	104.8(P)
Other	105.3(P)	107.3(P)	105.9(P)	Primary Products	104.7(P)	104.1(P)	104.8(P)
				Secondary Products	98.1(P)	100.4(P)	100.2(P)

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Producer Price Index General

% changes in selected stage-of-processing price indexes

Month	Total	Ex. Food & Energy
Dec	-0.4(r)	0.1(r)
Jan08	1.0	0.4
Feb	0.3	0.5
Mar	1.1	0.2

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

U.S. Prime Rate

Month	2008	2007	2006
Dec 1	-	7.50%	8.25%
Jan 1	7.25%	8.25%	7.25%
Feb 1	6.00%	8.25%	7.50%
Mar 1	6.00%	8.25%	7.50%
Apr 1	5.25%	8.25%	7.75%

Source: Federal Reserve Board

Housing Market Index 2007-08 (HMI)

The HMI is a weighted, seasonally adjusted statistic derived from ratings for present single family sales, single family sales in the next 6 months and buyers traffic. The first two components are measured on a scale of "good" "fair," and "poor," and the last one is measured on a scale of "high," "average" and "low." A rating of 50 indicates that the number of positive or good responses received from the builders is about the same as the number of negative or poor responses. Ratings higher than 50 indicate more positive or good responses.

Nov	Dec	Jan08	Feb	Mar	Apr
19	18	19	20	20	20

Source: National Association of Home Builders (NAHB)

Consumer Confidence Index

The Consumer Confidence Index is a measure of consumer optimism toward current economic conditions. The consumer confidence index was arbitrarily set at 100 in 1985 and is adjusted monthly on the basis of a survey of consumers.

The index considers consumer opinion on both current conditions (40%) and future expectations (60%).

July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan08	Feb	Mar	% +/-
112.6	105.6	99.5	95.2	87.3	90.6	87.3	76.4(r)	64.5	-15.6%

Source: www.consumerrresearchcenter.org

MARCH 2007 ISM BUSINESS SURVEY AT A GLANCE

	Series Index	Direction Mar vs Feb	Rate of Change Mar vs Feb
PMI	48.6	Contracting	Slower
New Orders	46.5	Contracting	Faster
Production	48.7	Contracting	From Growing
Employment	49.2	Contracting	Slower
Supplier Deliveries	53.6	Slowing	Faster
Inventories	44.9	Contracting	Faster
Customers' Inventories	51.0	Too High	From Too Low
Prices	83.5	Increasing	Faster
Backlog of Orders	47.5	Contracting	Slower
Exports	56.5	Growing	Faster
Imports	45.0	Contracting	Faster

For an in-depth explanation of this summary, go to <https://ism.ws/ISMReport>.

Chapter Corner

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Later that morning, the chapter held a membership meeting at a nearby hotel and welcomed Becky Coady of the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) and Dennis Larson of the Department of Labor. Giving a presentation on the history and purpose of the ESGR, they explained that federal law and ESGR activities are a response to an all-volunteer military and are intended to represent the interests of both employees and employers. Many regulations were discussed and follow-up information resources distributed to members.

Ray Noonan delivered the Education Committee Report. On one day's notice, Rick Parrino presented a Truss Technology Workshop (TTW) to the Des Moines HBA Remodelers Council on January 18. Due to weather, the Fire Performance of Wood Trusses (FPoWT) presentation to the Monticello, IA Fire Department had to be rescheduled to March 24; Andy Green and Al Esch would deliver that presentation. Given industry economics, the chapter will not seek out further education opportunities this winter but will continue to respond to requests.

A motion was made to send a \$2,000 contribution to the Carbeck Structural Components Institute and once again challenge other local chapters to support this important research and education initiative. With no objections, the motion carried.

Minnesota Truss Manufacturers Association

The Minnesota Chapter held its winter meeting on February 21 in St. Cloud, MN. The Code Committee report was delivered by Bob Mochinski. Members discussed the pros and cons of putting engineered information on Truss Placement Diagrams. Some manufacturers have begun doing this in Minnesota, but the consensus of the group was that putting engineering information on Placement Diagrams should not be done, given the impact on scope of work and responsibilities.

Chris Torgerson gave the Marketing/Education Committee update and discussed the ICC seminars. For the seminar on April 17 in Maplewood, the members approved the funds necessary for WTCA staff to travel to Minnesota to deliver the presentation. Also considered was whether or not the chapter should have a booth at the Northwest Lumbermen's Convention. With limited attendance at the last convention, however, discussion was tabled.

The WTCA update was given by Jim Scheible, and he provided all members in attendance a written report of the August WTCA Open Quarterly Meeting in San Francisco. A motion was made and passed to have Jim remain the chapter representative on the WTCA Board of Directors for another year. The chapter will cover the expenses for his attendance at the 2008 quarterly meetings, except for the Board meeting in conjunction with BCMC when he will already be in attendance at the show.

Under new business, officer elections were conducted. Tom Nomeland will continue as President and Chris Torgerson will be Vice President. The next meeting date was confirmed for May 15 with a location to be determined.

Missouri Truss Fabricators Association

The guest speaker at the Missouri Chapter's March meeting was Paul Rhodes of New York Life Insurance, and he discussed several topics including: taxation, protection and distribution of assets; pension and retirement planning; tax efficient wealth accumulation and preservation; asset allocation—where you build your assets and why; and family protection. His presentation was well received, he brought a lot of good points to the table, and all members agreed they came away having learned something.

Under the educational update, a recap was provided on the chapter's latest presentation for Johnson County Building Officials on February 13 in Overland Park. The chapter will begin offering plant tours to this group and several members offered their plants for possible plant tours in the future. For the upcoming Missouri Code Officials Association seminar in March, Scott Miller, Mike Vroman, Jasper Diedericks and John Hogan would be working together to deliver the presentations. The chapter was also approached by the Kansas Fire & Rescue Training Institute and was working with WTCA staff to set up a plant tour for the group. Since the chapter is becoming well known for providing excellent educational programs in the marketplace, the members were encouraged to suggest additional groups to contact to offer presentations and plant tours.

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Housing Starts

March housing starts fell 11.9%, to a 17-year low of 0.947 million (SAAR). The decrease in total starts was driven by weakness in the volatile multi-family sector which was down almost 25%. Single family starts were down 5.7% to 0.68 million (SAAR). Permits continue to slide, down 5.8% to 0.927 million (SAAR).

U.S. Housing Starts				
Millions - Seasonally Adjusted Annual Rate (SAAR)				
U.S. Totals	Mar	Feb (rev.)	% Change	
Starts	0.947	1.075	-11.9%	
Permits	0.927	0.984	-5.8%	
Single Family				
Starts	0.680	0.721	-5.7%	
Permits	0.606	0.646	-6.2%	
Multi Family				
Starts	0.267	0.354	-24.6%	
Permits	0.321	0.338	-5.0%	
Starts and Permits By Region:				
NE	Starts	0.097	0.106	-8.5%
	Permits	0.108	0.104	3.8%
MW	Starts	0.121	0.154	-21.4%
	Permits	0.126	0.141	-10.6%
S	Starts	0.499	0.571	-12.6%
	Permits	0.501	0.499	0.4%
W	Starts	0.230	0.244	-5.7%
	Permits	0.192	0.240	-20.0%

Analysis & Outlook: The housing correction continues and there are two key questions that nobody seems to have an answer for: (1) are we getting close to the bottom? and (2) when can we expect a measurable recovery? I don't have the answer either, but here is some information that you can use to draw your own conclusions. First, the economy is either in recession or close to it so that means jobs and income growth are slowing and that impacts ability to take on a mortgage. Second, inflation at the wholesale level (PPI) and consumer level (CPI) continue to increase at alarming rates, making it difficult for the Fed to lower rates much further. Third, the dollar continues to weaken and this is partly responsible for oil and other commodities (excepting wood products unfortunately) reaching record highs. Fourth, the credit markets are still not operating in an ideal/efficient manner. Lenders are wary of borrowers and vice versa as both sides try to reassess "risk." The world runs on credit, which means economies work better if the credit markets function better.

Builders continue to cut back on starts to bring new home inventories down while foreclosures continue to increase and that adds to resale inventories. Foreclosures are up 57% compared with last year at this time and analysts expect it to get worse in May and June when a wave of adjustable rate loans reset to higher rates. The second half of 2008 may be the trough (in foreclosures) as the majority of the "fragile loans" will have been worked through the system according to Rick Sharga, Realty Trac's VP of marketing. Fewer foreclosures would help reduce the inventory thereby slowing the decline in prices, and overall, this would greatly improve the demand/supply situation and provide a sound basis for a recovery, beginning perhaps sometime in 2009? We are already seeing welcomed action by the Congress and the Administration—higher loan and insurance limits for Freddie Mac, Fannie May, and other government agencies; potential tax breaks for 1st time buyers; the general tax rebate that will be mailed out beginning next month; and a host of other proposed programs to deal with foreclosures, the economy, and related issues. We have a resilient economy, buttressed by its substantial diversity, and a versatile and capable workforce, and the fact that many of our corporations have lots of cash to weather the current downturn. In addition, the world economy is doing quite well—in fact Europe has a growing inflation problem—the result of strong demand. The U.S. economy will respond favorably to sound measures by our political leaders and cooperative efforts by the various central banks. **SBC**

This housing starts report is provided to **SBC** on a monthly basis by **SBC Economic Environment** columnist Al Schuler. Visit www.sbcmag.info for more economic news.



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Chapter Corner

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West Florida Truss Association

At its first board meeting of the year, the West Florida Chapter voted to move its meetings back to the first Thursday of every other month. The general membership meetings for 2008 were set for February 7, April 3, June 5 and August 7, and the annual seminar for building officials held at Robbins Engineering was set for November 7.

The topic of the February chapter meeting was updated truss responsibilities in the 2007 Florida Building Code (FBC). Featuring a roundtable review with engineers Robert Wall, Tom Albani and Dave Rambali, the evening provided many pertinent updates on the latest version of the FBC. Attendees were able to review comparisons of the 2007 FBC to the 2004 edition as they relate to trusses. Sections of significance to component manufacturers, such as FBC Chapters 16 (Structural) and 23 (Wood) were highlighted, and attendees discussed the actions that should be taken to prepare for the pending code changes. Anyone who would like a copy of the files used at the meeting may contact WTCA staff. **SBC**

For a complete calendar, go to www.sbcindustry.com/calendar.php.

Reduce Risk & Increase Revenue (Pt 4)

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- What are the Inputs and Outputs that need to be completed before the job is delivered?

Production—Inputs

- Receive cut sheets and production drawings from Design department
- Create production schedule
- Create delivery schedule
- Purchasing issues: Coordinate "critical lead time items" with Purchasing department
- Inventory: Coordinate current levels and impact with Purchasing department
- Delivery: Schedule raw material delivery and coordinate with Purchasing department
- Determine direct labor requirements
- Set up daily labor job/codes
- Internal change orders (if applicable)

Production—Outputs

- Review cut sheets and production drawings
- Release cut sheets and production drawings for production
- Make change order corrections (if applicable)
- Coordinate time phased material delivery with purchasing department, including: quantities, dates, and order points
- Warehousing plan
- Verify incoming freight bill of lading with company's POs
- Verify company's ID tags have been installed on units of raw materials coming into inventory
- Track daily inventory (loss/gain)
- Weekly production plan including daily goals for all wall types
- Monitor:
 - Daily production
 - Material usage and drop-off
 - Material Inspection Reports (MIRs) for all units
 - Production Inspection Reports (PIRs) for all wall panels
 - Final Quality Control Reports (FQCRs) for all wall panels
 - Material shortages: coordinate with purchasing department
 - QC assurances (audits) monitored on materials and production processes
 - Bundling/packaging/labeling of finished products
- Verify delivery instructions given to driver
- Verify delivery packet complete; and given to driver

Once all the Production departments Inputs/Outputs have been completed, the Matrix should automatically flow to the next downstream department or work element; where this process of checks and balances starts all over!

Improve Wall Panel Quality Control!



Looking for a way to jumpstart the level of quality in your wall panel shop? WTCA agrees that quality assurance and quality control are critical to successfully managing and operating a wall panel manufacturing facility. What kind of quality control process does your plant have in place currently for wall panels? Are you proactive with quality or do you tend to react to problems? If you are not satisfied with your answers then consider the WTCA QC Wall Panel program.

This program helps manufacturers monitor the quality of their wall panels and provides the operation supervisors and managers with a robust data management system. It consists of inspecting wall panels and entering the data into the software program, allowing you to store data and create reports to assess plant quality. This program also offers a voluntary certification.

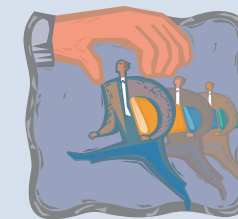
WTCA has created this program to be a practical tool plants can use to manage, benchmark, and evaluate their wall panel manufacturing. After doing inspections you can see where your problem areas lie. WTCA QC Wall Panel can assist you in refining your processes, which in turn provides assurance that your quality is meeting customers' expectations. For more information on this program, please visit www.sbcindustry.com/wtcaqcwall.php or contact Tony Piek at WTCA (tpiek@qualtim.com, 608/310-6713).

You may have noticed that there are dependencies between activities (inputs/outputs). Any delay of an activity...or forgetting to complete an activity, will impact the scheduled completion time, and usually the overall quality of the product... or work being performed.

A Quality System is only as good as the processes that you design into it; and the enforcement of those processes. It's really unfortunate, but more often than not, I see leadership and management become complacent about enforcing the processes, procedures, and personnel training necessary to produce a high quality wall panel.

See you next month when I will discuss Part 5 of the series: Estimating and Pricing Wall Panels! **SBC**

Boyle is a wall panel business startup and process improvement consultant. He can be reached at 541/771-7075 or jmb@jmb-panelman.com.



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