

December 3, 2014

## TOP STORIES

### ASTM and ICC-700 Work Continues on Green Standards

Committee work on green initiatives never seems to slow down. This past quarter was no different, with a tremendous amount of activity at both the ASTM E60 Committee meetings and the National Green Building Standard Consensus Committee Hearings.

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### Upcoming Codes and Standards Issues of Importance for CFS

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### Mid-Atlantic Steel Framing Alliance Celebrates 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

With the Maryland Live! Casino in Hanover, Maryland as the backdrop, the Mid-Atlantic Steel Framing Alliance (MASFA) celebrated 15 years of service to the steel framing industry.

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## COLD-FORMED STEEL ENGINEERS INSTITUTE – NEWS AND UPDATES

### CFSEI Concludes Successful Webinar Series

It has been another successful year for the CFSEI Webinar Series, with six completed and one more to go. On Thursday, December 4, Sutton Stephens, Ph.D, P.E., S.E. and Chief Engineer of Pacific Northwest Engineering located in Tacoma, Washington will present the *AISI Brick Veneer Cold-Formed Steel Design Guide*.

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Mark your calendars for May 18-19, 2015 for the CFSEI Expo in Orlando, Florida. The 2015 CFSEI Expo Planning Committee is currently seeking persons interested in presenting an educational seminar at the conference.

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### CFSEI Awards Program to be Revised

The 2015 CFSEI Awards Program has been streamlined and revised for 2015.

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## MARKETPLACE

### US construction spending up 1.1 percent in October

WASHINGTON — Newly built homes and schools boosted U.S. construction spending in October to the highest level since May. [More](#)

### Developers' Sentiment About Multifamily Market Off Recent Peak, but Remains Positive

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### Construction Backlog Indicator Reaches Another All-Time High

WASHINGTON — The Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC) announced that its Construction Backlog Indicator (CBI) reached a new all-time high during the third quarter of 2014 at 8.8 months, eclipsing the previous all-time high of 8.5 months set in the second quarter of 2014. [More](#)

### Announcing the U.S. Tall Wood Building Prize Competition to Innovate Building Construction

As part of the Obama administration's commitment to mitigate climate change, USDA, in partnership with the Softwood Lumber Board and the Binational Softwood Lumber Council, is announcing the U.S. Tall Wood Building Prize Competition. [More](#)

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#### ASTM E60 on Sustainability

This quarter saw an increase of ballots as participants prepared for the ASTM E60 Committee Meetings held in New Orleans in November. Staff responded to 16 ballots covering Life Cycle Assessment, Product Transparency Declarations, Sustainability Terminology, Product Category Rules and Construction Waste Management. Staff held meetings with the author of the Product Transparency Declarations to gain additional information and convey our concerns. Consensus has not yet been reached on the treatment of recycled content within the proposed standard or the methodology being used to account for product ingredients. The majority of work items on these topics need further revision and balloting.

The Steel Framing Alliance (SFA) continues to participate in these meetings and monitor the developments. For additional information, please contact [info@steel framing.org](mailto:info@steel framing.org).

#### National Green Building Standard (ICC-700)

The Consensus Committee for the 2015 revision of The National Green Building Standard (ICC-700) met in Washington, DC at the National Housing Center of the National Association of Home Builders November 6-8, 2014. Maribeth Rizzuto, Director of Education and Sustainable Construction for the Steel Framing Alliance, Managing Director of the Cold-Formed Steel Engineers Institute, and a member of the ICC-700 Consensus Committee, participated with 43 other members representing general, producer and user interests. This meeting concluded more than four months of task group work to review and debate the more than 400 proposals to update and/or change the document. Next steps include a confirming vote of the committee and posting for public review and comment. ICC-700 is a voluntary green building standard that covers all residential structures, including single and multifamily occupancies. For more information, contact Maribeth Rizzuto at [MSRizzuto@aol.com](mailto:MSRizzuto@aol.com).

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### Upcoming Codes and Standards Issues of Importance for CFS

As participants in the various codes and standards processes, SFA representatives are often exposed to emerging issues before they become well understood or are introduced into the marketplace. It seems that codes and standards processes have become the preferred approach for many different interests trying to strengthen or solidify their markets, or even as an entry point for new products and services.

Frequently, engineers, builders, owners, and others question what the next major impacts might be for cold-formed steel (CFS). The somewhat radical changes to energy codes in recent years have astonished many construction professionals who never would have thought that the energy code could impact the structure of a building or create a significant competitiveness issue for their structural system. What's next? We think that these issues will impact the CFS industry in the coming years:

Thermal bridging. The introduction of continuous insulation on exterior walls at thicknesses that create challenges for cladding attachment, door and window installation, fire propagation and similar obstacles appears to be just a step along the way to more stringent energy requirements that may impact CFS. Next up is thermal bridging that penetrates the continuous insulation and degrades its performance. In Canada, there are already requirements in British Columbia and proposals at the national level to require the building envelope to be made even more stringent to account for significant thermal bridges that occur with the use of brick ledges, exterior balconies, and even window frames. SFA's objective is to ensure that any requirements to address thermal bridges are cost-effective and do not negatively impact CFS.

Combustible framing in mid-rise and high-rise buildings. The wood industry has been aggressively pursuing the mid-rise market in North America over the past decade. The introduction of CLT lumber has given the wood industry an opportunity to expand its reach into constructing taller buildings overseas. The next step is to bring this method of construction to North America. SFA is working with fire service organizations to educate jurisdictions about the increased fire threat from tall combustible buildings, especially during the construction phase. SFA has also formed an informal group of interested parties—including the concrete and masonry industries—to monitor and react appropriately to future code change proposals that increase the risk of catastrophic fires in buildings.

Acoustics. Building codes have historically required minimal acoustic protection between limited types of residential occupancies. The proliferation of green codes and standards has resulted in the expansion of these requirements to a broader group of building types and increases in prescriptive Sound Transmission Class (STC) ratings. New trends in North American codes and standards include requirements for outdoor-to-indoor sound transmission (versus sound transmission between units) and assembly level ratings that take into account the impact of openings and interfaces between walls, floors, and ceiling or roofs.

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The CFS industry is currently supporting research at the National Research Council in Canada to better position CFS as these types of requirements expand into codes. In the future, we expect many of the green standards to move toward performance compliance paths that may include post-construction confirmation testing. These issues are on the radar screens of the SFA and AISI Code Teams. We will continue to participate in the codes and standards processes to position CFS favorably in upcoming standards. For more information on these and other code issues, contact Maribeth Rizzuto at [MSRizzuto@aol.com](mailto:MSRizzuto@aol.com) or Mark Nowak at [mark@mnowak.net](mailto:mark@mnowak.net).

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With the Maryland Live! Casino in Hanover, Maryland as the backdrop, the Mid-Atlantic Steel Framing Alliance (MASFA) celebrated 15 years of service to the steel framing industry. Some 70 guests enjoyed dinner and the presentation of awards of recognition to the original founders of the organization, which included Danny Feazell, Premium Steel Building Systems; Nader Elhajj, FrameCad Solutions; Jay Larson, American Iron and Steel Institute; Kevin Scott, Kevin Scott Associates; Ed Daigneau, Retired; and Chris David, Curt Kinney, Joe Marino, and Kevin Beilat and Todd Muirhead. Maribeth Rizzuto received special recognition for her service to the MASFA organization. MASFA President Jeff Klaiman attributes the organization's success to its members' commitment to training and educating code officials, developers, architects, engineers, contractors and distributors. "We haven't forgotten our primary mission to gain acceptance of cold-formed steel framing in the marketplace," said Jeff.

Congratulations, MASFA—and here's to the next 15!

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Planning is almost completed for the 2015 CFSEI Webinar Series, which will kick off in February 2015 with a presentation by Roger LaBoube, Ph.D, P.E. of the Wei Wen Yu Center for Cold-Formed Steel Structures. The presentation, titled "Back-to-Basics: A Look at Changes to the AISI North American Cold-Formed Steel Specification and Cold-Formed Steel Framing Standards," will be conducted on Thursday, February 12, 2015. Registration will be available soon at [www.cfsei.org](http://www.cfsei.org).

As always, if you are interested in a particular topic that you think would make an excellent webinar session, please let us know at [webinar@cfsei.org](mailto:webinar@cfsei.org).

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The 2015 CFSEI Awards Program has been streamlined and revised for 2015. Details will be available in the February 2015 Edition of "Framework Online." This popular program promises to be even better than past years with the addition of a new award for innovative product introduction. Stay tuned for details.

And finally as 2014 comes to a close the staff at the Steel Framing Alliance and Cold-Formed Steel Engineers Institute wishes to thank all who have made the work of our organizations possible through their generous contributions of their time, energy and talent as well as their financial contribution. Wishing all of you wonderful things in 2015.

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## MARKETPLACE

### US construction spending up 1.1 percent in October

WASHINGTON — Newly built homes and schools boosted U.S. construction spending in October to the highest level since May.

The Commerce Department said Tuesday that construction spending rose 1.1 percent in October, after having slipped 0.1 percent in September.

Fueling the gains in October was a 1.8 percent increase in spending on single-family houses. A similar boost in building schools led to a 2.3 percent increase in government construction spending. Meanwhile, private construction of power plants and commercial centers slipped in October.

Building activity has been slowly improving for much of 2014, although its contribution to broader economic growth has been relatively modest. Homebuilding has crept upward, limited by meager wage gains that have barely outpaced inflation. That has cut into the amount of money that people have to spend on homes or rent.

Diane Swonk, chief economist at Mesirov Financial, called the report "welcome news" but cautioned that single-family house construction "remains a shadow of previous levels."

"This is showing up in less construction employment and a smaller acceleration in wages than we would like given the age of this recovery, which in dog years is well into middle age," Swonk said.

October's solid growth in homebuilding underlines that sector's weakness.

"The October rebound does not undo the damage" caused by the marked slowdown in construction spending since the start of 2014, said Ian Shepherdson, chief economist at Pantheon Macroeconomics.

Over the past 12 months, private residential construction spending has risen just 1.9 percent to an annualized rate of \$353.8 billion. That lags total construction spending, which has climbed 3.3 percent from a year ago to \$971 billion.

New-home sales have risen only 1 percent, according to a separate Commerce Department report. Builders are largely targeting wealthier buyers. That can boost profits but often means less construction to fuel economic growth. The median price of a new home has risen 15.4 percent in the past 12 months to \$305,000, a pace that's more than double the average annual price increase for sales of existing homes tracked by the National Association of Realtors.

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Still, builders are hiring at a slightly faster clip than last year. Construction companies are adding an average of 14,000 workers a month so far this year, compared with a monthly average of 11,083 in 2013. The challenge is that stronger hiring and economic growth during 2014 has yet to translate into the wage growth that could further propel construction spending and hiring.

And because Tuesday's report contained upward revisions to August and September construction spending, the sector likely fed into faster overall economic growth. The revisions suggest that gross domestic product rose at an annual rate of 4.1 percent during the July-September quarter, rather than the 3.9 percent figure recently reported by the Commerce Department, said Daniel Silver, an analyst at JPMorgan Chase.

Architectural firms are also reporting greater demand for their services, however, a sign that construction spending should improve in the months ahead.

The American Institute of Architects said that its October billings index was 53.7. Any score above 50 indicates that billings increased. A breakdown of the index suggests that municipal governments and nonprofits are spending more on architectural designs, after having kept their spending in check during the more than five-year recovery from the Great Recession.

Source: *The Tribune*, December 2, 2014

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The MPI measures builder and developer sentiment about current conditions in the apartment and condominium market on a scale of 0 to 100. The index and all of its components are scaled so that any number over 50 indicates that more respondents report conditions are improving than report conditions are getting worse.

The MPI provides a composite measure of three key elements of the multifamily housing market: construction of low-rent units, market-rate rental units and "for-sale" units, or condominiums. Although all three components fell from 2014 peaks in the second quarter, all remain at 50 or above. The MPI component tracking low-rent units dipped one point to 51, market-rate rental units fell four points to 64 and for-sale units dropped six points to 50.

"Despite the slight drop in the index, multifamily developers remain positive about where the market is headed," said W. Dean Henry, CEO of Legacy Partners Residential in Foster City, Calif., and chairman of NAHB's Multifamily Leadership Board. "Current growth in employment is strong enough to fuel demand for multifamily housing."

The Multifamily Vacancy Index (MVI), which measures the multifamily housing industry's perception of vacancies, rose three points to 41, with higher numbers indicating higher vacancies. After peaking at 70 in the second quarter of 2009, the MVI improved consistently through 2010 and has been fairly stable since 2011.

"We are seeing the MPI return to the mid-50s level where it has been for much of the past three years," said NAHB Chief Economist David Crowe. "The moderation in multifamily builder sentiment aligns with a leveling off in production at a historically high level sufficient to keep up with rental demand."

Historically, the MPI and MVI have performed well as leading indicators of U.S. Census figures for multifamily starts and vacancy rates, providing information on likely movement in the Census figures one to three quarters in advance.

Source: National Association of Home Builders, November 20, 2014

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## MARKETPLACE

### Construction Backlog Indicator Reaches Another All-Time High

WASHINGTON — The Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC) announced that its Construction Backlog Indicator (CBI) reached a new all-time high during the third quarter of 2014 at 8.8 months, eclipsing the previous all-time high of 8.5 months set in the second quarter of 2014. The 2014 third quarter backlog is 6.9 percent higher than the third quarter of 2013 and the continued growth of backlog during the last six months likely indicates that 2015 will be a strong year of recovery for the nation's nonresidential construction industry, said ABC.

“Every region of the nation experienced expanding backlog during the third quarter and so did every industry segment,” said Anirban Basu, ABC chief economist. “Recent data regarding nonresidential construction and employment has shown only sporadic gains, which is consistent with the less optimistic backlog readings registered earlier this year. But the last two quarters tell a positive story that the average nonresidential contractor in America is positioned to get busier.

“Given the recent acceleration in job growth, the improvement in the quality of jobs being added, and a still-accommodative Federal Reserve, the U.S. macroeconomic outlook for 2015 represents the most upbeat assessment of economic prospects during the post-recession period,” said Basu. “The nation has added more than 2.6 million jobs over the past 12 months and, for the first time in six years, the nation's unemployment rate has dipped below 6 percent. While there are a number of headwinds, including a still-shaky global economy and a meaningful dip in oil prices that is likely to impact both oil production and related capital spending, most leading indicators remain positive. Lending conditions appear to be easing and a booming stock market has generated both positive wealth and confidence effects.”

Source: *The Associated Builders and Contractors, November 14, 2014*

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- David Padilla-Llano
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## UPCOMING EVENTS

**December 4, 2014**  
CFSEI WEBINAR  
AISI Brick Veneer Cold-Formed Steel  
Design Guide  
3:00 p.m.  
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## MARKETPLACE

### Announcing the U.S. Tall Wood Building Prize Competition to Innovate Building Construction

As part of the Obama administration's commitment to mitigate climate change, USDA, in partnership with the Softwood Lumber Board and the Binational Softwood Lumber Council, is announcing the U.S. Tall Wood Building Prize Competition. This competitive prize, open to teams of architects, engineers, and developers, will showcase the architectural and commercial viability of advanced wood products like Cross Laminated Timber (CLT) in tall buildings.

Advanced wood products are becoming the latest innovation in tall building construction. Products like CLT are flexible, strong, and fire resistant. In construction, wood products can be used as a successful and sustainable alternative to concrete, masonry, and steel. Using wood also reduces greenhouse gas emissions by storing carbon and simultaneously offsetting emissions from conventional building materials. By some estimates, the near term use of CLT and other emerging wood technologies in buildings 7-15 stories could have the same emissions control affect as taking more than 2 million cars off the road for one year.

Wood can also help struggling rural forest communities. During the Recession, the drop in new construction and decline in home remodeling had a deep impact on wood manufacturing. However, if CLT and similar advanced wood products can penetrate just 5 - 15% of the non-residential North American market, that would mean roughly 0.8 - 2.4 billion board feet of lumber consumed annually. To put that in real-world context, roughly 35 jobs are created for each million board feet of wood processed.

The winner of the Tall Wood Building competition will receive support for incremental costs of pioneering wood construction techniques to address the engineering design and code variances needed to incorporate wood technologies into new building sites. The competition requires that the winning project team source a share of materials from rural, domestic manufacturers and domestic, sustainably managed forests in order to jumpstart new production and economic opportunities in rural America.

The launch of this competition is part of USDA's overall strategy to promote the use of wood as a green building material. In addition, the White House Rural Council hosted the Building With Wood: Jobs and the Environment workshop in March 2014. USDA's Forest Service has also partnered with WoodWorks to provide outreach and technical support for architects and engineers of wood construction, supported a new commercial-scale CLT manufacturing facility in Columbia Falls, Montana, and invested more than \$2 million in research and technical support for emerging wood technologies through the Forest Products Laboratory in Madison, Wisconsin.

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December 3, 2014

Wood is a readily available and renewable building material that creates jobs and stimulates the economy. It can be used in urban or rural settings to build energy-efficient houses, buildings, and other needed infrastructure. It is successfully being used around the world and can help mitigate climate change.

As Secretary Vilsack said at the March Workshop, "Wood may be one of the world's oldest building materials, but it is now also one of the most advanced." Additional information about the competition is available at [www.tallwoodbuildingcompetition.org](http://www.tallwoodbuildingcompetition.org). Winners will be announced in 2015.

Source: White House Rural Council, October 10, 2014

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