Research Update

January 15, 2007

HUD Funds SFA Study on Wall Panelization Best Practices

The Steel Framing Alliance's core value of "maintaining leadership in construction technology through innovation" is the primary driver behind its research initiatives. SFA was awarded funding from HUD for a significant project to provide builders and framers with state-of-the-art information that would enable and encourage them to better integrate steel-framed wall panelization methods and processes into their construction system and their design and business models. The work plan for this project includes the following:

- Task 1 - Project Management: A project steering committee is in place, which reports to the SFA Research Team and CFSEI Technology Development Committee.
- Task 2 - Literature/Technology Review: A preliminary search is complete and a draft report has been developed. This will be integrated into a combined report with Task 3 activities, below.
- Task 3 - Market Research: Interviews and focus groups have been held in Texas, Hawaii and Ontario, and are planned for California and the Gulf Coast region. These sessions will include a wide range of builders, framers, and manufacturers. A report on all activities will be viewed by the project steering committee.
- Task 4 - Field Data Collection: Best practices will be documented through case studies, which will be initiated in February 2007. A variety of panelization technologies and business approaches will be included.
- Task 5 - Create Training Materials: Technical and educational materials will be developed, leading to more efficient building methods and an increase in the number of companies offering steel framing.

Code Inequities Between Wood and Steel Framing Identified

SFA provided funding and direction for a recently completed project to identify and evaluate the top 10 to 15 design and construction inequalities between wood and steel that result from the structural requirements for light-frame construction in the 2006 Editions of the ICC International Building Code and International Residential Code, and the relevant design standards that are referenced in these codes, that would have the most impact on steel's competitiveness if the inequalities were mitigated. The work plan for this project included the following:

- Task 1 - Identify Relevant Standards: The study focused on steel industry standards (AISI), wood industry standards (AFPA, TPI) and building codes (ASCE, ICC).
- Task 2 - Comparative Assessment: A detailed listing of 250 items was assembled and organized into 13 categories related to prescriptive and/or engineered methods.
- Task 3 - Estimate of Potential Cost Savings: Market impact; e.g., potential construction/design cost savings or constructability benefits was compared with the estimated cost/feasibility/level-of-effort to resolve the issues.
- Task 4 - Presentation of Findings: A summary listing of 73 items was developed, including groupings of similar items in the detailed assessment. Not all items were represented, which represented an initial screening.
- Task 5 - Prioritize Opportunities: Eighteen industry representatives participated in a facilitated exercise, which established 3 highest, 13 very high Priority, 3 high and 14 medium priority items.
- Task 6 - Final Report with Strategic Plan: A final report has been completed, which identifies the best opportunities for SFA to conduct follow-up research on and defines a strategy or approach for each.

Research reports are available through the Steel Framing Alliance website (www.steelframingalliance.com). The Research Team serves the Steel Framing Alliance as a technical advisory group, facilitating the timely technical review of research and the dissemination of its findings. For more information, please contact the Research Team Leader, Jay Larson, jlarson@steel.org, 610.691.6334.

1201 15th Street, N.W., Suite 320
Washington, D.C. 20005

T. 202.785.2022
F. 202.785.3856

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