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Taiwan

Solid Wood Products

Engineered Wood Delegation from Taiwan to the US

Northwest

2000

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Report Highlights:

In November 2000, the State of Idaho's Trade Office in Asia and ATO Taipei co-sponsored a 22 member engineered wood delegation which traveled to 3 states in the US Northwest. Presentations and site visits were organized by key US structural wood promotion associations and manufacturers. The mission helped establish the reliability of engineered wood products and demonstrated possible configurations to a broad audience of architects and builders. Discussions were initiated with Taiwan construction authorities, participating on the mission regarding obtaining approval for relevant products under Taiwan's construction-related fire codes.

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Mission: Engineered Wood Delegation
Destinations: Seattle / Tacoma, Portland, Boise
Origin: Taiwan
Dates: November 5th through 11th, 2000
Sponsors: Idaho State Trade Office in Asia and ATO Taipei

Participants: 22 delegates representing architects, builders, materials importers, and construction regulatory authorities.

Purposes: (1) Introduce principals and uses of engineered wood (principally glue-laminated beams [glulam]) as an alternative to reinforced concrete or steel in construction; (2) Demonstrate the structural reliability of engineered wood through site visits; and (3) Educate regarding US fire code recognition of engineered wood as a fire resistant material.

Introduction

Structural wood products are viable for public, residential, and commercial construction in areas of Taiwan where reasonable land prices permit low-rise (1 to 4 storey) construction (roughly 2/3 of Taiwan's land area). Interest and demand for wood frame homes and public structures has risen significantly in recent years in the wake of overbuilding in traditional real estate development sector and rising quality of life expectations among upper income consumers. However, a set of constraints must be addressed in order to realize substantive growth in structural wood product use. These constraints are concentrated in three principal areas, namely: (1) regulations that do not recognize or are inclined against structural wood, (2) lack of technical experience with structural wood products, and (3) market predispositions toward "traditional" reinforced concrete or steel girder structures.

The November 2000 Engineered Wood Delegation to the United States focused on the first two of these constraints. Throughout the week, delegates were guided through a series of presentations and site visits which underscored the practical benefits of building with engineered wood with a special emphasis, for the particular benefit of Taiwan construction authorities in the group, on the strong performance of such products during fire.

The Delegation

The delegation consisted of 22 individuals, including Eddie Yen, delegation organizer and Idaho's representative in Asia, and Jeff Miller, ATO Marketing Officer. Taiwan delegates included 6 architects, 6 importers, 4 builders, 1 association representative, and 3 government officials.

The Program

The delegation spent 6 days in Washington State, Oregon, and Idaho conducting site visits and listening to presentations on engineered wood products.

Presentations

Presentations during the mission were made by the Engineered Wood Association (APA) on the use of glulam in commercial construction, by the Softwood Export Council (SEC) on SEC programs to support foreign market development, by the Western Wood Products Association (WWPA) on carpentry techniques related to glulam and structural wood, by the American Institute of Timber Construction (AITC) on fire rating standards for glulam, and by US product suppliers Western Wood Structures, Quality Beams Corporation, and HMI Manufacturing.

Arrangements for the delegation, including site visits and transportation, were arranged in each of the three states by the APA, Western Wood Structures, and the Idaho Department of Commerce.

Site Visits

In Washington, the delegation visited sites in which structural glulam was used including the Tacoma Dome, the flagship REI Recreational Equipment store in Seattle, the Puyallup Fairgrounds, and a Tacoma area children's hospital. A tour was also arranged of APA's testing and certification laboratory where delegates were shown testing equipment and introduced to APA test procedure standards. Delegates also received introductions to the production lines at two manufacturers of glulam and laminated beam products, Stimson Lumber and Shelton Lam & Deck.

In Oregon, the delegation visited sites designed and built by Western Wood Structures, a company recognized for innovative architectural designs using glulam. Sites toured included the University of Portland Dome, a potash storage facility (Oregon's 2nd largest building), several bridges, 2 churches, and a theme restaurant.

The delegation was welcomed formally to Idaho by Governor Dirk Kempthorne in the State Capitol Building. Site visits in the state included inspections of two upscale residential communities in suburban Boise currently under construction. Tours of operations at Precision Panel, Precision Craft Log Structure, Boise Cascade Glulam, and the Truss Joist Laboratory (Weyerhaeuser) each offered introductions into unique wood products and applications. Precision Panel custom builds insulated, pre-cut housing panels for simple and fast assembly on a jobsite. Precision Craft sizes and cuts whole logs for log homes, Truss Joist Labs designs and tests heavy fibre OSB material for use in heavy loading applications.

Results

Commercial

Several of US companies that met with the delegation have existing sales agreements and business in Taiwan. With product and promotion already underway in the market, these companies benefitted by establishing the reliability and demonstrating the possible configurations of their products to a broader audience of architects and builders and initiating discussions with construction authorities regarding getting relevant products approved under Taiwan's construction-related fire codes. Both activities assist to spur architect, builder, and developer interest to increase wood/timber frame construction starts.

At least one company initiated and is in the process of concluding a sales representation agreement with a mission participant.

Promotion

This mission cemented a positive working relationship between Taiwan construction authorities and US trade promotion agencies, ATO and the Idaho Trade Office in Asia. As a result of the mission, ATO is now in a much better position to advise US exporters of wood products regarding certification of wood products under Taiwan's present building code regime. ATO has also confirmed Taiwan authorities' interest to consult with ATO and US industry experts during upcoming revisions to the Taiwan building code - in particular the clauses regarding fire ratings and with regard to potential Taiwan accreditation of US fire rating standards. Such relationships and dialogue are key elements of ATO's ongoing efforts to ensure US wood products are allowed to compete in the expanding market for structural wood.

The mission further cemented goodwill between ATO and delegation participants. Delegation members likely represent around 2/3 of current structural wood imports and better than 50 percent of architectural design work being done in wood. Delegate insights and support for future promotion activities will be critical to future trade promotion and market servicing work done by ATO, US structural wood associations, and state government trade offices.

End Report.

For more information on this mission or to find out more regarding promoting structural wood products to the Taiwan market, please contact, Jeff Miller, ATO Taipei wood product market specialist at the following:

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