



For more information:

Miloy Summerell, Jackson Spalding
msummerell@jacksonspalding.com or (404) 214-3576

Wood Products Council Launches Major Program to Support the Use of Wood in Non-residential Structures

*WoodWorks Southeast provides technical support and education for
architects, engineers and builders*

(February 14, 2008 – Atlanta) The Wood Products Council announces the launch of WoodWorks Southeast, a new program designed to encourage the use of wood in non-residential buildings in the region.

“Wood offers a lot of benefits that make it a good choice for non-residential building projects—anything from shopping centers and schools, to offices, community centers and arenas,” said Pat Schleisman, regional director of WoodWorks Southeast. “The goal of WoodWorks is to help architects, engineers, contractors (AEC) and others to design and build non-residential structures out of wood more easily and at less cost.”

The intent of WoodWorks Southeast is to support design teams using or considering using wood in non-residential applications in Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina, and maintaining that support from design through construction. This includes one-on-one technical support as well as education and training in areas such as building code issues, fire protection, wind resistance, green building and more.

“One of our challenges is to communicate the significant advantages of using wood to people who may never have considered it for non-residential projects,” said Schleisman, an engineer by trade who, like most people in the field, received little training in timber design while in school. “Wood gives you more value, environmentally and in terms of its beauty and design flexibility, for less cost, while meeting fire, safety and other code requirements.”

Among its benefits:

- Wood has inherent characteristics, such as its light weight and flexibility, which make it an ideal material in areas prone to high winds. The shear walls and diaphragms of a wood-frame building enable it to withstand lateral loads. However, in order for either to be effective, all of the related components—including framing, structural panel sheathing and inter-element fastening details—must be designed and installed correctly.
- Wood is durable. With proper design and maintenance, wood structures can deliver decades and even centuries of reliable service. The key is careful planning and an understanding of environmental loads and other external factors likely to impact a building over its lifetime.
- Wood is an inherently “green” building material. In addition to being renewable and sustainable over the long term, it outperforms steel and concrete when compared using life cycle assessment (LCA) methodology. LCA is an internationally recognized approach to evaluating materials and assemblies based on measurable indicators of environmental impact over their lifetime. Using this method, studies have consistently shown that wood is better for the environment than steel or concrete in terms of global warming potential, resource use, embodied energy, air pollution and water pollution.

“One of the roles of our field staff is to help design teams understand what’s allowable in the International Building Code (IBC) and their local building code,” said Schleisman. “When the IBC was introduced in 2000, it provided a much greater range of options for wood-frame commercial buildings. We want to help people take advantage of that.”

Woodworks is initially launching in three markets:

1) Georgia and the Carolinas (Southeast), 2) California, and 3) Minnesota, Illinois and Wisconsin (North-central). Upcoming events in the Southeast include a full-day workshop on design issues on March 25 in Atlanta and a Wood Solutions Fair on March 27 in Charlotte.

Wood Solutions Fairs are day-long events that combine concurrent seminars with relevant trade booths to provide a comprehensive learning experience. Educational events are free for those who register before the deadline, and the Wood Products Council is an American institute of Architects (AIA) approved provider. Information on specific topics and speakers is available at www.woodworks.org.

The WoodWorks program encompasses a full range of building types, including retail, offices, hotels, schools, industrial, religious, recreation, public, health care and multi-family. Field staff are available to discuss specific issues and have the expertise to provide a wide range of architectural, engineering and code support, either in person or through in-house presentations to an entire firm or design team.

About WoodWorks

WoodWorks is an initiative of the Wood Products Council, which is a cooperative venture of all the major wood associations in North America, as well as research organizations and government agencies. For more information, visit www.woodworks.org.

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