

Steel Stud Manufacturers Association develops third-party inspection system

The membership of the Steel Stud Manufacturers Association voted unanimously to direct its Board of Directors and Technical Committee to develop a third-party inspection program to be implemented Jan. 1.

SSMA members are leaders in code compliance within the steel stud construction industry. SSMA Bylaws require members to remain in good standing with the appropriate code agency. This program will provide the marketplace with certification of steel framing code compliance, supported by third party inspection of SSMA members' steel framing manufacturing plants. The program will help ensure that SSMA's customers and the contractors will receive what has been specified on a project.

The third-party certification program will begin with heavier structural framing to be followed with a program certifying members' drywall framing products.

Concurrent with the development of testing and inspection standards, SSMA will launch a communication plan to promote and strengthen the SSMA membership brand and to educate contractors, architects, and code officials on key properties and product markings that confirm product code compliance.

New York AG delivers \$1.23 million in unpaid overtime

New York Attorney General Andrew M. Cuomo recently announced that he has recovered \$1.23 million for Bronx construction workers who were shortchanged out of overtime pay. Almost 300 construction workers, assigned to work on approximately a dozen buildings throughout the Bronx that are managed by Finkelstein Morgan, have been waiting years to be compensated for overtime pay owed to them by the property management company and the construction company, J. Siebold Construction Company.

A settlement achieved by the Attorney General's Office with Finkelstein Morgan and J. Siebold Construction Corporation forces the companies to provide \$1.23 million in restitution and damages for almost 300 employees.

"New York's construction workers are the backbone of this city's economy, but these companies sought to stiff almost 300 Bronx construction workers out of the overtime pay they earned and deserve," said Attorney General Andrew Cuomo. "(The) settlement will turnover \$1.2 million to these workers and also send a serious message to employers across the state: time-and-a-half pay for work over 40 hours a week is the law in New York State, and if an employer ignores that law, we will take action."

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structures are going to suit their needs into the future.

Construction Superintendent magazine will focus on the information needs of construction superintendents through news stories, columns and news and product briefs.

In addition to general news, Construction Superintendent has been structured to focus on some specific areas in the form of dedicated departments in each issue:

> **Safety & Security** — New or little known information about safety and

/// COMMENTARY

The flooring moisture conundrum

Getting floors installed right the first time, every time



ALEX NIKAJ/ISTOCKPHOTO

By **HANK BRUFLODT**

When floors fail, everybody is in trouble. The downtime costs can become astronomical and the frustration levels quickly rise to where legal pursuits often follow. All this because of a very simple, yet often misunderstood phenomenon called concrete moisture vapor emission. Moisture is a natural and necessary constituent of concrete. All concrete slabs emit some volume of moisture in the form of vapor. As long as vapor can dissipate through the floor covering, concrete moisture is not a problem. When it cannot, that is when the troubles begin.

Regardless of the problems, there is only one way to handle high moisture levels: communication. The path most often taken is avoidance of the subject altogether until it's a problem. Making the general contractor responsible for the 'weather' of the slab is a bit unrealistic, just as much as blaming the flooring contractor for a wet slab they didn't build.

Communication starts with the most basic elements and the first thing for everyone involved to realize is that delaying a project is a very emotional issue that most can't deal with logically. It's also a lousy surprise attack for everyone when brought up at the last moment of construction, or worse yet

after facility operations begin.

The second step is to understand how it works. Engineers have long understood the fascinating world of psychrometrics. This embodies the science of moisture movement through semi permeable objects, such as walls and roofing. When you apply the principle of psychrometrics to a substrate versus the interior climate, it begins to explain why concrete moisture vapor emission is a natural process. Building interiors draw moisture into them.

When it comes to the project being built, the responsibility to test the slab for moisture compatibility usually falls on the floor covering contractor.

However, the floor contractor — or better yet, an independent testing agency — is incapable of offering meaningful test results unless the building is acclimated. However, as most everybody knows, the finish products are often installed before the building is acclimated. This means we are also trying to measure the moisture condition before the building is in its representative environment. That amounts to guesswork.

If we didn't put this cart before that horse, and waited to test slabs and install

finish products after the building has been acclimated, it may save untold millions in damages to all kinds of interior products besides just floors. A building is often called an "envelope" in terms of its varied climate from the outside world. It only makes sense to get it into that position as soon as possible since that will be its permanent state.

If the concrete slab is so new that it's just too damp to install the floor safely, the only options are to wait for it to dry or to install a topical sealer that would render the surface compliant and solve the problem. Another option would be to eliminate the floor and go for that polished-concrete look, but obviously that will not work in most places. We need floors that are warm, welcoming and hygienic. But we need them to stay stuck.

If sealing the floor is the only viable solution, it must be planned ahead in order to incorporate that into the costs of the building. Any business or building owner who understands that they will save a dollar by spending a nickel by comparison, will do so when it makes logical sense. There is enough evidence of past failures to make this sensible to anyone, hopefully sobering, yet the next obstacle is to qualify the right products to do the job which may be as much of a problem as the moisture itself.

As of yet, there are no standards in which to evaluate the viability of a product

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to resolve this particular problem. However, all moisture control products should be evaluated on the basis of just a few simple things: How well it reduces moisture, how well it bonds to the slab, how well it en-

dures the alkaline environment of the slab, how well other products stick to it, and of course whether it is safe for the environment and those installing it.

In the end, there is really no excuse for a floor failure. There is also no excuse for being ignorant of the law — in this case the laws of physics. Moisture problems are building physics issues, not the fault of any particular party. Unless building owners, designers and contractors recognize this fact, like history, the problem of floor failures will continue. ///

security on a commercial construction job site.

> **Gear & Gadgets** — Tools, machinery and accessories for the construction trade.

> **Office Matters** — Communications technology, labor laws, educational opportunities, and events.

> **Green Building** — The burgeoning green aspect of commercial construction.

> **The Lighter Side** — While the work is hard, there can also be humor on the job site.

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> **Recent Projects** — Unique or interesting projects.

"We set up these dedicated departments because, from talking to our editorial board and others, we felt these were the most sought-after news needs of commercial superintendents," said John Guzzon, managing editor of Construction Superintendent magazine. "When added with our front page news and our News-break department, Construction Superintendent will talk directly to superintendents like no other news source — either in print or online."

The online presence of Construction

Superintendent magazine will be extensive. Industry news has been posted online since July and steady growth in online content is anticipated, including news, job postings, an online forum, subscription services, and additional content relating to commercial construction superintendents.

"Our website www.consuft.com supports the magazine with additional content and provides a forum for superintendents to come together and discuss their jobs with each other," Mann said.

To contact the staff of Construction Superintendent magazine, call 480-361-6300 or write to 8040 E. Morgan Trail, Suite 23, Scottsdale, AZ 85258.