ICF News Roundup

ICFs Gain Visibility In Canadian Codebooks

Three of the major Canadian construction codes have been revised to include details for ICF construction. These include the National Building Code (NBC), the National Fire Code (NFC) and the National Plumbing Code (NPC)

One of the major revisions to the National Building Code is that most houses no longer require professional engineering. *Part 9, Housing and Small Buildings* now includes detailed prescriptive requirements for engineered insulating concrete form (ICF) walls, both below and above-grade. Buildings that meet the listed conditions may use the reinforcement schedules provided, and do not require professional involvement.

Similar to the code situation of the IRC/ IBC in the U.S., if the building falls outside of the stated parameters, Part 4, Structural Design, must be used.

'ICF Effect' Hopes to Eliminate Confusion

The Insulating Concrete Forms Association has coined a new phrase hoping to resolve some of the confusion that exists around ICF's purported R-Values.

The ICFA board recently voted to use the phrase "ICF Effect," to help to explain the high performance insulating properties of ICFs.

ICFs provide insulation through three different methods: high tested R-Values, low air infiltration, and thermal mass. In recent years, the industry has used phrases such as "performance R-Value" and "effective R-Value," which were difficult to quantify and nearly impossible to test for in a lab. This, in turn, led to confusion between the actual tested R-Values and the unproven claims .

"By creating the 'ICF Effect,' the ICF industry has defined the overwhelming energy efficient benefits ICFs provide to homeowners and building owners rather than constantly referring to R-Value," said Ron Ardres of Reddi-Form, who sits on the ICFA board.

Ardres points out that the industry has a vast amount of antidotal and scientific evidence to support the ICF Effect, and says the organization will provide a white paper and technology brief further defining the ICF effect in the coming months.

BuildBlock Adds Manufacturing Plant

BuildBlock Building Systems, LLC, announced a new manufacturing plant in Northern Utah. The company has partnered with Marko Foam to manufacture BuildBlock Insulating Concrete Forms (ICFs) in their Salt Lake City, Utah, facility.

Marko Foam's 40-year track record and commitment to quality is what attracted BuildBlock, according to Justin Wallace, BuildBlock production manager. "We're very excited about working with the Marko Foam network," Wallace said.

"The Salt Lake City facility broadens our coverage in the Southwest and lowers shipping costs for customers in that region."

BuildBlock's other manufacturing facilities are located in Alabama, Colorado, Florida, Indiana, Massachusetts, Missouri, and Wisconsin, in addition to two plants operating in Idaho.

The plant is already operating, and has block on hand ready to ship.

NAHB Forecasts 'Home of the Future'

The National Association of Home Builders is predicting significant changes over the next 10 years in how homes look and function. Their forecast is based on interviews with more than 500 architects, designers, and marketing experts.

The big news is that the square footage of single-family homes is expected to stabilize in the next few years. "We don't think the size will rise anymore," says Gopal Ahluwalia, NAHB's vice president for research. The change is driven by consumers who value quality more than additional space. The consensus of the professionals who were polled by NAHB was that average home size would slip into the 2,300 to 2,500-square-foot range by 2015.