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By Robert Klob

Inside This Issue

On the Cover: Spice, an 85-unit condo development near downtown Halifax Canada is one of the largest and tallest ICF buildings in Atlantic Canada. The top course of ICFs stands 73 feet above the footings. See story on page 20.

Photo courtesy Peter Polley.
New Amvic Territory Manager

Brian Smith has joined Amvic Building System as a territory manager overseeing business in the Northwestern U.S. Brian will be responsible for the account management, distributor relations and business development in seven states: Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Utah, Nevada and Wyoming. His territory also includes the Lower Valley and Vancouver Island region of British Columbia.

Brian has been involved with the ICF industry since the early 1990s, when he became a distributor for Blue Maxx (now Arxx) in Texas. Later, he worked as a Territory Manager for Eco-Block, and has spent the last five years in a senior management role with a large commercial ICF installer/contractor, ICW.

Patrick McMahon, vice president of sales, says, “We are very excited to have Brian join us and are looking forward to a long and successful relationship. Brian has an extensive network and well established relationships in the ICF market throughout the United States. Amvic Building System will benefit from his ICF knowledge; we will be motivated by his enthusiasm and winning desire.”

New Regional Manager at LiteForm

LiteForm Technologies has announced that they have hired Darryl Bagwell to represent their product line in the southeastern U.S.

In his new role as South East Regional Sales and Project Manager, Bagwell will oversee sales, distributor networks, and support client relations and installer training. His product portfolio includes all of LiteForm’s offerings, including LiteDeck, the new WRS and SRS foam decking systems, Flexxblock, and the original LiteForm wall system.

Bagwell has worked in the ICF industry for more than a decade, most recently as an area sales manager for Georgia Foam, an EPS molder that produces and distributes LiteForm products throughout the Southeast.

David Hall, marketing manager at LiteForm Technologies, stated, “Darryl knows our product well, and has a proven record of sales success. We’re excited to have him representing our product line in this important region.”
Innovation

The ICF industry has to be one of the most innovative in the world. From its beginnings in the 1960s—when a creative Canadian immigrant dreamed up the idea—through today, the history of ICFs is the history of innovative, daring businessmen and construction professionals.

Furring strips, plastic ties, turnbuckle bracing, and specialized window bucking materials have each, in turn, revolutionized the industry. Distribution methods and pricing models have also evolved over the decades.

The legacy of creative improvement is still going strong. The annual ICF industry product directory beginning on page 24 of this issue, showcases the next generation of products. Waterproofing, bracing, forms and foams, and footings and decking materials. It’s all organized by category and includes company contact information.

I enjoy seeing the new products and industry advancements that will take this industry to the next level. These are products that will make buildings more durable and energy efficient than ever before. They may also increase the profitability of your business.

I encourage you to take a careful look, and consider how this directory can help your business grow. Keep this issue in your truck or at your desk, where it will be available for ready reference. And when you find a listing—or display advertisement—you’re interested in, tell them you saw it on the pages of ICF Builder.

As I See It…

Furring strips, plastic ties, turnbuckle bracing, and specialized window bucking materials have each, in turn, revolutionized the industry.

by Clark Ricks

How Strong Is Your ICF Coating?

As an ICF builder, isn’t one of your best selling points the strength of the wall? Then why put a soft shell on a hard core?! The solution is PermaCrete—an ICC-ES code compliant, cementitious coating specifically tested by ICC-ES for ICF construction. No surface is stronger, and no surface is more durable! Up to 8 LEED Project Points!

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Home Starts Trend Upwards

In March, builders submitted more permits for single-family homes and apartments than any time in the past 3½ years, suggesting that the residential construction industry may finally be emerging from its worst downturn in at least 70 years.

The Commerce Department reported that permits indicate construction rose to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 747,000 in March. That’s up from a seasonally adjusted annual pace of 654,000 homes last month, and the highest level since September 2008.

Still, that number is only about half the pace considered healthy. Economists say that construction activity is still depressed and the housing market has a long way to go before it is back to full health. Primarily, buyers need to work through a backlog of existing homes, which are priced 30% lower than new ones, nearly twice the markdown typical in a healthy housing market.

New Flame Retardant Licensee Granted

The flame retardant currently used to fireproof ICF foam, called HBCD, is set to be phased out over the coming year or two. (See Fire Retardants and ICFs in the Aug. 2011 issue of this magazine for more information.)

So far, the only adequate substitute for the chemical is a Polymeric Flame Retardant (Polymeric FR) discovered by the Dow Chemical Company. In April, Dow formalized its third and final license agreement with Albemarle Corporation to manufacture the chemical.

“Polymeric FR has become the ‘next generation industry standard’ flame retardant for use in both XPS and EPS foam insulation applications globally,” said Mark Whiteman, president, Dow Global Technologies. “Having three international licensees to produce and market the new Polymeric FR assures global supply security and facilitates industry conversion as XPS and EPS manufacturers’ transition to the new technology.”

The first license was granted to Great Lakes Solutions, a Chemtura subsidiary, and was announced in March 2011. The second license was announced in January of this year, and was given to Bromine Compounds Ltd., a company within the ICL Industrial Products (ICL-IP) segment. The third and final license, as mentioned above, was granted earlier this spring to Albemarle Corporation.

The Polymeric FR licensees have committed to build several large plants enabling commercial volumes to be produced over the coming months and years. This should enable the global polystyrene foam insulation industry to make a smooth transition to Polymeric FR.

The development of Dow’s Polymeric FR technology comes against the backdrop of pending regulatory restrictions on HBCD, initiated by the European Union’s efforts to ban persistent bio-accumulative toxins (PBTs). Several other nations, including the U.S. and Canada, also have efforts underway to curb HBCD use.

Joplin Rebuilds With ICFs

Joplin, Missouri, devastated by an EF-5 tornado in May 2011, is rebuilding, and many of its residents and businesses are using ICFs, a technology that when used correctly, is virtually tornado-proof.

Helen Owen is one example. Exactly 365 days after the storm ripped through her house, she returned to the site. In place of the rubble is a new ICF home, built with vertical ICF TF System. Its walls are engineered to withstand 250 mph winds and her energy bills will be dramatically reduced.

“We are very excited at the progress being made on the homes being built in Joplin,” said Jeff Nene senior director of public relations for Convoy of Hope, a faith-based emergency relief organization which is donating the homes. “These new homes are setting the bar high in terms of quality, energy efficiency and storm resiliency.”

The homes are being constructed under the direction of George Van Hoesen of Global Green Building, who is serving as general contractor.

Although many of her possessions are gone, Owen and others like her now have a chance at living in a safer, more energy efficient environment. This means that those who were unable to pay for insurance, utilities, food and medication before the tornado, will now be able to afford all of them, thanks to Convoy of Hope, Global Green Building and TF Forming Systems.

“In the past we have just taken our chances with building structures that can withstand the average weather event common to the areas where we live.” Van Hoesen explains. “Insurance companies make their living gambling on these events not happening to us. [But] as we see insurance rates rise, as these events get bigger and more frequent, we should understand that the construction methods of the past are not how we should be building today.”

“There isn’t a valid excuse for not building with ICF and resilient construction methods,” he continues. “The bottom line shows that the benefits far outweigh the small initial cost difference and we can put more money back in your pocket every month if you are financing your home. Using systems like ThermoForm from TF Forming Systems we can affordably build stronger more stable structures that last centuries while dramatically reducing the energy needed to run a house or business.”

Six homes are currently under construction with the promise of a dozen more completed within this year.
Home Sales Rise Dramatically

The relentless decline in home prices appears to be nearing an end. Economists predict prices should rise for the first time in seven years by 2013.

Reuters, the worldwide news agency, polled 24 economists as part of the S&P/Case-Shiller 20-city home price index.

The report included a warning that a possible new wave of foreclosures could threaten the recovery.

“We are expecting a gradual improvement,” confirms Yelena Shulyatyeva, an economist at BNP Paribas in New York, “but if we get a big wave of new foreclosures coming to the market, price declines could be even greater.”

House prices have so far fallen about 32 percent from their peak at the end of 2005, and an estimated 11 million Americans now owe more on their homes than they are worth. Still, a majority of economists say that the unprecedented wave of foreclosures has peaked, and that home prices will rise an average of 2.0% next year.

Although job growth is slow, the labor market is expected to continue strengthening this year, which should help home sales. Sales of previously owned homes are expected hold steady at 4.7 million per year.

“This gradual healing is encouraging, but we must tread carefully as the housing market is still far from a robust recovery,” Michelle Meyer, an economist at Bank of America Merrill Lynch in New York.

NRMCA Promotes Building Safety Month

Concrete has long been recognized the most durable building material, especially in withstand ing natural di sasters. To help raise awareness of this fact, the National Ready Mixed Concrete Association (NRMCA) hosted a series of events promoting Building Safety Month in May.

Together with the Concrete Joint Sustainability Initiative, they conducted a series of workshops titled Implementing Disaster Resilient Construction explains how to design and construct homes and buildings to improve community resiliency. The purpose of the workshops was to inform decision makers at the local level on the importance of disaster resistant construction techniques.

Topics covered during the seminar include local disaster risk assessment and mitigation, resilient construction methods, “Fortified” design and construction programs, building code requirements, safe rooms and storm shelters, flood resistant construction and fire resistance. The full-day workshops took place in Pewaukee, Wisc., Louisville, Ky. and Portsmouth, NH.
Insulating Concrete Forms (ICFs) are gaining market share not only in North America, but around the world. In some regions, they're barely beginning to carve out a niche, while in other areas, they've become quite well established. In this article—the second in the series—we'll look at an ICF market with virtually untapped potential: The Middle East.

This area presents intriguing possibilities for the ICF industry. On the positive side, the extreme year-round heat, and the well-entrenched tradition of concrete construction bode well for the industry. Additionally, the region is experiencing a prolonged building boom that is virtually unaffected by the factors that brought the U.S. economy to a standstill.

On the other hand, Middle-Eastern nations are awash in fossil fuels, so they don't have the energy efficiency and sustainability mandates that are commonplace in the U.S. and Canada. Business practices and ethics in the region are quite different from those accepted in North America, which present multiple pitfalls for companies unaccustomed to doing business there. Still, at least a handful of North American ICFs have established a foothold there, and they say the area has considerable potential.

Market Potential

At least three North American ICF companies have sizable operations in the Middle East, and at least that many more are seriously considering enlarging their presence there, having built a project or two with forms shipped in from Europe and elsewhere. In addition, at least one local brand, Eco Green Block, is available.

LiteForm Technologies, headquartered in South Sioux City, Nebraska, has been supplying ICFs to the Middle East for more than a decade, and now has manufacturing facilities in the region.

"This is a region that is very familiar with concrete construction," says David Hall, marketing manager for the company. "They want a more comfortable indoor living environment. And despite living in a region with plentiful petroleum resources, they’re receptive to energy efficiency."

Jim Buttrey, vice president of sales and marketing at IntegraSpec, agrees with Hall’s assessment on efficiency. “The Middle East has become much more energy efficient in the last decade,” he says. “It’s true they have plenty of oil, but oil exporting corporations recognize it’s far more profitable to export it than use it internally. My experience is that Middle Eastern nations are very conscious of energy efficiency, and that ICFs have considerable potential there."

He adds that nearly all the buildings—residential and commercial—are finished with beautiful stucco exteriors, and ICFs provide the perfect substrate.

There is also a need for durability. Most populated areas of the Arabian peninsula are near the coast, located within the risk zone for typhoons blowing off the
Indian Ocean. They’re also occasionally hit with the legendary desert windstorms that arise further inland. A few areas, such as the Iraq-Iran border, have high seismic requirements as well.

Finally, the ongoing violence in the region indicates a lasting U.S. military presence; the Marine Corps has already built a few buildings in Iraq and Afghanistan with ICFs because of their proven blast resistance.

State of the Industry

IntegraSpec ICF, headquartered in Kingston, Ontario, Canada, has likely done as much ICF work in the Middle East as any other manufacturer. They’ve built projects in half a dozen different countries, including Yemen, Israel, the Kingdom of Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates. While IntegraSpec doesn’t mold locally, the knockdown system is relatively inexpensive to ship from North America. The company is serious about developing the region’s ICF potential, and has hired an local territory manager to oversee sales.

One of the more notable projects was literally built in a war zone. “We were asked to supply ICFs to a vehicle maintenance shop to be built in the ‘Green Zone’ in Baghdad, Iraq,” states Buttrey. “This was a U.S. Marine Corps facility where they repair Humvees and other military transports that get hit by roadside bombs, machine gun fire, and so forth. The U.S. military wants ICFs for the force protection they provide.” (Several other ICF projects have been built for the military in Iraq and Afghanistan, but details and photos of those job are sealed.)

Other IntegraSpec projects of note include an office building in Jordan, a hotel in Saudi Arabia, and a 1,300 sq. ft. home in Yemen, which was completed and poured in just five days in late 2010.

Hall, at LiteForm, says they’re staying busy also. “We’ve built quite a number of residential and commercial structures in the Middle East,” he says. “We have a lot of things going over there right now, and we continue to get a lot of leads from the region. In fact, probably 75% of our international business comes from that part of the world.”

Hall reports that demand is particularly strong for LiteDeck, the company’s EPS planking system, and that they also sell a significant amount of the original LiteForm wall system.

Unlike IntegraSpec, the forms are made regionally. “We have a licensing agreement with a molder in Kuwait that is producing the panel-and-tie LiteForm system,” Hall explains. “From there we can
ship to just about anywhere in the Gulf region fairly cost-effectively.

In 2009, they supplied the forms for a series of three-story apartment buildings in Kuwait City. Appropriately named the Kuwait City Villas, the approximately 20,000 sq. ft. project used LiteForm for all the exterior walls and LiteDeck for the floors and roof.

Promass, the Italian EPS tooling manufacturer, is also pioneering ICFs in the Middle East. Based on their assessment of the region’s potential, they developed an ICF system based on regional needs and their machines’ capabilities, named Eco Green Block. In 2009, Ian Giesler and Manfred Knobel, two well-known ICF consultants and builders promoted the technology at Arab Plast 2009, a construction plastics tradeshow held in Dubai. The response was quite positive, and shortly thereafter, Knobel managed the construction of two landmark ICF projects, probably the first in Dubai. One, a freight warehouse and office building, is visible upon landing at the Dubai International Airport. The other is a residential villa.

BuildBlock, the Oklahoma City-based ICF, began exploring the area’s potential just a year or so after they began operations. Mike Garrett, BuildBlock CEO, said at the time, “ICF technology is ideal for the region. An ICF structure can be completed in much less time than the post-and-beam method [common in the region], which is a tremendous advantage in terms of saving money and in meeting the construction needs of the area.”

By 2006, they had formed a joint venture with Al Hayat Group, one of the largest privately held companies in the Middle East. The venture, named BuildBlock MidEast, was announced with great expectations.

Hadi Al Alawi, the senior Al Hayat executive who was put in charge of the new operation, said, “There is much [potential] for the technology in the region as it offers enormous savings in terms of energy and construction cost. Unparallelled comfort, energy efficiency, safety ratings, and speed of construction are the main advantages.”

They exhibited at Gulf BID, a major construction tradeshow for the Persian Gulf area, and a few months later he reported, “We have successfully completed several ICF projects across the Middle East and now homeowners, builders, and government agencies are recognizing the superior features of ICF structures. The concept has been well received by the various ministries of Bahrain and in the UAE who have asked us to explain the benefits of the system better.”

Based on the enthusiastic response, BuildBlock MidEast began setting up a manufacturing facility in Bahrain with dedicated tooling, molding equipment, and 10,000 sq.
ft. of storage area. The projected capacity is nearly 500,000 forms annually. Unfortunately, navigating the maze of international business is never easy. Limited budgets, red tape, and thorny cultural issues have so far kept this plant from becoming a reality.

Conclusion
As noted above, ICFs have already achieved several significant victories in the Middle East, and the beginnings of an industry are already in place. Giesler reports “there are several great ICF contractors in the region.”

But the Mideast also has significant hurdles to overcome. Accessory products, for example, are non-existent. Wall bracing and bucking is accomplished with dimensioned lumber; concrete is placed with chutes, crane buckets, and other “old-school” technology. In short, it’s at about the same stage the North American market was at 20 years ago.

Business and cultural difficulties also still need to be worked out. One ICF executive who wished to remain anonymous described the region as “an incredibly difficult place to do business.”

Yet those who can manage the risks may strike it rich pioneering ICFs in the Middle East.

Having established a firm toehold in the region, companies like LiteForm are expanding into local manufacturing and sales of ancillary products like EPS decking.
Most of the discussion about ICFs focuses on energy-efficiency and disaster resistance, and rightfully so. But while it’s true that no other building system comes close to matching the durability and energy efficiency of ICF, a growing number are choosing ICFs for a third reason: ease of use.

For owner/builders seeking a top-quality building at the most affordable cost, insulated concrete form construction is a simple answer. Hundreds of projects, ranging from weekend Habitat for Humanity homes to palatial estates and even commercial buildings and churches have been built by amateurs, volunteers, and first-time installers.

The common thread with successful builds is that they have a supportive ICF professional to guide them through critical points.

Cautions
While it is certainly true that ICFs can achieve a top-quality building more easily than other methods, prospective owner/builders should know it’s not as easy as “stacking legos.” Even small mistakes can have disastrous consequences.

Concrete walls are heavy. A wall with a typical 6” core will weigh 75 lbs. per sq. ft. That’s about 1,000 pounds per linear foot of wall. It probably goes without saying that the walls must be properly braced and positioned before the pour, because anything more than the most minor adjustment will be impossible.

And unlike wood frame walls—which can be removed, adjusted, and reset—once an ICF wall is full of reinforced concrete, any change becomes a major demolition job. If the wall is wavy or out-of-plumb due to inadequate bracing, if there are bulges or even blowouts in the wall forms, if window and door bucks have sagged or shifted, good solutions short of tearing it out and doing it over are hard to come by.

Nearly all successful owner/builders have significant prior experience with concrete and or frame construction before even considering this type of work. Even then, professional training, on-site guidance and access to equipment is essential if the finished project is to look good, meet code, and have structural integrity. For instance, getting the concrete mix consolidated in the forms is a balance of vibrating enough to shake the air pockets out of the concrete, without vibrating so much that it weakens the foam forms.

Still there are numerous examples of first-time crews and volunteer labor achieving remarkable results under the right supervision.

Find a Pro
Dan McCullough, a Utah-based Logix distributor, is just one of many ICF professionals across the U.S. and Canada that regularly goes the extra mile to ensure the job goes smoothly. Over the years, he’s mentored numerous contractors on their first ICF job, including several crews that went on to complete award-winning commercial buildings.

He’s also helped a few owner/builders, including one client who turned down McCullough’s bid to supply the ICF, then came back for help when he ran into trouble with the competitor’s forms. McCullough, knowing that any negative experience with ICFs might adversely affect the reputation of the entire industry, agreed to help. He spent days on the jobsite, correcting errors and mentor-
ing the crew. He rented the owner/builder his bracing, and spent the day prior to the pour verifying that bracing and reinforcement was all installed. On the day of the pour McCullough was up on the scaffolding, directing the pump truck operator, helping with the stinger vibrator, and in short, doing whatever he could to make the job successful.

Mike George, owner of SmartBlock ICF, is another ICF professional that has established a reputation for doing whatever it takes to make a job a success. He says he visited one jobsite with a footing that was so out-of-plumb that the vertical error was measured in feet. With any other building system, this would have meant starting over. But instead of tearing it out, George spent much of the next week shaving and shimming to get a first course of forms that was level, square, and plumb. Once that was accomplished, the rest of the build was relatively uneventful.

**Pick a User-Friendly Block**

It’s easy to see why ICFs are popular with owner/builders. “ICFs are very flexible and easy to work with from a construction standpoint,” said Nicholas Nikiforuk, an IntegraSpec executive. “You do not need large equipment or tools.”

Nikiforuk worked with Pine Grove Church, a congregation in Ontario, Canada, that built its own meeting house with ICFs. To keep costs down, church members stacked the walls as unpaid volunteers.

Nikiforuk designed the church to be ICF-friendly, and was available onsite throughout the build. He credits good training, straightforward design, and an easy-to-use ICF as keys to the project’s success.

Nikiforuk reports, “We had only two licensed installers on site to supervise volunteers, but it worked out very well. The job involved 10,000 sq. ft of ICF walls, and largely due to the volunteer labor, was completed for around $85 a sq. ft.

Doug Thompson, a professional engineer who served as the church’s building committee chair, reports, “We were impressed as our volunteer work force quickly adapted to IntegraSpec’s ‘user friendliness.’ It allowed us to control our costs without compromising our finished product.”

**Training is Crucial**

The church project had licensed installers on site for the duration of the job. If that’s not an option, it’s essential that installers are adequately supervised—and mistakes corrected—at regular intervals and at critical steps in the process.

When the community of Woodland Hills, Utah, decided to build a volunteer fire station and community center, Steve Vaughan, the local Quad-Lock distributor, provided this type of support.

Bert Cherry, who spearheaded the project, hosted a training meeting at his home, where Vaughan taught a core group of volunteers how to assemble and stack the forms, how to set the rebar, and all the other necessary skills. But that wasn’t the end.

“He brought his trailer and set up here on the jobsite for the first day or so to make sure we got started correctly,” says Cherry. “He came back a few times throughout the build to check on us. The level of support was phenomenal.”

On weekends, as many as 30 or 40 people would be working at once. “We had kids, we had housewives, we had older retired gentlemen. All of them were able to build with ICFs without any difficulty,” he says. He does admit, however, that “The hardest thing was providing adequate supervision.”

The site had a few ground rules to ensure nothing went seriously off-track. An experienced concrete contractor did all the rebar tying and lap spicing himself to ensure quality. Each course was inspected by a supervisor for tie placement, solid form interlock, and correct steel design prior to the placement of the next course. This requirement slowed construction somewhat, but it ensured a few minor errors were caught immediately, and eliminated surprises on pour days. “A few times we had to go back and tear out a little bit, but all-in-all, it worked out really good,” Cherry says.

Vaughan also supplied the turnbuckle bracing for the job. Most distributors have a supply, and are willing to rent it to builders at a reasonable cost. In many cases, distributors can also supply hot knives, footing forms, window and door bucking, and sometimes, windows, doors and roofing as well.

**Opportunities**

The best way to get trained is to work under the direction of a qualified professional on the jobsite. For many years, Ian Giesler offered week-long onsite training courses on projects he had under construction in Texas. Others may have training opportunities closer to home through programs like Habitat for Humanity.

Lubbock, Texas has built literally hundreds of ICF homes in conjunction with Habitat for Humanity. One 2006 build was done using female youth volunteers from World Changers, a Christian service organization. They were able to stack the ICFs on one 1,500-square-foot house so quickly and easily they actually had down time while they waited for the pump truck to arrive for the pour. Construction was simple and fast, but the workmanship was also top-rate, winning a community development achievement award.

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**Before Becoming an Owner/Builder**

- Educate Yourself About ICFs. *Is this something you can realistically do?*
- Choose a User Friendly Block. *Get as much training as possible beforehand.*
- Find a Distributor Committed to Your Success.

**On the Jobsite, The Professional Should**

- Check the Footing Prior to being poured.
- Ensure the First Course of Forms is Plumb, Level, and Square.
Oakville Mews

Oakville Mews is a Craftsman-style complex combining nine townhomes with five street-level revenue suites.

Patrick M.B. Chan, a representative for Logix ICF, which provided the forms for the project, explains, “The Town of Sidney wished to increase density in the core of the town while still retaining a small town residential feel... To meet that requirement, we ended up with a project that is architecturally complex with five levels of residential spaces within a building height of 2 ½ floors and many dormers and projecting decks.”

Another challenge was parking. With 14 living spaces on a 0.3 acre lot, adequate parking became a major concern; it was the reason the previous developer abandoned the project. This construction/design team solved the dilemma using a creative approach: a car-share program for residents of the complex, which would eliminate the need for some people to own and park a personal vehicle.

Chan says, “Even though this was a classic Arts & Crafts-style development, we used an advanced insulation wall system, Logix ICF, to offer an energy efficient, high impact green development. Logix ICF was used on this project to maximize sound proofing, fire separation between suites, and superior energy efficiency.”

He continues, “This project is very close to the flight path of the major regional airport, so soundproofing was a high priority concern. ICF was seen as the best solution to the inherent challenges of noise pollution that came with being near an airport.”

The decision to use ICF has since proved to be outstanding.

Chan says the project has opened doors for the ICF industry that otherwise would have remained closed. “This project has been highly supported by the mayor, council and the local residents and neighbors,” he says. “British Columbia has a reputation of favoring wood construction over anything else. But the successful completion of this project really enhanced...
our reputation in the eyes of the Town of Sidney. We are now viewed as innovative, ‘think-outside-the-box’ developers and more particularly, favored with our home warranty providers.”

He concludes, “Although not a high-dollar project, we have achieved a classic and quality building that will provide residents with the comfort they desire.”

For more information on Oakville Mews, visit the development’s website or blog www.oakvillemews.com, and http://oakvillemews.com/blog/.

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### Project Statistics
- **Location:** Sidney, B.C., Canada
- **Type:** Townhomes with retail on ground level
- **Size:** 11,000 sq. ft.
- **ICF Use:** 11,800 sq. ft. (all exterior walls) plus 4,000 sq. ft. interior demising walls
- **Cost:** $4 million
- **Total Construction:** 365 days
- **ICF Start-to-Finish Time:** 105 days

### Construction Team
- **Owner:** By the Sea Enterprises
- **General Contractor:** Sorensen Developments
- **ICF Installer:** Black Bamboo Design & Build
- **Form Distributor:** Slegg Construction Materials
- **Architect:** Curtis Miles Architecture
- **Engineer:** JSH Engineering, Ltd.
- **ICF System:** LOGIX ICF

### Fast Facts
- ICFs help soundproofing from nearby airport
- Nine townhomes and five retail spaces
- Arts & Crafts-style with multiple dormers, decks, and varying floor heights
- Maintained a popular website and blog documenting construction process
This pair of energy-efficient luxury lofts in Orange, N.J. are a landmark project in turning the city green.

The two 8,400 sq. ft. buildings are built with Quad-Lock ICFs, with a green roof created using the EPS-and-concrete Quad-Deck system. Quad-Lock was also used for the interior demising walls between units. With the entire building envelope made from reinforced concrete (and a four-hour fire rating), occupants get a significant insurance discount.

The large flat roof was topped with 100,000 lbs. of topsoil to create a beautiful outdoor living space—completed with sod, shrubs, and a beautiful view—that occupants can use for barbeques, parties, or a tranquil garden respite from the streets below.

The ICF install began in January, but thanks to the ease of ICF construction, never encountered any serious slowdowns, and the project stayed on schedule. ICFs were also helpful in eliminating much of the noisy heavy equipment, which was a concern since the project was built in an existing neighborhood.

Ceilings heights range from 17 to 20 feet, so bracing and pouring the tall walls was a factor as well.

The project has generated a tremendous amount of interest. It was featured in multiple media outlets, including a feature-length story in the New York Times. Keith Miles of Northern Hills Redevelopment—owner, general contractor, and...
Project Statistics

- **Location:** Orange, N.J.
- **Type:** Townhomes
- **Size:** 17,000 sq. ft. (floor)
- **ICF Use:** All exterior walls plus interior firewalls, and floor decking
- **Cost:** $95,000 (ICF portion only)
- **Total Construction:** 240 days
- **ICF Start-to-Finish Time:** 90 days

Construction Team

- **Owner:** Northern Hills Redevelopment
- **General Contractor:** Northern Hills Redevelopment
- **ICF Installer:** Northern Hills Redevelopment
- **Form Distributor:** Innovative Building Products
- **Architect:** John E. Alford Architecture
- **Engineer:** Babs Engineering
- **ICF System:** Walls by Quad-Lock/Floors by Quad-Deck

Fast Facts

- Two 8,400 sq. ft. buildings.
- ICF green roof supports 100,000 lbs. of topsoil
- ICF install began in January
- 17 to 20 foot ceilings.
- Frequent jobsite tours for visiting architects, engineers, and developers
- Extensive publicity in trade media, including a story in the *New York Times*

ICF installer on the project—ended up spending a significant amount of time hosting frequent jobsite tours for visiting architects, engineers, and developers. Based on the success of this project, he was asked to make a presentation on green building to the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce, and the town mayor touted the project as “the technology of the future.”

When the builder was asked if he would change anything about the project, Miles responded, “I’d change the interior floors from stick-built to the Quad-Deck system.”

Thanks to the load-bearing strength of ICFs, this Quad-Deck roof is a tranquil green oasis—completed with lawn furniture, shrubs, and a beautiful view—in the midst of an urban blacktop jungle.
Spice Condominiums—built on the site of an eighteenth century spice factory—consists of 85 condominium units near downtown Halifax Canada.

Peter Polley, owner of Polycorp, which served as developer, general contractor, and ICF installer on the project, says, “At nearly 113,000 sq. ft. and seven stories [including two levels of underground parking at 34,896 square feet], Spice is the largest and tallest ICF building of which we are aware in Atlantic Canada.” The top course of ICFs stands 73 feet above the footings.

Polycorp went to great lengths to ensure the condo units would be as comfortable and efficient as possible. All exterior walls, party walls, and floors are made of concrete. The concrete floors were poured-in-place using Hambro’s steel floor joist system. To eliminate acoustical bridging between floors, they installed an isolation membrane between the structural concrete slab and the concrete topping that encases the in-floor radiant heating tubes. “This measure, although not mandatory, was a huge selling feature,” says Polley.

Instead of using a central heating plant for the entire building, each unit has its own electric boiler, connected to a radiant in-floor heating system. The thermal mass allows occupants to shift demand to off-peak hours and benefit from lower power rates. Individual Heat Recovery Ventilators (HRVs) further reduce energy losses.

“The choice for us was simple,” says Polley. “We wanted to give purchasers maximum control over their individual heating system and pay only for what they use.”

Cantilevered balconies can be a source of huge energy loss in Halifax’s frigid winters. To eliminate this, Polycorp decided to site-fabricate the balcony slabs separately, and crane them into a galvanized steel frame bolted to the building. “The net result is that we have successfully eliminated the thermal bridging,” Polley reports. “This approach was so successful that we will be repeating it on our next condo project.”
He continues, “Our homes are durable, quiet, energy efficient, and draft free. Combined with in-floor radiant heating and time-of-use metering we think we have achieved an unbeatable combination and so do our customers.”

Of course, achieving such a milestone project was not easy. The design features multiple angles and dozens of windows, and was built on a congested site at the corner of two busy streets, with 40,000 vehicles passing the site daily. One thoroughfare has a very steep grade of fifteen percent (15%).

“The combination of traffic and an unfriendly grade exacerbated what was already a very tight site in terms of receiving deliveries and staging of the project in general,” says Polley. “Fortunately, ICF lends itself beautifully to sites like this. Because the ICF block is so light and easy to handle our productivity is increased significantly. There was no need to worry about moving flying forms around on a tight sight or finding a place to store them between pours. Another advantage was that we did not need to provide any temporary shoring as all of our Hambro joists spanned from engineered concrete party walls.”

Polley notes that they were able to continue construction—including pouring concrete—during periods of extreme cold.
Asked about the coldest day on the job, he says there were a few days when workers were stacking forms at 20 below zero.

But the effort was worth it. He reports “By any standard, Spice was very successful. The project was sold out shortly after completion and resale units are achieving premium prices in the condo market... Many of our purchasers make a point of telling us that the main reason they buy a Polycorp home is that we build using ICF. They remind us that Polycorp has built its reputation using ICF by Arxx and that ICF’s are an important and integral part of our brand, which helps us to deliver superior homes and maintain satisfied customers in our marketplace.”
The 2012 ICF Builder Awards are getting underway, and this year’s contest promises to be even better than last year’s highly successful event.

Contractors, distributors and ICF manufacturers are encouraged to submit projects for consideration. Simply download the entry form and contest rules at www.builderawards.com, or call the magazine at 877-229-9174 ext. 2 to request a notebook. The website also contains profiles of past winners and a short video that illustrates the entry process.

Competitions rules and judging criteria remain unchanged from last year, and tend to favor “milestone” projects with outstanding complexity, significance, and construction considerations over architecture, size and sustainability.

Clark Ricks, editor of this magazine and one of this year’s judges, advises, “Remember that every entry is built with ICFs, so your entry notebook should explain how the project exceeds the current industry standards. There are dozens of noteworthy projects being built every year, and I look forward to being able to give them the publicity they deserve.”

Sponsors of last year’s event include:
ICF Product Directory

ICF manufacturers and those that service this industry are always coming up with newer, better products to help the contractor become more efficient and profitable. The products listed on the following pages cover many aspects of the ICF structure, from bracing to vibrators. Don’t hesitate to call for more information. Tell them you saw the product in ICF Builder magazine.

Accessories

Inexo by Ipex

www.ipexamerica.com 1.800.463.9572

Until now there have been few choices when attempting to provide a truly professional electrical box solution for Insulated Concrete Form homes. Traditional electrical boxes are tedious to install and often require a fair amount of ingenuity and additional labor to provide a less than ideal finished product. Other boxes offered to ICF builders require installation before the concrete pour, throwing off your project timetable.

INEXO’s patented design provides a truly professional solution that works with your production schedule and provides the quality installation and finished look that builders require and owners appreciate. INEXO™ boxes link seamlessly with existing ICF materials, tools and methods. A complete offering designed for ICF walls allow builders to standardize on the use of electrical boxes throughout the building. Commercial and residential versions of the box are available in single, double and triple gang. Boxes are available to purchase through Wind-Lock.

Estimating Software by Fox Blocks

www.foxblocks.com 1.877-369-2562

New estimating software from Fox Blocks makes it simple for contractors to calculate ICF installation bids with extreme accuracy.

Called Fox Blocks Estimator Pro 3, the web-based program instantly calculates the number and cost of the various ICF forms, the amount and cost of concrete and rebar, and the number of trucks required to deliver the material to the jobsite. If the crew size and labor rate is specified, it converts man-hours calculations down to how long the job will take and the total labor cost.

The program even tabulates accessory needs, including bracing requirements and the linear feet of bucking material required.

These figures can then be printed or saved out in an easy-to-read format for bid preparation. A full working version of the software is available on the Fox Blocks website.

Fox Blocks Wire Clips

www.foxblocks.com 1.877-369-2562

Fox Blocks HV Clips are wire ties that make it easier to get walls that are perfectly straight while reducing costs.

Technical director Glen Klassen says it completely eliminates the need for truss wire. Eliminating truss wire reduces material costs, but also creates better concrete flow and lower man hour rates. Sold in boxes of 250 clips, the company recommends buying one box per 150 blocks, which works out to be about half the cost of truss wire.

The clip can be used vertically (between courses) and horizontally (securing adjacent blocks) since the ties are spaced 8” on center in all direction.

For more information, use the contact information above or call your local Fox Blocks representative.

Air Filters and Exchangers

EZ Breathe Balanced Ventilation System

www.ezbreathe.com 1.866.822.7328

The EZ Breathe Balanced Ventilation System is the best solution to the fresh air needs of ICF homes. EZ Breathe is easy to install, virtually maintenance free, and the end cost of the system to your homeowners can be as little as 1/3 of an HRV or ERV system.

According to the EPA and U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission, “Unless they are built with a special mechanical means of ventilation, homes that are designed and constructed to minimize the amount of outdoor air that can ‘leak’ into and out of the homes may have higher pollutant levels than other homes.”

Energy efficiency is what every homeowner wants, and as an ICF builder it’s a major part of what you offer as a green builder. Give the homeowner what they want, give them fresh, pure indoor air with EZ Breathe.

See our ad on page 9 for more information.
Giraffe Bracing continues to lead the ICF industry with its versatile, user-friendly low-maintenance, ICF bracing systems. Often copied but never duplicated, Giraffe’s unique storage crate has proven time and time again to be the best in the industry. Knowledgeable builders and retailers that use Giraffe in their business testify to its unparalleled quality and performance. Our chain of distribution allows our retailers to give you the best price by cutting down on costly shipping fees. 4 warehousing locations and over a hundred retailers across the country make Giraffe Bracing the logical choice. A specially designed rack holds 24 sets of bracing and has a spot for everything. This means at a glance, you know for sure that every component is accounted for and our Internal zinc-plated turnbuckles means no thread clean up required... “ever”. Giraffe Insulated Concrete Form Bracing allows you to build walls 10’, 15’ and 20’ high. Giraffe Bracing is the highest quality bracing on the market and can also be used for vertical shoring applications with Insul-Deck, Lite Deck or other ICF floor forming systems. 

Try our bracing first before you buy, by renting from one of our retailers, or call us to arrange for leasing. You’ll soon discover why Giraffe is, “Standing Tall In A Concrete Jungle”.

Hilltop Manufacturing
www.hilltopmanufacturing.com 1.866.627.7720

The Hilltop ICF Scaffolding and Bracing system made by Hilltop Manufacturing is an outstanding choice for all ICF contractors. The lightweight aluminum strongbacks makes transport and setup easy.

The adjustable turnbuckle has no threads at the top of the brace. That means no concrete buildup on the threads, and trouble-free wall alignment. Recently Hilltop has introduced a new extra-heavy-duty strongback for the taller wall systems. The system comes with a removable handrail support, and is available in all standard height (8’, 9’, 10’, or 12’). Tall wall and custom heights are available.

The braces are compatible with all major brands of insulated concrete forms. Pricing and additional information is available at the phone and website listed above.

Plumwall
www.plumwall.com 1-888-928-6676

Engineered tall wall ICF bracing up to 24-feet is the new Plumwall Adaptor Kit. Using the same Plumwall braces, the Adapter Kit features a 4-foot strongback extension that connects two 10-foot braces together. Double-walled outrigger extensions give strength and support to the top brace.

Plus, on every Plumwall ICF brace is the exclusive alignment control at platform level making alignment a one-person job.

Plumwall's original All-in-One ICF brace is designed for quick setup with no missing parts. The foldout platform bracket and outrigger lets you easily unfold and go.

The Plum-3 ICF brace offers the simplicity and durability of a conventional three-piece system. The pin-on bracket mounts to the 14-gauge galvanized steel strongback with the outrigger connecting to the platform bracket.

Making ICF bracing even easier to use is the Plumwall transport and storage crates that hold 24 braces. Each crate is stackable and can be handled safely using a forklift, telehandler or lifting hooks.

From storage, setup and alignment of residential, commercial and multi-story buildings, Plumwall ICF bracing is your straightforward choice.

Densifiers

Bright Technologies
www.brightbeltpress.com 1.800.253.0532

Bright Technologies offers solutions for recycling EPS foam. The company sells a comprehensive line of EPS Densifiers with capacities ranging from 100 lbs. per hour to 1,200 lbs. per hour. The machinery converts waste Expanded Polystyrene into a product weighing 16-20 lbs. per cubic foot. Densifying waste foam offers numerous advantages, including reduced storage requirements and reduced hauling/handling costs. After processing, up to 40,000 lbs. of foam can fit into a single truckload. Densification also eliminates the danger of pentane gas buildup.

Bright machinery has a reputation for quality. All equipment is designed, manufactured, installed and serviced right here in the United States. The original EPS Densifier, installed in 1995, is still in use today.

A video of the densifier is online at www.densifiervideo.com.
The AmDeck Floor & Roof System is a modular, lightweight, stay-in-place form made of Expanded Polystyrene (EPS) and used to construct concrete floors and roofs for commercial, industrial and residential uses. When installed properly, the system provides structural strength through reinforced concrete and insulation through EPS. The system utilizes 10-inch lightweight steel framing studs which carry the temporary construction loads until the concrete gains its required strength and act as furring strips to which interior finishes can be attached.

This system perfectly complements your Insulated Concrete Form (ICF) structure and together they provide a complete structural and thermal "building envelope" for your floor or roof. The AmDeck* Floor and Roofing System comes in standardized, small, lightweight modular units. This means that the system is much easier to use and handle, since pieces are not as large and bulky. Also The AmDeck* Floor and Roofing System is fully reversible, reducing labor time and construction waste on the jobsite.

The LiteDeck WRS (Wood Rib System) is an ultra-versatile, carpenter-friendly EPS decking system for creating insulated concrete floors. It’s easier to cut and modify than competing systems, and costs far less than any other product on the market.

Shoring requirements and installation methods are similar to the traditional LiteDeck SRS (Steel Rib System). However, instead of integral steel furring strips, the new WRS system uses locally purchased dimensional lumber. The most common profile uses conventional 2x6 lumber (or a light-gauge steel beam of the same size). An even "greener" profile uses an 11 7/8 I-joist ripped lengthwise for support.

These systems are all compatible with LiteDeck’s patented “top hat” design and can create clear spans of 50+ feet. Standard LiteDeck WRS components are available in eight-foot lengths or can be ordered in custom lengths with the ribs pre-installed.

For now, LiteDeck WRS orders are placed though the corporate service center at LiteDeck’s headquarters in Nebraska.
Wall Systems

BuildBlock

Whether you’re building a home or a multi-level commercial structure, you can’t beat the benefits of building with BuildBlock® ICFs. BuildBlock ICFs are completely reversible, combining standard features you’ve come to expect with unique benefits you’ll find no where else. That is why Installers everywhere choose BuildBlock® ICFs over the competition.

Our product line includes the original BuildBlock® insulating concrete form building system, BuildDeck® Flooring System and BuildLock® Knock Down Block. For your convenience, we also sell several ICF-related products which can be ordered along with your ICFs.

Our Superior design, competitive pricing, Master Sales Business Team, professional Technical Team, and Nationwide Manufacturing Facilities have enabled BuildBlock® to emerge as a leader in the ICF industry. Call us or visit us on the web today for product information and estimates for your next ICF project.

Paid Advertising

Curb Block From Fox Blocks

The patent pending Curb Block from Fox Blocks makes it easy to create a floor ledge at any height. The new style of block features an extra attachment between the upper and lower webs of the tie so the block maintains rigidity even when half (or more) of one side is cut away. It’s currently available as Straight and 90° corner blocks in the 8” core width, and is molded with a green tie for easy identification.

Curb Block can be used with virtually any floor system, including hollowcore, precast, truss, wood, pan deck, and Hambro. Curb Blocks can also be cut to facilitate garage slabs, or on the outside face to create brickledge or taper-top block.

To use the Curb Block, just cut one face of the block at the desired height, then snap the upper ties with a hand saw. As much as 11” of block can be removed from one side without affecting performance.

Extra Curb Block can be saved for the next job or used as regular blocks within the walls being built, as the shape and size of the Curb Block is identical to the black tie design.

Hilltop

ICF Scaffolding and Bracing

A lightweight bracing and scaffolding system designed for use with a wide variety of insulated concrete forms.

Features:

» Removable handrail support
» Available in 6", 9", 10" and 12" heights. Custom heights also available.
» Lightweight aluminum channel strong backs.
» No threads at top of brace. This means no concrete buildup on threads.

For prices and more details call: 1-866-627-7720 (Toll Free)
Energy Stick by Fox Blocks
www.foxblocks.com 1.877-369-2562

The Energy Stick from Fox Blocks is designed to improve energy performance while maintaining ease of construction. Made from two-inch-thick, graphite-enhanced EPS, Energy Sticks fit snugly between the ties inside the wall cavity.

By moving the concrete mass toward the living side of the wall, it allows for a more comfortable and efficient building. Additionally, the fastening point stays consistent with standard blocks. (No need for long screws for any attachments!)

Each Energy Stick measures 32” long (equal to two courses of block) and is slightly tapered so that it slides easily into place. The top and bottom faces have a tongue-and-groove design to ensure a consistent tight fit.

The product works equally well with both the standard Fox Blocks line and the field-assembled 1440 system.

Each Energy Stick layer will add R-9 to the wall; three Energy Stick layers inside a 12” cavity block would create R-48+ with 6” of concrete.

LOGIX T-Wall Forms
www.LOGIXicf.com 1.888.415.6449

LOGIX is the leading Insulated Concrete Form (ICF) system in North America. With a superior R-value of up to R-27, LOGIX helps create an airtight building envelope for exceptional thermal performance and sustainability.

Offering a choice of escalating R-Values and a series of builder-friendly features, the LOGIX ICF system is easy to install and delivers more profit and less pressure to the construction team.

LOGIX Insulated Concrete Forms Ltd now offers a variety of T-Wall forms, which provide builders with a fast and efficient way to construct T-junctions with minimal waste and little effort.

LOGIX T-Wall forms are factory-assembled to maximize jobsite efficiency, but they’re based on the LOGIX KD knockdown form system. This means they can be ordered in a variety of standard core thicknesses, or even for intersecting walls of different thicknesses.

LOGIX is the smarter, faster, stronger technology.
Superform

Superform ICFs are intended to replace conventionally poured concrete foundation walls in residential and light commercial construction. Because the Superform wall system accomplishes forming, framing and insulating in one step, it provides a finished wall far superior to any other framing method. The rigid EPS provides both the form for the retention of wet concrete, and the thermal insulation for the exterior wall. The EPS also provides superior sound barrier insulation for interior party walls. The plastic ties in the blocks are recessed slightly to prevent thermal bridging, allowing for proper placement of reinforcing bar, and also serve as a furring strip to which inside and outside finishes are attached.

The 2 5/8” of rigid EPS on each side of the wall provides a tested thermal insulating value of R-28, and has been treated with a flame-resistant additive for fire protection. A typical wall has a fire resistance rating of three hours and a sound transmission (STC) rating of 55.

Northwest Ohio Foam Products

Northwestern Ohio Foam Products has introduced BarrierX5, a 1.25” thick version of The Barrier for even greater insulating values under a concrete slab and the only flexible 100% recycled EPS foam available in a roll.

The BarrierX5, BarrierXT, and Barrier complete the insulation of the building envelope by protecting the concrete slab from heat loss and moisture migration especially when used in conjunction with ICFs and a radiant heated floor.

BarrierX5 has a flexible EPS foam core with poly film laminated to both sides creating an insulated and waterproof product. The flexible 4’x60’ rolls conform to the uneven grade saving you time and money on installation costs by eliminating the need to repair broken rigid sheets or preparing the perfectly flat grade. In addition, the product has a patented, integrated self-taping seam that reduces moisture migration through the slab - improving the overall efficiency of your slab.

Waterproofing

Epro Spray-Applied Waterproofing for ICFs

Epro Services Inc.’s products have waterproofed more ICF foundations than any other fluid applied system in the industry.

The reason is that Epro provides a complete system from a water-based, seamless, high performance liquid membrane to extremely durable and tough HDPE protection courses and drainage composites that just work better than any other system.

Unlike sheet (peel-and-stick), membranes, which have seams and rely on an adhesive for bonding, the Epro fluid applied membrane forms a seamless barrier even at the most critical points (transitions, terminations and penetrations) and provides its own tenacious adhesion.

The protection course and drainage composite protect the waterproofing membrane while controlling and directing hydrostatic water pressure away from the foundation. Their HDPE construction provides unparalleled chemical resistance guaranteeing a long lasting system.

This adds up to the best ICF waterproofing system solution.
I was recently driving near my neighborhood and there was a new “big box” pharmacy being constructed. The structure was about 80’ x 80’ x about 24’ tall. Quite literally a box. This box was being built with standard 8x8x16 masonry block. I drive by this corner several times a week and was able to watch the CMU go up over a span of nearly 7 weeks (YES, seven weeks). I was then able to watch the finishing touches over the course of several more months. The exterior walls had a dryvit type application on the exterior and a furred wall with drywall & rigid insulation on the inside. When I saw this, I decided to stop and talk to the superintendent on the job site. He was very cordial and forthcoming with information when asked.

My number one question was, “Why did you use CMU instead of ICFs?” Somewhat to my amazement, he said “what are ICFs?” I briefly explained what they were and he stated that he had seen “something like that on TV a while back”. I told him that by using ICFs instead of CMU on this project the exterior wall installation could have been 2-3 weeks instead of 7+, and for the same and possibly less cost. He was amazed but said that it was out of his control – but he wanted me to meet his boss. I left my card and was surprised when a few days later he called and said he could meet with me on the site in the next few days. I said I would be back with a sample and additional information.

I met his boss; he was familiar with ICFs but said they didn’t have anyone experienced to install it and the subs were not familiar with its nuances. I said we could provide names of quality installers and we could teach the other subs at no cost. He was open to the idea, but ultimately said that he would build whatever was on the plans from the architect. As the architect, how would he benefit? However, he stated, if the client mandated it, then he would be much more open to the conversion.

My next contact was the chain’s regional manager and their construction division. The manager listened to what I had to say but responded that CMU works, the labor pool is readily available, and they are able to keep their architectural/engineering expenses lower and consistent. Additionally, he said, they don’t have to deal with engineers, installers and building inspectors that don’t know or don’t want to know how to properly work with ICFs. It was the proverbial “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” I see all too often. Though he was down on the idea of change (nobody likes change), he was very interested in the idea of saving time and much lower long term operating expenses. The more he and his superiors hear about the benefits of ICFs, the more likely they will give it a try. It all comes down to promotion and continued positive feedback. Change will come!

This is one example out of thousands of scenarios that plays out daily across North America. The mentality has to change. Those that regularly read my articles know this is something I have been preaching for a long time. It is getting better, but we still have a long way to go.

The mentality has to change. Those that regularly read my articles know this is something I have been preaching for a long time. It is getting better, but we still have a long way to go.
though our industry has been around for many years and we have numerous successful projects to benchmark, we are still viewed as the new kids on the block.

So, what is the solution? It’s working, marketing and promoting as a group of successful companies with substantial resources instead of one company here and there with very limited resources. As an industry, we need to show a unified front that has the best interest of the industry in mind, instead of the small-minded and individualistic mentality that has become commonplace.

Major commercial developers sense the baggage of switching to ICFs may outweigh the benefits. There is a perception that the ICF system they choose today may get shut down due to internal litigation tomorrow. Then they will have spent substantial time and money to change, only to have to change again. The masonry industry doesn’t have these same issues. They understand that competition is acceptable and if they market themselves correctly, there is more than enough work to go around. Interesting concept!

If we ever want to be a serious contender in the building environment, mentalities and philosophies must change – both internally and externally. A very frustrated ICF distributor recently explained what he thought should be done at a national, industry-wide level: The industry should have had generic ICF media in all of the areas that have been affected by natural disasters the last two years. Similar kits could promote to corporate entities the benefits of an ICF system. We could have irrefutable, unbiased, third party testing establishing or guaranteeing performance levels. There could be funds or incentives set up to offset costs in converting from frame/CMU to ICF. Lastly, there could be funds available to establish political action teams in Washington promoting the systems equally as hard as the cement and timber industries. I could not argue with his logic.

I am not here to debate who is wrong and who is right with any of the internal squabbles. And quite frankly, I don’t care. With each of my columns, I try to give the perspective of someone from the outside looking in. I don’t have a vested interest in promoting ICFs, nor do I make any more or any less by integrating ICFs into my designs. I promote ICFs because I think it’s the best product for my clients to use.

Each of us has a part to play in the future of this industry. When you look in the mirror each morning do you know you are doing all that you can to promote not just your company but also the Industry? Do you promote as we or just me? Could you do more? In closing, I will use a quote from a previous column...by working together, we will succeed together.

Robert J. Klob is president of Robert Klob Designs, Inc., a full service residential design firm specializing in ICF design. He can be reached at www.rkdzns.com, 866-584-2474 or robk@rkdzns.com.
The Epro Solution ... Use Nature To Stop Nature
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Four New Field Installed Systems Available ...

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- System III MBB Waterproofing / Gas Barrier
- System III LWB Blindside Waterproofing / Gas Barrier

Excellent Strength and Chemical Resistance - the result of the unique field installed composite system design utilizing HDPE.

Seamless - The highly flexible spray or fluid applied membrane forms a monolithic barrier.

Exceptional Adhesion - The sprayed or fluid applied membrane bonds tenaciously to almost any substrate in almost any condition including green concrete or a damp substrate.

Self Sealing - The bentonite layers seal at any penetration of the system.

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