

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR



Scott L. Melnick

This April I'll be in Seattle attending my 13th consecutive North American Steel Construction Conference with nearly 3,000 structural engineers, fabricators, erectors and detailers. Short of being seven months pregnant (as my wife will be in April), I can't imagine why every member of the design and construction community is not at the conference.

The most obvious reason for not attending is a perceived lack of value. Well, if you've never attended an NASCC before, let me assure you that the biggest problem isn't finding a worthwhile session to attend, it's trying to attend all of the sessions you want (though we do try to make it easier by running 35 of the 43 technical sessions twice). It's a tough choice right from the start. On Wednesday afternoon, do I want to learn about simplified perimeter details, attend a session on contract terms and conditions, explore options for low-floor-to-floor height structural systems, learn about the latest in fire protection requirements and solutions, investigate the pros and cons of instituting of telecommuting in my firm, check out revised SENRAC rules, find out about the new U.S. and Canadian seismic requirements, or investigate the latest concepts for frame stability design? Of course, my dilemma may be simplified since I might already be smack in the middle of a nine-hour tutorial on practical steel design or a seven-hour tutorial on connection design. (For more information on the conference, visit www.aisc.org or fax 312.670.5403 and I'll be glad to send you a conference program.)

And let's not stop with the opportunities for continuing education. As with any conference worth its salt, the NASCC is a prime opportunity for networking. But unlike other conferences, the NASCC also gives you the opportunity to chat with not just your professional peers, but also your colleagues in allied fields. It's a great opportunity for structural engineers to discuss issues with fabricators, for fabricators to meet with erectors, and for detailers to talk to designers.

Finally, the NASCC is a great place to stay current on the latest product offerings. Whether you're interested in software, paints or bolts, vendors at the trade show portion of the conference offer the chance to see what's new and what's coming.

Another potential reason for not attending is the cost. But whether you're comparing the NASCC to other conferences within the design and construction industry or to equivalent conferences in other industries, the NASCC is a relative bargain. My wife, a hand therapist, is always amazed at the relatively low price we charge—and I'm always shocked when she fills out a registration form for one of her conferences and I see how much it costs. Pre-registration for this year's NASCC is \$325 for AISC members or \$450 for non-members (if you're not currently a member, join now—the discount on the conference registration pays the bulk of the membership costs and you'll receive a free 3rd Edition LRFD Manual with your new membership). Plus, we offer special deals for young professionals. If you've obtained your degree during the past five years, you can pre-register for the conference for just \$175!

Topping off the low fees is the philosophical argument that it actually costs you money not to attend the conference. If your peers are there—learning the latest techniques and networking for professional and business contacts—and you're not, then you're falling behind. And that's dangerous in the design and construction community's fast-paced environment.

If you still don't plan on attending the conference, I'd love to hear from you about why you won't be there (likewise, if you do plan on coming—or if you've attended past conferences—I'd like to know the major benefits you get from the conference). Email your comments to: melnick@aisc.org.

Hope to see you in Seattle!

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