

Plain(s) and not so Simple

BY ERIKA WINTERS-DOWNEY, S.E

When it comes to steel in the Great Plains region of the U.S., thoughts on its use are as wide-ranging as the region itself.

GREETINGS FROM THE MIDWEST! I'm the Great Plains regional engineer for AISC.

In a nutshell, the middle of the country is mine. I represent the states of North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, and portions of Texas, Colorado, and Wyoming.

As a regional engineer I am the face of the steel industry in my region, a liaison between the design community and the steel production and fabrication community, and a resource for designers when it comes to project-related inquiries regarding structural steel. Do you want to know the current price at which structural wide-flange beams are trading? Find out the current backlog and inventory of your local service centers? Learn about architecturally exposed structural steel or LEED credits relating to steel? That's what we regional engineers are here for!

Another task of AISC's regional engineers is to give presentations at conferences, meetings, and individual firms. I usually have the opportunity to give about one a week, to individual firms or to associations regarding the above topics. At the 2009 NASCC: The Steel Conference in Phoenix (April 1-4; visit www.aisc.org/nascc), I will give a presentation on the rules of thumb for cambering beams. I hope to meet many of you there!

HSS, BIM, etc.

I recently took over the duties of organizing AISC's HSS Producer Committee. If you have project-related questions relating to HSS use, the committee's site has a number of resources for the design and construction community (www.aisc.org/hss). Or you can always contact the AISC Steel Solutions Center (call 866.ask.aisc)—and/or me directly. In 2009 we will be sponsoring tours at several HSS production facilities around the country and giving an accompanying presentation on the production, uses, and design of HSS

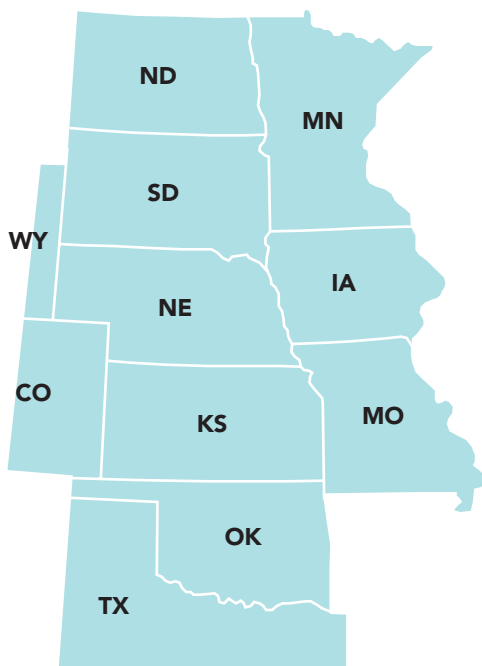
members (when available, the schedule will be posted on the AISC website).

I'm also involved with my local U.S. Green Building Council chapter as the liaison to university USGBC chapters in the greater Kansas City area. I am involved with a Kansas City area-based building information modeling (BIM) collaborative, which meets monthly to discuss ideas and questions relating to this exploding technology. As most designers look to the steel industry to lead the way in this technology, I will be seeking out other similar BIM groups in my region so that attendees can have a face and name to contact with steel-related BIM questions. If you're involved with one of these groups, I'd love to hear from you.

My region is large and diverse (and snowy this time of year). Some areas tend to favor steel construction and some favor other materials. This can be due to local politics,

labor supply, and even designer experience and preference. Presenting developers and designers with current and local information on design practices and steel supply—and connecting them with local fabricators—has been, in my experience, the best way to be of value to design teams. Your regional engineer, whether it's me or one of my colleagues, can make sure you have the most up-to-date picture of structural steel options on your project.

Please check out my page via the "My Region" channel on AISC's updated website (www.aisc.org) to view my upcoming travel schedule. I will be including photos of steel construction in my region, as well as a short blog about my recent and upcoming activities. **MSC**



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