

Field Reports on SteelDay 2010

AISC staff members share tales and photos from a variety of events across the nation.

MORE THAN 8,000 PEOPLE attended about 200 free events across the U.S. on September 24 for the second annual national SteelDay. Hosted by the American Institute of Steel Construction (AISC), its members, and other affiliated organizations, SteelDay is the structural steel industry's largest networking and educational event for the design and construction community. Building on the success of last year's inaugural event, this year's SteelDay nearly doubled its number of in-person attendees (not including live webinar attendance) and added dozens of event locations.

Additionally, for this year's SteelDay AISC partnered with national and international affiliated organizations: American Galvanizers Association, National Corrugated Steel Pipe Association, Canadian Institute of Steel Construction, and Promozione Acciaio in Italy. Together the organizations brought dozens of other relationship building events and seminars to the design and construction communities across the world.

Architects, engineers, contractors, university faculty and students, government officials, and the general public visited steel mills, fabricators, service centers, galvanizers, and other steel facilities to network and witness advanced technologies in action. "It was a great opportunity for designers and others to see first-hand how the structural steel industry is building high-performance and sustainable projects," said AISC president Roger E. Ferch, P.E.

Steel facilities throughout the country opened their doors for tours, open houses, demonstrations, presentations and other celebratory activities. A number of event hosts partnered together to offer tours of multiple facilities that showcased various aspects of the steel supply chain and types of careers available in engineering and construction.

"This event gives those specifying a better feel for the product and more respect for the process," said Jane Powell with Walter P Moore. She attended SteelDay's North Texas Integrated Tour that took attendees through a steel mill (Gerdau Ameristeel), a service

center (Metals USA), a structural steel fabricator (Qualico Steel Company, Inc.), and a galvanizer (Sabre Galvanizing).

PKM Steel Service, a fabrication facility in Salina, Kan., offered facility tours, booth displays, and engineering seminars and attracted the largest SteelDay crowd with more than 1,000 attendees. First-time SteelDay attendee Ernest Wilcher was quoted in the *Salina Journal*: "A friend invited me to come out and I was curious. He told me about what they work with so I wanted to see the process. I never knew where PKM was located. You hear about other manufacturers but when I saw this, I was like, 'Wow.' I want to see this factory in operation."



▲ SteelDay 2010 at AFCO Steel, Little Rock, Ark.

Smaller SteelDay events provided valuable time for relationship building. Structural steel fabricator AFCO Steel in Little



◀ Cruising the Chicago River

Many of those who over the years have designed structures on both sides of, and over, the Chicago River participated in a SteelDay networking cruise hosted by AISC. That afternoon I met the engineer who designed the Columbus Bridge over the Chicago River—in 1972! Charlie Carter reunited with a former IIT professor, Domingo Carreira, as did several other of his students, including a former AISC engineer, Jacques Cattani, who now works for Teng. It was great just talking for a bit with Jacques, who was reflecting on how so much of his job has become project management, and Domingo, who said that he is and always will be an engineer.

At one point, the bartender told me one of the guests said that this was the best “seminar” he’s ever been to—the view, the networking, etc.

Afterward about 30 people took us up on the offer to tour of the AISC offices, which overlook the river. Chicago Rolled Metal Products’ George Wendt also led a tour of nearby Millennium Park, where his firm and others had worked on the various structures. All in all—a great success!

—Monica Sbripka,
AISC Upper Midwest Regional Engineer

Rock, Ark., brought in 12 attendees to its event for a shop tour and educational session. “All of our guests were our VIPs,” commented Kevin Reynolds, sales and estimating manager at AFCO Steel. “We gave them a better understanding of what goes into fabricating structural steel.”

One of SteelDay’s highly interactive events was an “Equipment Rodeo” hosted by Topping Out Inc., Omaha, Neb. Visitors of all ages and professional backgrounds experienced what it takes to be an ironworker by operating cranes through pylon obstacle tests, torch cutting steel plates, participating in welding training, and bolting structural steel.

“Our specific industry often goes unseen in the community and SteelDay is a great way for people to take part in the world we live in everyday,” said Michael A. Naccarato, P.E., Topping Out’s chief corporate engineer and director of training/standards. “How many students and others can say they’ve operated a crane? We’re giving them a chance to try it.”

In addition to connecting with local structural steel representatives across the U.S., this year’s SteelDay featured live webinars and new special events in New York City, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C.

In New York City the Steel Institute of New York and Owen Steel Company co-sponsored an evening presentation on “Building an Award-Winning Structure,” followed by a networking reception in the Samuel B. and David Rose Building at Lincoln Center Plaza.

SteelDay photos, videos, certificates of attendance, and more information can be found at www.steelday.org. Next year’s SteelDay is scheduled for September 23, 2011. **MSC**



▲ Open House Features History and New Technology

Buckner Companies celebrated SteelDay with an open house showcasing its new office building, the “House of Steel.” The building reuses many steel pieces and artifacts from prior projects, including a 15-ft-deep plate girder, one of the crane hooks used to erect the original World Trade Center, and a weathering steel bridge that Buckner had originally erected in 1972.

The function was well attended by various representatives of the construction team including architects, engineers, fabricators, and vendors. The program included a series of demonstrations including a crane, metal deck attachment, bolts, crane safety, and how Buckner uses GPS tracking of its equipment throughout the United States and PDAs to perform timekeeping and provide other records from the jobsite. The food was excellent and the networking opportunities diverse, making for a very successful SteelDay event.

—Roger E. Ferch, AISC President



▲ Opening Doors Brings New Respect in the Northwest

Metals Fabrication Company, Airway Heights, Wash., hosted a SteelDay event attended by more than 100 guests over the course of the day. Attendees included students, architects, engineers, contractors, city officials (including the mayor) and a news cameraman from KHQ, the local television station.

Dressed in green SteelDay tee shirts, staff members were stationed at key points in each shop while others milled around with the crowd to answer any questions.

One of the popular displays, labeled the "Petting Zoo," was a large plate display with sample materials and weld types that guests could touch and examine. Also, prominently displayed signage told the story of steel's (and Metals Fab's) dedication to sustainability.

One logistically clever thing Metals Fab did was to have large colored dot stickers next to the name badge stickers. By placing the appropriate color on the name badge, you could quickly identify who was an architect, vendor, student, etc.

Airway Heights mayor Patrick D. Rushing said, "We drive past these big buildings every day, not really knowing what is done here. This is a really nice event."

—Ross Allbritton, AISC Northwest Marketing Representative



▼ A Big Event in Texas

Fabricator Central Texas Iron Works (CTIW) opened its doors to students from the local high school, local community college and technical school, and the University of Texas (Austin) on SteelDay. The students that attended were enrolled in either engineering, drafting, or business related courses. The tour included a short overview presentation of the work that CTIW performs, which are mainly industrial projects. The tour continued to the fabrication shop, which is organized into column, beam, brace, and miscellaneous fabrication bays and also a bay that had robotic fabrication equipment where two robotic arms were welding simple beams. Visitors also went through the engineering department where they saw 3D modeling/drafting and had the opportunity to talk connections and details with CTIW's engineering department.

Chris McCauley, a drafting instructor at nearby Texas State Technical College, said this tour taught his students more in one day than he can cover in a semester, thanks to just seeing real-world applications.

It was a great experience and even the Texas weather cooperated with temperatures remaining below 100 °F.

—Erin Criste, Steel Solutions Center Advisor



◀ Town Rallies Round Steel Fabrication Shop

PKM Steel, Salina, Kan., is a large steel fabrication shop in a small town. The firm made an early commitment to SteelDay with a vision to make it the largest event in the country, and they succeeded. There were more than 800 pre-registered attendees, the largest yet for a SteelDay event. Neighbors, friends, local politicians, community leaders, and building designers took the time to learn more about this company and the steel industry in general.

Many companies that have business relationships with PKM but had never visited the shop took this chance to tour the facility and put faces with names. Attendees came from as far away as California, Utah, and the Dakotas. Quite a few made the drive from Kansas City and Denver. Many students from area technical schools also attended.

Attendees toured the shop, and some attended one of two classes on Innovations in Steel—a snapshot of the structural steel construction industry in the U.S. Many visitors were surprised to learn about the large projects that PKM has worked on—the Aladdin Casino in Las Vegas, the Denver International Airport, and Bartle Hall Convention Center in Kansas City, to name but a few.

—Erika Winters-Downey, AISC Regional Engineer

Reflecting on the Second SteelDay

When we first started thinking about SteelDay, we weren't sure what it would look like, what kind of participation to expect or how it would all come together. We certainly didn't expect such a terrific success our first time out, in 2009, with more than 175 events across the country showcasing our industry.

Second time out, we had another issue to ponder: How do we improve the day and increase turnout? We needn't have worried as the structural steel industry once again stepped up to the challenge and made SteelDay 2010 an incredible success securing its place as the industry's largest educational and networking event, bar none.

In 2009 approximately 5,000 people attended 175 events in person, with another 2,000 or so attending online events. This year, early estimates suggest we have virtually doubled our in-person attendance. Our event count this year is at the 200 mark. In addition, our success has inspired other trade organizations and even other countries to partner with us and widen the net for SteelDay. It seems, even in these dour economic times, we are giving people what they want in terms of networking, educational and business opportunities. People want to see our industry's facilities and our industry wants to show them off. Our message is that we are green, fast and economical and, as of SteelDay, there are several thousand more people who know that, "There is always a solution in steel."

My personal heartfelt thanks goes out to all the SteelDay hosts, both in the U.S. and around the world, to each of our SteelDay partners, to our ever-enthusiastic AISC staff, and of course to the thousands of people who attended events on September 24. Let's see what we can achieve on September 23 next year!

—Chris Moor, AISC Industry Mobilization Director

▼ A SteelDay Rodeo in Omaha

The SteelDay event at Davis Erection, a division of Topping Out, Inc., gave a whole new meaning to the "Interact" element of the SteelDay theme. The facility's entire yard and shop area were set up with various equipment and machinery stations for guests to learn what it takes to be an ironworker and erect the structural steel for buildings and other projects of all sizes.

The different stations gave attendees a rare chance to operate cranes through pylon obstacle courses (the console said it had a 6,000-lb capacity at that reach), ride a SkyJack electric scissor lift to a height of 50 ft, participate in torch-cutting contests (to see who could cut a steel plate in the quickest amount of time), watch welding demonstrations, walk steel beams with a harness and safety device, and bolt structural steel. Guests could also take a tour of the facility.

"Our SteelDay event offered a great opportunity for people to experience the world we live in everyday," said Michael A. Naccarato, P.E., chief corporate engineer and director of training/standards for Topping Out, Inc. "Everything that happens in steel erection in the field was there for people to participate in."

Everyone in the community was invited to participate in the day's activities (safety gear and provisions were provided). Throughout the course of the day, close to 200 people attended, including families, kids, industry professionals, and students.

—Tasha O'Berski, AISC Public Relations Specialist



▲ Plenty of Steel Activities in St. Louis

On SteelDay, I spoke to more than 170 engineers and steel industry professionals from Bi-State Fabricators Association in St. Louis. We discussed the current economic climate and how best to manage your business and various markets as we climb out of these troubling times. Following that, Atlas Iron Works hosted a fabulous event with more than 70 attendees touring its facility, from the detailing office to the shop floor, to gain an understanding of the efficiencies and technology that a structural steel fabricator brings to the table.

Relationships were built and innovations were discussed, and as people move forward on projects in the St. Louis area, I am confident that more designers will bring their subcontractors, such as Atlas Iron, to the table to benefit from early involvement with their fabricator.

In addition to the tour, Atlas offered welding booths where attendees could attempt their best weld bead. Vendors such as Hilti and St. Louis Screw and Bolt also were on hand to discuss their products and how they fit into the steel supply chain.

—Tabitha S. Stine, AISC Director of Technical Marketing

