



CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE



Certification key to precast concrete resilience

Precast concrete has long been acknowledged as one of the premier safe construction materials because of its inherent fire resistance, and studies performed over the past several years have substantiated precast concrete walls as blast resistant.

The owner finds even greater value in using precast concrete by reducing risk of significant damage from catastrophic events in addition to the readily identifiable life safety benefits. The resilience of precast concrete construction has been demonstrated over many years. Most recently, the teams that investigated the performance of precast concrete in the earthquakes in New Zealand, Chile, and Japan (including the effect of the resultant tsunami) reported that it performed remarkably well.

Rather than merely extol the inherent benefits of precast concrete, however, I also want to focus on its application. It is one thing to come up with a creative and well thought-out design. It is another to have confidence that the design effectively translates into the constructed product. For many years, model building codes have accepted certification by PCI's Plant Certification Program as compliance with the special inspection requirements for precast concrete fabrication, as does the current IBC. Qualified engineering personnel audit our plants for inspection and testing processes, record keeping, product process, and product compliance to standards. PCI members are committed to ongoing improvement and to zero nonconformance, and we must remain so. We also must jealously guard against the usurpation of the benefits of this certification by firms that don't show the same commitment. We need to hold others accountable for compliance, and we need to continue to work diligently in educating specification writers, building officials, and owners.

Finally, we need to be as confident of the completed precast concrete structure as we are of the components that leave our plants. The PCI Field Certification Program does not of itself ensure detailed inspection of the erected structure by a competent engineer or qualified inspector. If we want to give building officials as well as members of the construction team total confidence in precast concrete as the preferred method of construction, we need to close that loop.

A PCI task group has been developing a comprehensive field inspection training program that will familiarize third-party inspectors with all the nuances of precast concrete erection. The International Code Council is well aware of our efforts and is eager to see the finished program, which PCI plans to roll out during the convention this fall. This should eventually lead to the certification of inspectors, and it should be obvious why PCI must take the lead. Let's do everything we can to support this effort by promotion and participation. It will go that much further if we the precasters maintain an active presence on site in the inspection process, augmenting the work with our familiarity with the specifics of the project design and our experience with its implementation. ▮



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