Dean Gwin

Chairman's Message

Precast Concrete: Resilience against Earth, Wind, and Fire

Whether you live on the West Coast, where earthquakes and fires are prevalent, or in states where tornadoes and hurricanes are common, it is devastating to see families whose homes, schools, businesses, churches, and lives are uprooted by natural disaster.

What news reporters covering disasters don't focus on is, "Why was the gymnasium where children were placed to ride out the storm built with anything other than concrete?" or "Why did the side of the condominium blow off during such a low windstorm and allow water intrusion?" or "Why did the apartment under construction burn to the ground in a matter of minutes?" or "Why did the developer of this beautiful waterfront community use a seawall product that will not stand up to the natural elements?"

Communities that have been affected by disasters both natural and manmade are commonly referred to as "resilient" in news stories. Resilience is seen as their ability to recover quickly and adapt to extreme adversity. High-performance precast concrete structures and infrastructure demonstrate resilience by withstanding natural and manmade disasters, which not only saves lives but also reduces the need to rebuild.

We can prepare for and often predict the disasters caused by the forces of nature, but we can't prevent them. What we can do as an industry is continue to expound on the benefits and track record of using precast/prestressed concrete components to protect infrastructure, businesses, and homes. But are we doing enough of this? This mission is on all of our shoulders, and we must make a concerted effort to convince and convert the design community and owners. Take advantage of PCI's knowledge and marketing tools; proclaim the same message, and help us move the needle.

Building codes provide the first line of defense against natural disasters and help provide safeguards. It is hard to fathom that there was a time when fire resistance for precast/prestressed concrete assemblies was not accepted by the building codes. Where would our industry be right now if it were not for our predecessors who worked diligently to gain acceptance of precast/prestressed concrete components? What can this generation of precasters do to crank up the effort to affect building codes and move the needle?

Sixty years ago, precast/prestressed concrete made its entrance into the building marketplace, and today our industry continues to make history. In April PCI was formally accredited as a standards developer by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), making PCI the only ANSI-accredited standards developer dedicated to precast concrete structures and systems.

Don't take the efforts of PCI or the resiliency of precast/prestressed concrete for granted; move the needle by reinforcing the message of structure durability, multihazard protection, and the life safety and health attributes of our products.

Dean Gwin | **2014 PCI Chairman**
President/COO | Gate Precast Co.