Will Panelization revolutionize the industry?

Short Course Weekend could provide the answer

Prior to the opening of the 63rd annual AWCI convention in Phoenix, a unique program about panelization will be featured in the association’s first-ever Short Course Weekend.

The program, which is being developed cooperatively by the AWCI Technical Committee, AWCI Technical Director Gene Erwin and manufacturers and contractors utilizing panelization techniques will represent one of the most comprehensive educational seminars ever developed to explore the process.

Following opening day registration on Friday, March 14, registrants will have the opportunity to both learn exactly what the process entails and to see it in application. Approximately 9 hours of classroom experience and a four-hour field tour will put them in touch with the system “from the ground up”. Various elements of the Short Course Weekend will focus on the financial and resources investment required for panelization, the advantages of the system, an honest appraisal of when the process is valid for the contractor’s consideration, and the amount of commitment necessary to develop panelization as a part or all of the construction process.

Panelization defined

One element of the Short Course Weekend will be to define panelization in terms of its application to the industry. Panelization, in the words of Mr. Webster, means to divide into or decorate with panels. Erwin, however, points out “Mr Webster gets closer to the definition when he defines prefabricate—to build houses and ships in standardized units in factories for rapid assembly.

Erwin adds, however, that neither of these definitions fully convey the intent and direction of the Short Course Weekend. “As used in our program, panelization conveys the processes required to produce a quan-
tity of identical or similar units which can be assembled and attached to a structural frame to enclose the bulk of the perimeter open space of the structure,” he says.

**Panelization by degrees**

The Short Course Weekend will also focus on the degrees of prefabrication possible for panels. The requirements for materials; equipment, storage space and talent vary in direct proportion to the addition of components to a basic steel framed panel.

“Obviously; the more components that are prefabricated prior to erection and attachment, the more complex and demanding will be the requirements placed on the prefabricator,” Erwin says.

“The present state of the art has resulted in prefabricated wall units that include framing, bridging, bracing, insulation, exterior finished cladding and the sealed window units,” Erwin says. “After attachment of the panel to the structure, only the caulking and sealing of joints created in fitting the panels together and the interior mechanical and finishing need to be done.”

Erwin points out the Short Course Weekend will emphasize the flexibility of panelization systems, which allows the contractor to choose partial or total prefabrication based on the approach that best suits his particular circumstances;

**The bottom line**

The Short Course Weekend will also explore the important dimension of the cost of moving into panelization. This phase of the program will look beyond mere capital investment.

“While each situation is going to be individualized, and thus obviously different, we have the histories of a sufficient number of contractors who have moved into the field to provide insight into the investment required. Our program will certainly consider the amount of money involved, but it will also focus on the types of skilled manpower, the expertise and the equipment required,” he said.

Included in the program will be an excellent cross-section of case histories. “We’ll have some success stories and, some not-so-successful stories to tell,” Erwin says.

**The full program**

The subject matter for the Short Course Weekend will be both technical and comprehensive. Such subjects as the deflection requirements for the successful performance of a given cladding will be discussed. So will the traditional aesthetic difficulties of certain claddings that have been carried over in adapting to the field of panelization.

The course will cover the needs for proper detailing guidance and avoiding conflicts in architectural and shop drawings, requirements, specifications and other elements of construction. It will also address the importance of proper education and training of supervisory and general labor personnel.

An additional highlight of the Short Course Weekend will be translating the educational program into visual contact with the systems. “The structures in which the short Course, Weekend and the AWCI convention are to be held are examples of the very panelization processes we’ll be studying and discussing,” Erwin says.

“This will provide an opportunity for registrants to study the structures at their own leisure; We’ll also be making at least one job-site inspection where where they can see the panelization at work, and we’re working out final details for a tour of a plant, that has moved into panel production. It is, in a single weekend, perhaps the most comprehensive panelization seminar ever to be developed.”

Registration information can be obtained by contacting Erwin or Chris Stinebert at AWCI, 1711 Connecticut NW, Washington, D.C. 20009; (202) 667-8400. Registration is open to both members and non-members and is open to both registrants and non-registrants for the AWCI convention.