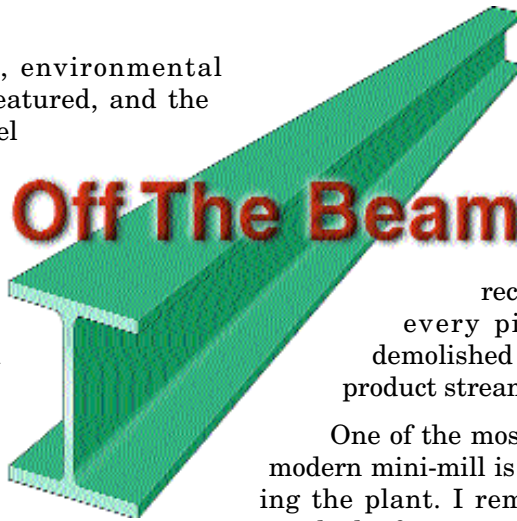


At many conferences today, environmental issues have been prominently featured, and the Second World Conference on Steel in Construction, held in San Sebastian, Spain, was no exception. As I sat in a hotel room reviewing abstracts of the next day's sessions with AISC's Charlie Carter, I was struck by one paper titled: "A Comparative Life Cycle Assessment of Steel and Concrete Framed Office Buildings."

One of the conclusions of the paper's study was that "there is no operational energy benefit in the passive thermal performance of modern concrete-framed office buildings as compared with modern steel-framed office buildings." My immediate reaction was to discount the paper as being kind of obvious. But Charlie disagreed and claimed that many architects and even some engineers still held to the myth that concrete buildings had some thermal advantages over steel-framed structures.

Usually, these types of arguments never have a winner. However, the next day I had to concede Charlie's point. One of the first presentations I attended was from an architect discussing the future of steel in construction from an architectural viewpoint. And in one of those cosmically coincidental occurrences, one of his points was that many architects prefer concrete for its perceived thermal advantages.

Besides the error of believing concrete has a thermal advantage as a framing material, I'm surprised that architects who are concerned with envi-



ronmental issues don't go crazy over steel's recyclability. Almost every piece of wide flange manufactured in the U.S. today is produced for all practical purposes completely from recycled scrap metal. And almost every piece of wide flange from a demolished building is put back into the product stream and recycled into new steel.

One of the most striking facets of a visit to a modern mini-mill is the mound of scrap surrounding the plant. I remember being awestruck as I watched a few years ago barge after barge arrive at the Mississippi River dock of Nucor Yamato's Arkansas mill.

The next time you want to impress someone with a trivia question, ask what is the most recycled material in the world. Many people will say aluminum or paper. The true answer, though, is steel.

Scott Melnick

Editor & Publisher

On a completely separate note, I'd like to remind AISC members that the Annual Convention is fast approaching and this year's promises to be like no other. The Institute has lined up a first rate group of speakers who will change the way attendees run their businesses. If you haven't already received registration materials, please call Lewis Brunner at 312/670-5420.

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