

If you don't mind being inundated with email, it can be enlightening to join one of the many interesting list servers on the internet.

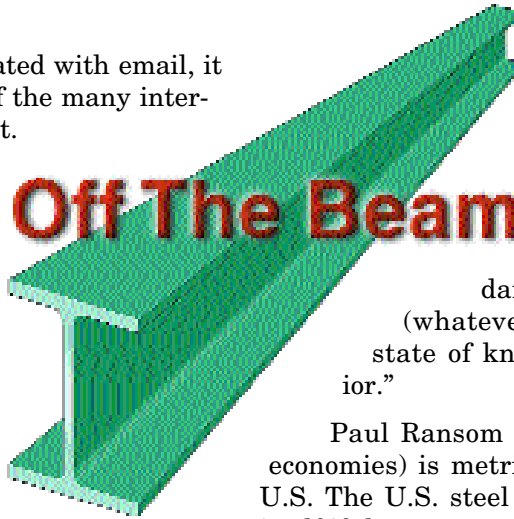
For the uninitiated, a list server is essentially a collection of email addresses; messages sent to the main address are then forwarded to everyone's address in the collection.

One of the best list servers for structural engineers is sponsored by the Structural Engineers Association International (to subscribe—there is no fee—to the list, send an email to admin@seaint.org and in the body of the message type "join seaint" —no quotes). SEAINTE estimates 15,000 people are subscribers to the list and it's not unusual to get nearly 100 messages in a single day. (For fabricators and detailers, I recommend steel-link. Subscribe to it by sending an email to majordomo@steel-link.com with the words "subscribe steel-detail" in the body (no subject or quotation marks necessary).

Lately, the most interesting "thread" of conversation at the SEAINTE site has been ASD vs. LRFD. It all started with someone wondering, "How wide spread is the use of LRFD?" (Nobody has a definitive answer; my best guess is it's used for about 20% of the steel buildings in the U.S.)

Some of the comments have been downright silly, some highly technical. Some of the arguments simply boiled down to new vs. old. And some people argued that if there's no economic benefit, why switch? My favorite comment came from Bill Polhemus, who wrote: "I don't think LRFD was

Off The Beam



ever really seriously considered an 'economics driven' standard (although it was initially marketed as such—probably not a smart thing to do). It is a "rationality-based" standard. It takes structural design (whatever the material) closer to the state of knowledge of structural behavior."

Paul Ransom added: "The G8 (top 8 global economies) is metric and limit states except the U.S. The U.S. steel design profession is isolating itself if they are not coming to grips with the international cooperation of the standards development agencies and associations like AISC. As AISC becomes more international in scope, their publications will follow and, eventually, the only relevant design evolution will not include ASD." I might add that the AISC Board of Directors issued a statement that LRFD is the preferred design method and no 10th Edition ASD *Manual* is anticipated.

The large number of comments posted in this on-line argument clearly indicates a lot of interest in (and some downright hostility towards) LRFD. For those of you who graduated before LRFD became the standard in essentially all U.S. engineering departments, AISC will offer a 10-hour course on LRFD at next year's North American Steel Construction Conference. Information on the full program will be available by the end of the summer. Until then, you can always read the archived email arguments at www.seaint.org.

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