



Scott L. Melnick

While the changing pricing paradigm in the steel industry has gotten the lion's share of the attention, its impact will actually be dwarfed by the new steel specification now being completed. For more than a decade, a debate has raged within the structural steel industry—a debate fueled by the existence of two steel specifications. AISC probably made a mistake in 1986 by issuing the LRFD Specification without withdrawing the ASD Specification. And in 2005, that mistake will be rectified through the issuance of what is popularly being referred to as a “unified” specification, but should more correctly be referred to as a single specification.

Charlie Carter, AISC's chief structural engineer, was recently asked: “When will ASD be extinct?” and his response is worth repeating:

“I'm not sure what the future holds for ASD. But I know AISC will not be the whipping boy on the issue any more once the 2005 AISC Specification is released. The building code provides for two methods of design—LRFD and ASD. We will provide the 2005 AISC Specification as a single document with one set of equations that can be used for either LRFD or ASD (with appropriate factors for each). So the differences between LRFD and ASD will be a set of factors as far as AISC is concerned.”

If you're confused, check out Cindi Duncan's story (and Jason Ericksen's sidebar) on pages 55-56 of this issue. And keep an eye on the AISC website. The draft specification has already been issued for public review and updates on the new specification will periodically be released. (One way of staying on top of information on the website is to visit www.aisc.org, click on **My AISC**, log in, and then click on **My Interests** to register to be notified when information of specific interest to you is posted.)

Of course, while I hope the pricing situation won't have a long-term impact, I know it can't be

ignored, either. And not just by the steel industry—according to most sources, concrete prices are escalating just as fast as steel prices. At first, I couldn't fathom why this would be. I knew that cement and wooden form prices were climbing. But I also knew that couldn't be the whole story. And then I heard a fascinating statistic. Apparently, a concrete-framed structure has about 80% as much steel as a steel-framed building (in seismic areas, the percentage is even higher). And rebar prices are climbing faster than structural steel prices (not to mention the recent trend toward allocation for rebar).

To read an interesting “conversation” about steel's competitiveness, check out the article that AISC's John Cross wrote for *The Georgia Engineer* by visiting www.aisc.org/competitive.

Monumental Design

I received a letter recently (see page 27 of the May issue) that lambasted MSC for continuing to publish stories about Frank Gehry's designs. Essentially, the writer complained about the incredibly high cost of construction involved. We publish stories about Gehry's buildings because they're intriguing exercises that push fabrication to new limits. And since they're notoriously dependent on the electronic transfer of drawings, they're also on the forefront of the brave new world of EDI. That said, I'll be curious what people think of his monumental designs in 20 years—and what people think of other monumental architecture of the early 21st century. For example, on a recent trip to New York, I saw some of Santiago Calatrava's incredibly beautiful renderings for the proposed new permanent PATH station at the World Trade Center. It's quite a contrast between the two designers—but I'll leave it up to others to make a qualitative analysis.

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