Engineered Wood Products: A Guide for Specifiers, Designers, and Users

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As stated in its Preface, this book is "...the first of its kind." This reviewer knows of no other book that addresses the practical issues surrounding contemporary engineered forest products for the benefit of a cadre of users. Within these pages are six chapters that deal with a variety of engineered wood products (glued-laminated timber, plywood, metal-plate connected wood trusses, I-joists, composite panels, and structural composite lumber). Three more chapters cover the important and related subjects of fire protection, long-term performance and durability, and quality assurance in manufacturing. The final two chapters address the relationships between building codes and engineered wood products and load and resistance factor design, respectively. These latter two units are particularly useful because the workings of code bodies and the new reliability-based codes are foreign to many people in the profession. This compendium of chapters, written by industry, government, and academic representatives knowable in the various facets of contemporary wood engineering, brings together information that is both interesting and useful to those trying to keep up with the fast-paced product innovations in wood construction.

The chapters that deal with products generally begin with an introduction and historical perspective about each product. This reviewer found these sections to be interesting and informative (even to someone with twenty years of experience in wood engineering). A detailed description of the raw material requirements and manufacturing process, often complete with schematics, was presented to give the reader a sense of what the product is and the environmental and economic considerations associated with its development and use. In several chapters, design or other examples were provided to illuminate the processes and concepts being discussed. To this reviewer, the credibility of the book was enhanced by the absence of product promotion by the authors. Also, it was found that the authors provided a fair, even-handed, and dispassionate assessment of the product capabilities. The readers are presented not only with the advantages of each product, but also with the practical considerations that could cause problems with respect to product use.

The editor says that this book is written for practitioners, such as architects, designers, contractors, building officials, and others in the timber construction field. This reviewer believes that this book could serve well that constituency. No mention is made by the editor of the text being suitable for use in any university-level course. This may be because it is difficult to imagine the structure of a course for which this text would be the primary reference. However, the information found between these covers would certainly be valuable to students preparing for careers in timber construction.

The book is written in "plain language," as the editor states in the Preface. This reviewer felt that the casual use of the English language and lack of compliance with the more formal rules of written grammar (for example, the frequent ending of sentences with prepositions) were somewhat distracting. However, not everyone would be so bothered by the informality of the language, and this is at worst only a minor difficulty with the text. The number of typographical errors found in the text is minimal and does not detract from the quality of the book.

In conclusion, this reviewer believes that the arrival of a text that addresses the products used in contemporary wood engineering and the issues that surround their use was long overdue. This book fills the need of practitioners for useful information related to modern engineered wood products and aspects tangential to their use. I recommend this text and believe that it would complement any library of modern wood engineering.