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Technical Opinions from CCMC

By Luc Saint-Martin

This article briefly reviews the evaluation process followed by NRC-IRC's Canadian Construction Materials Centre and indicates how builders can use the information resulting from the evaluation of a particular product.

From time to time, your local supplier or a representative from a manufacturer suggests that you try a new product. From what you are told, the product could save time and money and satisfy your customers. However, you are unsure about installing something that you haven't used before and for which you don't have a performance record. That's when you think it would be nice to have easy access to an expert who could give you an informed opinion about this product quickly and without charge. In fact, such information is probably but a mouse click away, on the Web site of the Canadian Construction Materials Centre (CCMC).

CCMC, part of NRC-IRC, is a national service that offers evaluations of innovative construction materials, products and systems. A CCMC evaluation is an impartial, technical opinion on the suitability of a product for its intended use as determined in relation to the requirements of the National Building Code of Canada or a provincial code. The final decision on the acceptability of the product and its code compliance, however, rests with the regulatory authority having jurisdiction.

CCMC Evaluation Officers, when they receive a request to evaluate a novel product, develop technical criteria in consultation with experts from elsewhere in NRC and from other organizations, then direct the manufacturer or supplier to an accredited laboratory where the testing is done. If test results are positive, CCMC issues its technical opinion on the product's suitability in the form of an Evaluation Report. The Evaluation Report also contains other key information on the product, including any limitations on use. These reports can be found on the CCMC Web site in the *Registry of Product Evaluations*, which now contains information on over 500 products.

Evaluations are undertaken for products that are manufactured, assembled, or processed at a particular site or manufacturing facility and they apply only to those products for the use intended. The opinion rendered is limited to the question of the product's conformance to code requirements. The reports do not address other issues that builders or home buyers may want to know about, such as warranties offered, colour selections for products, and so on.

The CCMC opinion does not say product A is better than product B, nor does it make any such comparisons. Furthermore, CCMC is not a watchdog and it cannot cover every scenario with regard to new products that may be appearing. It plays a role only for products it has evaluated. So it is important for builders to be informed and vigilant and to read the Evaluation Reports carefully, especially the information about product installation and limitations on use. For example, if a product is tested for a particular use, it does not mean it can be applied in other situations that appear to be similar.

Even if a supplier shows you that a product has a CCMC number, it should not be taken for granted that the evaluation for that product is still valid or in effect. You should check the Registry and make sure the product is still included. If it is not, you can contact CCMC and ask about it. The CCMC Web site also has a feature that helps you contact the manufacturer directly. Even if the product is still included, it is important that you make sure it is one that suits the situation it has been proposed for. That means paying careful attention to the limitations on use.

The Registry covers a wide variety of products, from foundation piles to engineered wood framing components, insulation, windows, and so on. You can search by manufacturer or product name, or, if you have it, the CCMC reference number. You can also search by keyword.

Whatever the situation regarding an innovative product, remember that the final approval for the use of the product rests with the regulatory authority involved.

The Web site of the Canadian Construction Materials Centre can be accessed at:

http://irc.nrc-cnrc.gc.ca/ccmc/index_e.html

Once there you can click on the “*Registry of Product Evaluations*.”

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