

Short Term Technical Assistance

Forestry Department
Alberta Research Council¹

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DISCLAIMER

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Summary

Alberta Research Council Forest Products personnel are often asked to answer technical questions or supply technical information based on experience or from library sources. The objective of this project is to provide this technical information service to private industry, government departments, educational institutions, municipal organizations and the general public. Most inquiries can be handled by telephone, some require a literature search, and a few require some limited testing or panel pilot plant work. No charge is made for these services.

During 1989/90, 211 telephone calls and inquiries were handled by the ARC Forest Products Program. This was an increase over last year. This year the system of categorizing calls into subject areas was revised to improve the monitoring of interest areas.

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1. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this project are to undertake the following work regarding short term technical assistance:

- a. Provide short term technical assistance to government departments in the area of wood science and technology related to Alberta wood species and wood products.
- b. Provide short term technical assistance to industry in the area of wood science and technology related to Alberta wood species and wood products.
- c. Provide short term technical assistance to public in the area of wood science and technology related to Alberta wood species and wood products.
- d. Provide short term technical assistance to educational institutions in the area of wood science and technology related to Alberta wood species.
- e. Provide short term technical assistance to municipal organizations in the area of wood science and technology related to Alberta wood species and wood products.

2. INTRODUCTION

Through previous education, experience, and current research and development projects, the Alberta Research Council's Forest Products Program has built up a large knowledge base in the areas of wood properties, wood products and engineered wood composites. Access to this information can be a factor in the increased utilization of Alberta forest products. By making use easier, substitution is discouraged. Most of the inquiries can be easily handled by telephone; some require literature reviews and written replies; some require limited panel manufacture or testing.

The number of technical inquiries has steadily increased over the last few years as the public and industry awareness of the presence of the ARC Forest Products Program has grown. Tracking information request calls is a valuable tool to identify areas of interest for R&D.

3. METHODS AND MATERIALS

Inquiries are normally handled in one of the following methods:

- * telephone communication of available information (sometimes this is a referral to another source of information).

- * letter communication including available literature (sometimes requiring a computer literature search).
- * personal communication on available information.
- * quick tests to acquire specific data on a limited scale (for quick comparison purposes).
- * manufacture of small demonstration panels.
- * quick tests to determine compliance to a standard (not for certification purposes).

This year, to facilitate tracking inquiries and uniformity of reporting among the forest products staff, a grouping system was established. Six categories were used:

- * structural panel information
- * solid wood products information
- * wood preservation information
- * building systems information
- * waveboard information
- * miscellaneous information

Inquiries were also broken down by sector as follows:

- * Government departments
- * Private Industry
- * Public
- * Educational Institutions
- * Municipal Organizations

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

During 1989/90 the Forest Products Program logged 211 telephone inquiries covering a broad range of questions. The breakdown by categories and sectors is as follows:

| | |
|---|-----|
| Structural panel information | 23% |
| Solid wood products information | 15% |
| Wood preservation information | 7% |
| Building systems information | 12% |
| Waveboard information | 14% |
| Miscellaneous information | 29% |

Breakdown by sector:

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| Government Departments | 12% |
| Private Industry | 58% |
| Public | 15% |
| Educational Institutions | 13% |
| Municipal Organizations | 2% |

Seventeen of these inquiries required laboratory work or an in-depth response. The variety of these inquiries was great. As well as the normal questions on strength properties, lab work included a range from steam explosion to ash content. A list of the seventeen laboratory inquiries is presented in Appendix A.

The number of inquiries increased through the year. One factor contributing to this was the creation in early 1990 of the Alberta Research Council Technology Line. This toll free information service is actively promoted throughout Alberta. The service provides a one stop clearing house for questions from industry and the public. Forest Products inquiries are channelled by the information line operator to an appropriate ARC employee. This initiative by ARC shows a commitment to technology transfer through a system similar to that funded at ARC Forest Products by the Canada-Alberta Forest Resource Development Agreement.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As the Alberta forest products sector develops, and as public awareness of the ARC Forest Products Program grows, there is an increasing demand for information on wood properties, wood products and engineered wood composites. The personnel of the Forest Products program provide a valuable service in technology transfer through the Short Term Technical Assistance project.

Current objectives of the Alberta Research Council mirror those established over the years that this project has been funded by the Canada-Alberta Forest Resources Development Agreement. For this reason, it is recommended that this project be continued in 1990/91 with joint funding by the Alberta Research Council

Appendix A

Inquiries Requiring Laboratory Work

Inquiries Requiring Laboratory Work

| Company | Description |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Marathon Coatings Technology Ltd. | test panels for specialty applications |
| Weldwood Slave Lake | OSB properties |
| Weldwood Hinton | lumber properties |
| Hawkwood Industries | performance of panels |
| SMED | adhesives |
| General Systems Research | steam explosion |
| Stewart and Ewing | wood ash |
| Weldwood | specialty papers |
| Blue Ridge Lumber | surface properties |
| Western Archrib | specialty products |
| Reichhold Chemical | moisture meter calibration |
| Superior Sash | door panel construction |
| Jasper Millwork | shear testing |
| Ronden & Associates | wood/plastic composites |
| Municipal Affairs | building systems |
| Vision Smart | panel properties |
| CCMC | review of standards |