



MEMO

To: Interested Parties

From: Build With Strength

Date: November 2, 2017

RE: Setting the record straight on the American Wood Council’s misinformation

Build with Strength (BWS), a coalition of the National Ready Mixed Concrete Association (NRMCA), responded to the American Wood Council’s (AWC) [desperate attempt](#) to mislead decision makers, consumers and the building industry as a whole about the impact wood-framed construction in multi-family housing is having on local communities across America. BWS recently released an independent study showing it is cheaper and safer to insure a more resilient structure made from products like concrete. It’s not just our study that shows wood buildings are more costly to insure during construction and during operation. Other independent sources show that wood buildings cost 53% to 145% more for builder’s risk insurance and 55% to 137% more for commercial property insurance than concrete and steel buildings.^[i]

AWC Claim	FACT
<p>Claim: “Were the data presented correctly, wood construction would cost approximately 21 percent less. Or, instead of a \$14 million construction cost, a wood-framed building would be \$11.1 million.</p>	<p>Fact: The reality is that building with concrete is a wise investment both in the short-term and long-term. On initial costs, concrete is on par with wood. According to Fannie May, the average cost of low- to mid-rise apartment buildings range in cost from \$178 to \$184 per square foot, which corroborates closely to the estimates used by NRMCA.^[iii]</p> <p>Comprehensive cost estimates using RSMeans were conducted for the typical four-story, 100,000 square-foot apartment building and constructions costs for the wood frame ranged between \$12.9 million in Orlando, FL to \$17.3 million in Edgewater, NJ. The cost for the same building built with concrete ranged from 3% less to 3% more depending on the city.</p>

	<p>A building made of concrete lasts a lifetime, is more energy-efficient, and can stand the test of severe weather in almost any environment.</p> <p>Don't believe us? Listen to the experts and learn how to maximize your investment.</p>
<p>Claim: "Wood is the go-to material for builders in the United States for many reasons: it's easy to build with, strong and renewable."</p>	<p>Fact: The fact is building with Insulated Concrete Forms (ICFs) is quicker (and safer) than building with wood since fewer trades are involved. Wood buildings require more labor increasing initial costs and construction time of the building. It's simple. Concrete is the strongest building material to build with.</p>
<p>Claim: "It also has a lower carbon footprint than alternative materials because the wood continues to store carbon that was sequestered while the tree was growing."</p>	<p>Fact: Carbon storage pales in comparison to the energy savings associated with heating and cooling a well-insulated concrete structure. An accurate portrayal of the carbon footprint of a wood building should include the increased use of fossil fuels to heat and cool that building. What the wood industry doesn't tell you is that deforestation is the single largest contributor to climate change.</p>
<p>Claim: "It's irresponsible – dangerous even — for a building material industry to spread misinformation about fire safety, actively working to mislead stakeholders who are looking for accurate information to effectively do their jobs."</p>	<p>Fact: The only thing irresponsible is AWC's continued promotion of combustible wood construction. This effort has put thousands of citizens across the country at risk including building occupants, firefighters and neighbors. In fact, AWC's Vice President of Codes and Regulations admitted they had a problem:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>"As an industry, we are aware of the challenge presented by these fires, and a team of national experts from across the construction sector have begun meeting to find solutions."</i></p> <p>And countless leaders in the fire industry have questioned the safety of this type of construction:</p>

[Steve Lohr, Chief, Hagerstown, MD Fire Department](#): **“Combustible framing (fires) burn hotter, spread faster, are harder for fire crews to access...”**

[Joseph Finn, Boston Fire Commissioner](#): **“You have nothing but a vertical lumber yard with very limited protection....”**

[Kevin Flory, president, Kansas State Firefighters Association](#): **“It’s almost a building with toothpicks.”**

[Click here](#) to see a map of the recent fires across the country that are a result of this unsafe and irresponsible type of building construction.

Learn more at www.buildwithstrength.com.

###

^[i] John Cross, Risk and Reward)

^[ii] Fannie Mae Multifamily Market Commentary – March 2017

[\[Unsubscribe\]](#)