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Engineered Timber Could Be Boon to Wood Products Industry

By DYLAN DARLING - *Associated Press* - Friday, April 29, 2016

EUGENE, Ore. - Solid as steel. Sturdy as concrete.

Cross-laminated timber carries these claims and hopes for boosting Oregon's wood products industry.

The engineered wood product is made by gluing together layers of boards, such as 2-by-4s, 2-by-6s and 2-by-8s. The resulting panels can be used in place of steel or concrete in the construction of buildings.

Advocates of the engineered wood say it has the potential to become a major product in commercial construction. But advocates acknowledge that a couple of things would have to happen first. Building codes in the United States will have to be revised to allow the use of panels in large buildings, and architects, developers and builders will have to demand the material for their projects.

Cross-laminated timber has been made for years in Europe, and it's catching on in Canada. However, D.R. Johnson lumber company in Riddle, south of Roseburg, is the only Oregon firm making the wood panels. And it's the only company certified in the United States to manufacture the panels for use in building construction.

D.R. Johnson President Valerie Johnson said cross-laminated timber could expand the market for wood products in the Northwest. An under construction building for the College of Education at Western Oregon University in Monmouth is the first structure to use the company's panels.

"We have interest coming from virtually every state in the West and Southwest," Johnson said. "The breakthrough ... is building larger and taller structures with wood by using very strong, very durable, large mass timber components."

Industry benefits

Most homes in the nation are built out of wood. Lumber and plywood are used for frames, roofs, floors and sidings.

Johnson and others involved in the wood products industry hope the large wooden panels made of cross-laminated timber replace some of the concrete or steel in the construction of commercial buildings.

Wood products-related companies would benefit, they say. And more Oregonians could work in the industry cutting timber, milling lumber and making the panels.



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“Innovations in wood products can add real value to our industry,” said Sara Duncan, spokeswoman for the Oregon Forest & Industries Council, an association of forestland owners and wood products companies.

Timm Locke, of the Oregon Forest Resources Institute, called cross-laminated timber a “game changer” when describing what it could do for the wood products industry.

“It could be as big a market as the residential market is right now,” he said.

But for that to happen people who design and construct buildings would have to demand the engineered wood. And state building officials would need to approve codes allowing the construction of large, multi-story wooden buildings.

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