



tech talk

BY OLIVER WITT

Software, engineers hook up

Bridgewater Lumber Co. in Bridgewater, Mich., was in the process of designing a horse arena near Ann Arbor when it ran up against a code requirement for a sidewall wind load rating. Since the lumber company did not have a professional engineer on staff to stamp the drawings, the company was going to have to hire a consultant.

Fortunately, the software that Bridgewater was using to design the arena had anticipated the problem. One click on the Construction Maestro program and Bridgewater was led to Timber Tech Engineering in Denver, Pa.

Another click forwarded the drawings to Timber Tech, which was able to review them and determine that they satisfied the local building code. The bill came to \$300.

If the drawings had needed revision, Timber Tech has the expertise and experience to work with Bridgewater and local code administrators to achieve code compliance. Timber Tech is one of the few engineering firms that specialize in post-frame construction. Its services include the structural design of foundations, posts, roofs, and related systems.

Bridgewater Lumber bought Construction Maestro a year ago and began using it six months ago. The Timber Tech connection with Construction Maestro was established in October. Bridgewater Lumber does about \$10 million of business a year, 30 percent in a variety of building construction types and 70 percent in lumber sales.

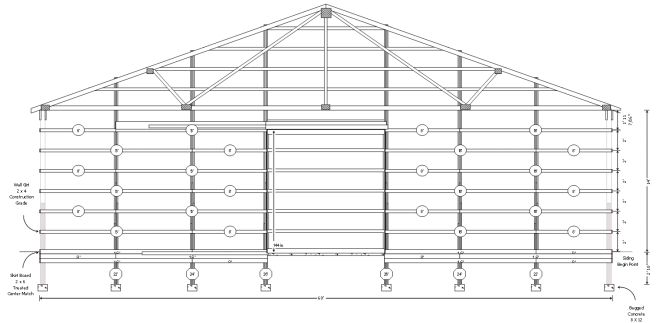
Construction Maestro is published by Symun Systems in Flushing, Mich. The program is intended to produce working drawings, material lists, and cost estimates for post-frame buildings and garages. What it will not do is provide the professional stamp of an architect or engineer to certify that the design meets local building codes.

Timber Tech is licensed in 20 states. It has working arrangements with professional engineers in the rest of the states to assure national coverage.

Rich Hosmer, manager of Bridgewater Lumber, says he selected Construction Maestro because it was easy to customize and because of its connections with major suppliers that he works with. For example, Construction Maestro has the product lines of 13 of the top steel manufacturers in the country built into the program. A builder can load the product line of the manufacturer of choice into the database.

Hosmer says the link to Timber Tech was a good example of Construction Maestro's convenience.

"It was easy — a lot easier than going to an architect," Hosmer says.



Time also is an issue when the job is small or the architect or engineer is not experienced in post-frame construction, Hosmer said.

"Our last commercial project took four weeks to complete the engineering," he says. "This took less than a week."

Brent Leatherman, a design engineer in Timber Tech's Kouts, Ind., office, worked on Bridgewater's horse arena.

"We review the drawings and make any necessary changes to ensure that the building as designed meets code," Leatherman says. "We take responsibility for researching and applying the local requirements before we issue a price quotation. Fees are based on size and complexity of the project. We don't see the code issues as being too difficult to navigate."

For the Ann Arbor horse arena, Timber Tech didn't need a full set of drawings, Leatherman said. Bridgewater was just looking for loads and member sizes.

Mike Rinks, co-owner of Symun Systems, says he selected Timber Tech because of the firm's formidable reputation in post-frame construction and because of its extensive certifications throughout the United States. Rinks says he has no immediate plans to offer more engineering options, although he will review arrangements next year.

Read a previous story about Construction Maestro in the Tech Talk column in the July 2004 issue of *Rural Builder*. ■

For more information on Construction Maestro, circle reader service number 15.

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