

## Providing Good Quality Concrete to Customers

### THE PANEL

*Representing producers:*

**Anthony Ameruso**, Ferrara Bros. Building Materials Corp.

*Representing contractors:*

**Raymond Heun**, New York Concrete Construction Institute.

*Representing testing labs:*

**Miles Rostek**, Stallone Testing Laboratories.

*Representing engineers:*

**Ysrael A. Seinuk**, The Cantor Seinuk Group P.C.

*Representing owners:*

**Joseph Siano**, MTA NYC Transit.

*CIB Program Chair/Panel*

*Moderator:* **Mark Shpungin**, Master Builders.

Quality concrete was the topic at a spirited and thought-provoking discussion organized by the Concrete Industry Board and the Association of NYC Concrete Producers. On January 28, the two organizations brought together a



**Seinuk:** *Nobody builds faster than New York, but what does that do to quality?*

panel of experts from those sectors of the industry most closely involved in achieving quality in concrete: the owner, the engineer,



**Siano:** *We give the responsibility to the contractor and then we observe the construction. Our quality control program is the key.*

the contractor, the testing lab, and the producer.

With lively participation from the audience, Mark Shpungin led a discussion that helped to explain why the process of achieving quality concrete is not a simple business.

Ysrael Seinuk spoke for the advantages of high strength concrete which is not used in New York because of the speed of construction required here. In addition to its strength, it permits long spans and small columns, both of which are desirable to owners and architects.

Joseph Siano described the issues involved in achieving quality concrete at an agency which must accept the lowest bid. The Transit Authority's solution has been to develop a quality

control program containing 13 elements that allows them to assure quality. "In concrete, documentation is essential to forensics. We must play policeman," he said. "People work better under observation."

The TA's pre-planning process determines the quality, with mixes designed for their specific placements. In his experience, what happens on the site (waiting time and temperature, for example) is more responsible for variability than anything that happens at the plant.

Ray Heun, speaking for contractors, objected to the principle of low bidder getting the project. "It should be the lowest



**Heun:** *Selection should be the lowest qualified bidder. You get what you pay for.*

qualified bidder," he said. "You get what you pay for," a sentiment echoed by others from both panel and audience.

The contradictions inherent in the work of testing labs were described by Miles Rostek. The testing lab, he noted, is the best



**Rostek:** *The testing lab is the best friend of the contractor and supplier because it can spot problems at an early stage.*

friend of the contractor and supplier because it can spot problems at a point when corrections can be made for the least expense. However, the lab is not usually viewed that way. They, too, are selected on a low-bid basis and normally are paid by the general contractor or construction manager, rather than



**Ameruso:** *Concrete is a versatile material but it has finite limits and we have to stay within them.*

the owner. He pointed to the frantic activity on a site when concrete trucks arrive as a factor that contributes to testing difficulty.

The final panel member spoke for the producers. Anthony Ameruso pointed to the many variables involved in producing concrete, from truck drivers to rules that vary from agency to agency. He noted that "concrete is a versatile material but it has finite limits and we have to stay within them."

For the new computerized batching equipment, independent testing companies test the calibration of scales for DOT and DEP projects.

**Bognacki:** *Since the Port Authority's end result spec was instituted, 95% of the concrete supplied to us in New Jersey qualifies for the 6% bonus.*

From the audience, Cas Bognacki, Engineer of Materials for the Port Authority, asked why should we pay for something that we didn't order if the concrete is not up to spec. Speaking of the PA's end result specification which was instituted three years ago, he said that 95% of the concrete supplied in New Jersey qualifies for the spec's 6% bonus, and that the New York figures are "coming along." He described the 6% as a "drop in the bucket" if durability is increased.

Bognacki added that the testing lab should be the responsibility of the owner or owner's representative. Otherwise, there is a potential conflict of interest.

#### **In summary**

Concluding the two-hour, sometimes heated, consistently interesting discussion, Mark Shpungin summarized the major points of agreement:

- Select the proper contractor.
- A pre-planning meeting is a must. There will seldom be call backs.
- Use the technology that is available today – don't rely on long standing specs that may be out of date.
- We must find a way to accommodate New York's two to three day cycle and still have quality concrete. ■



**Shpungin:** *We must find a way to accommodate New York's two to three day cycle and still have quality concrete.*

#### **A Mix Design Second**

*In most concrete used in the New York area, aggregates (both coarse and fine) account for about two-thirds of the volume of the mix.*