

Construction of large barns poses increasing safety issues

The installation of trusses is behind the times in safety measures and adequate bracing

BY BOB REID
Ontario Farmer

Stratford – The increased dimensions of new farm buildings has made construction a riskier physical environment.

Placement of trusses approaching a hundred feet in width often requires workers climbing to high places without scaffolding or tie-offs to prevent falls that would cause serious injury, said Brian Barron, senior manager of the Construction Health and Safety Program for the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD).

Workers routinely stand on strapping material for footing that can break or work in an elevated area with no work platforms or guardrails.

He acknowledged that the installation of large wooden trusses with a crane is a “fluid process” but one that can be made safer by planning ahead.

“There needs to be an access where workers can be tied off,” said Barron, speaking to building contractors attending the recent Canadian Farm Builders Association annual conference in Stratford.

He suggested there was no need for workers fastening trusses to the top wall plate to be standing on the plate while doing so. Moveable scaffolding or elevating work platforms will allow workers a safe place

to stand while securing trusses to the wall.

Workers moving among, along or on top of the trusses being attached need to be much more mobile than workers fastening trusses at the wall plate.

“It is a significant challenge to make things safe,” said Barron in addressing that need for mobility.

At the same time there is a “macho mentality” among workers that says installation of trusses has always been done in a less cautious way, said Barron.

There are times workers have to be placed in elevated locations but any height above 3 meters requires an adequate

fall protection system to be employed.

There is also pressure to get the installation of trusses completed as fast as possible because of the high cost of crane rental.

However, any inconvenience or added cost associated with safety measures is preferable to dealing with the death or serious injury of a worker, said Barron.

That situation was further addressed by Roger Jeffreys, MLITSD’s Provincial Engineer.

“It is very painful knocking on someone’s door to tell them that their family member will not be coming home from

work,” said Jeffreys.

He addressed the need to properly brace trusses as they are put in place by attaching diagonal bracing.

Two-by-four wooden strapping installed for later attachment of roofing material provides next to no bracing strength, said Jeffreys showing several pictures of roof trusses collapsed by wind.

“I don’t know what it will take to get that message across,” said Jeffreys.

Instructions for properly installing and bracing roof trusses come with each truss shipment delivered to a construction site.

The Truss Plate Institute puts

out instructions on properly installing trusses as well.

Installing a group of trusses together with adequate diagonal bracing on the ground into a more stable unit before lifting them in place with a crane was also suggested as a safer means of roof construction.

This minimizes the amount of work and movement on trusses while they are being put in place.

“There is not a one-size-fits-all plan,” said Barron, acknowledging the variability and challenges in constructing large barns.

“But there does need to be some sort of plan in place,” he added.

Meat & Poultry running burger competition

Meat & Poultry Ontario has opened a competition to identify their best burgers using beef, veal, poultry, lamb, pork and other meats.

Called Ontario’s Ultimate Burger Competition, it will be judging entries July 19 at Fanshawe College in London.

“If you’re a Meat & Poultry Ontario business member, who’s passionate about selecting the finest cuts of meat, grinding and blending flavors to perfection, and mastering the art of patty making, this is your chance to shine,” the organization said.

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