

CHANGING TIMES

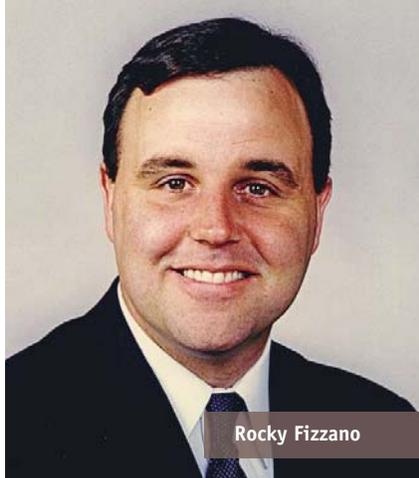
ROCKY FIZZANO IS 2012 CHAIRMAN OF NATIONAL CONCRETE MASONRY ASSOCIATION

Fizzano Brothers Concrete Products Vice President Rocky Fizzano steps into his new position as National Concrete Masonry Association (NCMA) chairman at one of the most interesting times in the history of the organization. With the recent announcement of a new provision allowing a single web of 3/4-in. minimum thickness, an array of alternatives to the three-web configuration of 8x8x16 block meeting requirements of ASTM C90 Standard Specification for Loadbearing Concrete Masonry Units is now available.

Advancing C90 changes through ASTM C15.03 Committee on Concrete Masonry Units, NCMA noted in December how the single-web configuration, compared to legacy product designs, reduces by up to 75 percent the material connecting 8x16 face shells. The revised standard holds the potential to a) lower products' mass and transportation costs; b) increase masons' productivity through lighter units, while reducing fatigue and injury associated with heavier block handling; c) ease rebar congestion and grout placement in reinforced wall assemblies; and, d) boost wall R-values by a factor of 3 to 4.

Amid ASTM Committee C meetings in Tampa, C15.03 members approved what

NCMA calls one of the most substantive changes to C90 in decades. The single-web provision revises requirements that have been a defining concrete masonry unit



Rocky Fizzano

characteristic—three webs, two cells—for nearly a century. It does not require block shapes or sizes to be reconfigured, but offers concrete masonry producers and their customers more flexibility in how webs are arranged to meet evolving building code re-

quirements and marketplace demands. Other C90-prescribed unit properties remain, including face shell thicknesses and minimum unit compressive strength. NCMA plans online meetings this winter to help industry stakeholders present the new web-thickness provisions to architectural, engineering and construction interests.

For Fizzano, coming into the chairmanship at a time like this is unprecedented, and not just because of the C90 changes. "I've been working full time since 1991, but I've been in our business since about the fifth grade, and I don't know of anything that is this big," he says. "I remember when NCMA and ICPI split up in the early 1990s, but that was much smaller than things that are going on right now. You've got two huge items, one of them being the changes to C90, which has not been changed in decades and opens up new avenues for the use of concrete block. And the second is the commodity check-off program that NCMA is certainly involved with. With business off about 50 percent for producers, these are crazy times.

"Realistically, two guys from NCMA's staff—NCMA Director of Engineering Jason

NATIONAL CONCRETE MASONRY ASSOCIATION

CHAIRMAN (2012)

ROCKY FIZZANO

Vice President

Fizzano Brothers Concrete Products Inc.
Malvern, Pa.

IMMEDIATE PAST CHAIRMAN (2011)

DON GORDON

Chief Executive Officer & Co-President
Atlas Block Company Midland
Ontario, Canada

CHAIRMAN-ELECT (2012)

CHARLES NEWSOME

Executive Vice President
Johnson Concrete Company
Salisbury, N.C.

The National Concrete Masonry Association (NCMA) is the global trade association representing the concrete masonry and hardscape industry. Its members include concrete masonry and hardscape component producers, as well as allied industry suppliers. Engaged in a broad range of technical, research, education, marketing, certification, communications, and government-relations activities, NCMA offers a variety of technical services and design aids through publications, computer programs, slide presentations, and technical training.

The NCMA Education and Research Foundation supports the concrete masonry industry by serving as a research and education affiliate. Every year, it

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identifies and funds new grants intended to support industry advancements in various areas. During the past seven years, the foundation has approved more than \$700,000 in new grants and scholarships.

NCMA's Research and Development Laboratory is a world-class facility, dedicated to scientific testing and research of concrete masonry and hardscape products and systems. The laboratory features a new concrete unit production line, capable of simulating several methodologies in use at modern operations.

Robert Thomas is NCMA president. The office is located east of Dulles Int'l. Airport at 13750 Sunrise Valley Drive, Herndon, VA 20171, tel.: 703/713.1900; e-mail: nema@ncma.org; website: www.ncma.org.

Thompson and President Bob Thomas—looked at C90 about two years ago and said, 'We can probably make some changes here, and there are going to be some real benefits for us.' The changes reduce the web thicknesses and design of the CMU, which will allow easier grouting and installation. It's also going to be a little bit lighter in terms of the weight, so you'll have cost reductions because less material will be used in making the block. But those things are small compared to what it does for our R values, which go from 2.3 for standard 8-in. block to 6, without any insulation or doing anything. That's a real game changer, and single-web construction is a viable product. This was probably long overdue, but we weren't thinking about it; thankfully we had two guys that were."

Fizzano said it's too early to estimate the exact percentage saving that these new standards will bring block makers, but he said that if a company has to meet an energy requirement of R 6, they would have to use an 8-in. block with either pumped-in foam or an insulation insert. "That's \$1.25/sq. ft. right there," he explains. "The fact that this is easier to install and has the higher R value is immediate saving right off the bat."

PERFORMANCE GUIDELINES

As an industry, our history has always been involved in recycling, Fizzano says. Like many block companies that have been around as long as Fizzano Brothers, which began in 1935, his grandfather and brothers (the founders) had a truck that hauled cinders from the locomotive plant across the street from where they grew up. "They had a big mound of cinder at the end of their yard," he details. "They took those cinders, cement and water and made concrete blocks with a Sears block machine, and at the end of each week, they had enough blocks to deliver to whatever foundation they were supplying. From right then and there, we were taking recycled products and making blocks. Did some of those 'cinder blocks' not hold up so well? Sure. And that's why they went ahead and put performance guidelines together, to make sure you had a standard to follow.

"It's the same as the performance guidelines for recycled materials. We want to go ahead and do that, because we want to be creative with how we use recycled materials. Furthermore, job sites are requiring it. But we want to make sure we're putting things in there that complies with C90—that we're not putting wood chips or other things that are going to burn. That why we

issued our Performance Guidelines for Concrete Masonry Units."

In early 2011, NCMA released a Beta version of a Plant Quality Control Certification Program with the purpose of soliciting comments and feedback regarding its merits and content from masonry and hardscape producers well as the specifiers and regulators using these products. The goal of the program was to establish minimum,

uniform quality control procedures manufacturers can voluntarily implement to ensure that products are of consistent, documented quality. The comment period ended Aug. 1, 2011. "We felt that it was an important thing for us to have, especially when we're dealing with DOT-type agencies," says Fizzano. "We didn't have anything and DOT is very into having plant quality control measures and plans—they

FIZZANO BROTHERS CONCRETE PRODUCTS INC. AT-A-GLANCE

An independently owned, family-operated company that has been in business since 1935—when the company acquired its first block machine from Sears, Roebuck and Co. for \$400—Fizzano Brothers currently has three manufacturing plants in the Philadelphia area that service the Mid-Atlantic states by producing a comprehensive line of quality, commercial-grade concrete products. The company's acclaimed Designer Series Architectural CMU are available in Split Face, Ground Face, Blasted and Two-Tone blended finish, all made in a variety of colors, shapes and sizes.

Fizzano Brothers is licensed to provide Dry-Block water-repellent CMU, Korfil- and Icon (per next page caption)-insulated block, Soundblox acoustical units, Ivany system for reinforced concrete masonry, and Allan Block retaining wall systems. Each of the company's three locations has a full-service masonry and hardscape supply outlet handling a complete line of masonry and hardscape building materials.

When architectural concrete masonry units began to appear in the industry, the company immediately recognized the potential, and a concentrated effort was made to educate professionals about the design possibilities these units offered for their projects. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the Fizzanos invested time and money cultivating this promising market. Interest, enthusiasm for and acceptance of split-face concrete masonry units spread throughout the architectural community.

The close-knit family business environment works well for the Fizzanos. "We are guided by our company slogan, 'Better blocks for better building'," remarked cousin Guy Fizzano, president. Accomplishing this goal is made easier because of the relationship the family enjoys, "We are great relatives, great friends and great business partners," added John M. Fizzano, head of landscape products sales. Each person fills a

specific role while staying focused on reaching the shared goal. Other relatives in the mix include Rocky Fizzano, vice president and plant manager at the Exton Plant; Tony Fizzano III, manager at the Trevese Plant; Tom S. Fizzano, in charge of sales; John T. Fizzano, head of safety; Tom A. Fizzano, fleet manager; and Ron Fizzano, plant manager at Crum Lynne. In addition, Rocky says that his son Nick, who has been working in the yard for the last three summers, started at the company in the seventh grade.

Now, the six Fizzano cousins are working together and have serious roles in running the business. They are focused on a single goal: perpetuating the Fizzano heritage. Each believes, as company leader Rocky Fizzano said, "Quality is first and foremost—it's not how many blocks are made but how many good blocks you make."

Recognizing changes in the industry, the Fizzano cousins have begun grinding and shot blasting concrete masonry units to provide additional textures for their architectural clientele. Staying on the cutting edge means staying in touch with the marketplace and continually looking for new units to add to the product line, they believe. The cousins are determined to pass Fizzano Brothers onto the next generation. Their young children are already following in their fathers' footsteps by spending Saturday mornings playing in the yard and developing relationships that will continue the Fizzano heritage.

The company just completed block work on the Pennsylvania Convention Center (750,000 CMUs), PPL Park, and Comcast Tower in Philadelphia (the tallest building in the state, using 100,000 CMUs with 20 percent pre-consumer recycled material). The company is presently working on or gearing up to supply the Philadelphia Justice Center. (150,000 CUMs), St. Josephs University dormitories (250,000 CMUs), and new structures at Temple University (75,000 CMUs at 4,000-psi).

Fizzano Brothers supplied 100,000 Icon insulated CMUs with Dryblock water repellent and 75,000 Spec Brick CMUs for PPL Park in Chester, Pa.



require it in many states—and we felt that we had a big opportunity with regard to Segmental Retaining Walls and Articulated Concrete Block, used for bridge abutments. So we went ahead and put that together really geared toward those tends.

“Obviously, a lot of our members are members of ICPI [Interlocking Concrete Pavement Institute] also, so we went ahead and joined up with them and continued with the manual. We’ve got an idea of what we want and we have Beta #9, and we’re going to bring it out in Orlando at the NCMA annual convention [February 28-March 3] in the technical committee meeting, and I think we’re going to get a recommendation to go forward with it. The only thing left for us to do is look at what implementing this plan will cost the manufacturing plants. We’ve got somebody who’s in the process of doing that, and we should have our results for Orlando.”

Regarding ICPI, Fizzano says NCMA has been working closely with that group in recent years. “We’re doing a couple of different promotions and research programs with them,” he adds. “We’ve been co-hosting our winter and summer meetings for the last couple of years. Also we’ve been making connections with the Mason Contractors Association of America (MCAA), and we’re looking at working with them for our conventions in 2014 and beyond. We had been talking to [former MCAA President] Mackie Bounds, who was a great voice for the industry. And now a new president has come in, John Smith, and we hope we have as good of a relationship with him.”

CMU CHECKOFF PROGRAM

Fizzano also says that the LEED rating era is having a definite impact on the way block makers do their job, including his own company, and adds that the in-the-works CMU Checkoff Program—a bookkeeping mechanism providing regular payment such as dues or a tax on sales of goods that will help finance generic commodity marketing programs—will help NCMA better track the group’s activities on LEED ratings and other similar measures. “Fizzano Brothers probably has 30 percent of its commercial/ institutional projects with LEED requirements,

whether its a government building or a Walmart,” he states. “I couldn’t tell you about nationwide market share, mostly because we don’t have the funds to track it right now. But that’s where we feel our CMU Checkoff program is going to come in and help us benchmark what is going on in our industry. There are thousands of projects where CMU is being used with LEED requirements, and our product plays well with regard to LEED. It’s made locally, you’re not delivering it more than 50 miles, you’re quarrying locally, you’re getting cement 75 miles away, recycled products are available, and we don’t have to ship stuff more than 500 miles. So we do have strong advantages.

“The CMU Checkoff Program is big for our industry, and we’ve been working on this for about three years. It involves producers across the country paying a levee for an increment of product they sell. For us, it would be pennies for each block we sell to end users. We take that money and send it to the Checkoff Program, an entity overseen by the U.S. Department of Commerce, and it allows us to take the money and promote, educate and research our product. We’re going to take about 50 percent of the available funds and use them for national campaigns, and take the other half of the funds and use them for local programs, such as college design competitions, regional advertising or a research project on CMU.”

Similar types of checkoff programs have resulted in the “Got Milk?” of “Beef, it’s what’s for dinner” campaigns. Other construction materials groups are also in the

Fizzano Brothers supplied 25,000 scored groundface CMUs for the Settlement Music School in Willow Grove, Pa.



process of developing their own checkoff programs, including the ready-mixed industry. Congress has to legislate this, and we're in the process right now where there's actually a bill—HR 3395, co-sponsored by Rep. Tammy Baldwin (D-WI-2) of Wisconsin and Rep. John Shimkus (R-IL-19). If enacted into a law, we start collecting funds.

"Right now, we have money going to our state associations by producers and we have money going to NCMA. But by doing this levee with all producers putting money into the checkoff program, we're looking at big dollars and increasing our budgets to do marketing, research and education. We're looking at probably quadrupling what our budgets currently are.



SHARING THE SHOW

In 2011, NCMA's annual convention and Icon Expo co-located with ConExpo-Con/Agg in Las Vegas in hopes of keeping the latter show's numbers elevated in terms of both exhibitors and attendees. "I thought it was terrific," Fizzano says. "It's a huge show, and we're not normally used to being a part of something like that, so it's fun and eye opening. To be a part of that show is terrific, and we're able to get a lot out of it because there are quite a few exhibitors at that show that our members want to deal with. They might not necessarily be directly in the masonry market, and walking the floor made it fun to see what's out there for our members. We're certainly looking at the possibility of going back there in 2014."

But before anyone can consider a repeat visit to Las Vegas, the NCMA co-sponsored Precast Show (co-located again with 2012 Icon Expo) is nearly upon the industry. "The planning is going pretty well," Fizzano claims. "We've dealt with NPCA for a couple years, and we've got a two-year stint lined up—this year in Orlando and next year in Indianapolis," he explains. "The registration and attendance are going to be pretty good; I know the hotel where we're staying is already sold out, which is a good thing."

Fizzano says the status of the joint show is positive, even after a 2011 that contin-

ued the downward slide of NCMA memberships that began in 2008. "We may have actually leveled off in 2011, but the way we operate with our dues, we'll be a little bit lower in terms of our budget compared to last year. That's more a factor of when we take the information, which is a couple years out and how we calculate our dues. We're not seeing anything in terms of a

great rebound in 2012; we think it's going to be flat—that's what most indicators show. But there are some positive signs with unemployment numbers improving, and we are seeing pockets in different parts of the country—parts of the Carolinas, the Boston area, Texas—that are starting to show some increases. I guess flat is good after a downward spiral."

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