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RECOMMENDED PRACTICES RELATING TO THE RESPONSIBILITIES AND RELATIONSHIPS IN BRICK CONSTRUCTION

Most brick construction projects are completed with the result that the building owner, architect, general contractor, mason contractor, brick distributor and brick manufacturer are completely satisfied with the final product. On rare occasions, however, a mistake is made or a misunderstanding occurs that spoils what would otherwise be a rewarding and profitable experience for all concerned.

Recognizing this fact, representatives from the manufacturing, sales and distribution, and installation segments have developed these "Recommended Practices" which identify the areas in which misunderstandings are most likely to occur and suggest procedures to be followed that will minimize the effects when mistakes do occur.

The "Recommended Practices Relating to the Responsibilities and Relationships in Brick Construction" was developed through the cooperative efforts of the Brick Industry Association and the Mason Contractors Association of America. Draft copies of the complete document were distributed to other construction industry associations for review and, where appropriate, their advice was included in the final "Recommended Practices".

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of these recommended practices is to prevent misunderstandings that might result from improper sampling procedures, ordering, or examination of the field work.

As in all business relationships, there are responsibilities among all parties involved – manufacturers, distributors, general contractors, mason contractors, construction managers, architects, engineers, owners and/or their respective representatives or agents – in producing an acceptable masonry project. It is to the mutual advantage of all concerned that problems, when encountered, be identified and addressed in a timely manner.

Contract Allowances

The practice of using only dollar value allowances for brick in construction documents is not recommended because this method does not provide sufficient information to make an informed bid. Items such as special shapes often are too complicated to use an allowance. However, if an allowance is used, the following variables should be included: unit specification (ASTM standard), grade, type and size (width by height by length). The construction documents should clearly state whether taxes, delivery, handling, and/or installation are included in the allowance. In the initial establishment of an allowance, the parties should take into consideration the extra cost of special shapes and any other special units required by the project.

Ordering

All brick orders should be submitted in writing by the purchaser to the distributor or manufacturer, whichever is appropriate. The order should include and clearly identify the following:

- A. Job name and type;
- B. Location;
- C. Owner;

- D. Architect;
- E. General contractor/mason contractor;
- F. Material quantities, including types and quantities of special or non-standard items, should be accurately determined so that the order may be shipped in its entirety. Brick should be described by actual dimensions (width by height by length) rather than by generic or trade name;
- G. Unit prices, including conditions such as escalation of prices, freight rates and terms;
- H. Delivery schedules, including anticipated start date and quantity of each shipment;
- I. Other information pertinent to the order, such as a copy of that portion of the specifications which applies to the brickwork.

If special shapes are required, detailed large-scale drawings should be supplied by the purchaser through appropriate channels at the earliest possible time.

Most orders are processed through a chain of purchasing which begins with the signing of the owner-general contractor agreement and ends with the receipt of an order by the manufacturer. Other parties may be involved in this process as intermediaries or secondary parties, including, among others, the owner's representative, the general contractor, the mason contractor and the distributor. Each party in the chain should endeavor to promptly process the order and give approvals as necessary so as to cause minimal delays in the schedule of the project. Upon receipt of the order, the manufacturer typically acknowledges the order and should promptly advise the parties through the chain of purchasing about any unacceptable or impractical terms. The acknowledgement should then be thoroughly scrutinized by the responsible parties.

It should also be understood by all parties that by the placement of a written order the purchaser incurs the specific payment responsibility for all special and/or non-standard items.

Certificates and Testing

Contract documents may require a letter of certification from the manufacturer to verify that the quality and characteristics of the brick meet ASTM standards. Test reports from an independent testing laboratory, supplied by the manufacturer, should be considered current if they are 24 months old or less. The cost of testing is typically borne as follows: if the results of the tests show that the brick do not conform to the requirements of the product specification, the cost is typically borne by the seller; if the results of the tests show that the brick conform to the requirements of the products specification, the cost is typically borne by the purchaser. The cost of any additional testing is typically borne by the purchaser.

Selection and Sampling

Brick is subject to variations in color between production runs and occasionally within the same run. Modern manufacturing processes encompass the use of automatic equipment, which may also result in minor differences in color and texture of the brick.

The selection of the size, color, texture and type of brick is the responsibility of the owner and/or owner's representative. Usually, small samples are used for the preliminary selection and may not exactly represent the complete range of colors and textures encountered in production runs.

Sometimes, a small sample is sufficient for determining the final selection. However, when large quantities of brick are to be erected, the prudent owner, general contractor, mason contractor, distributor and/or manufacturer should direct or request that the final selection be made from a field panel (also known as a field sample or mock-up). A field panel is typically constructed as a freestanding element that will later be torn down when the project is complete. Usually, a quantity of brick equal to 100 modular-size brick (approximately 15 square feet) will be used for the construction of the freestanding field panel.

If an owner or the owner's representative requires the field panel, the distributor or manufacturer may not have control over the actual erection that is frequently performed by a mason contractor. The party or parties who have control over the work of the mason contractor (either by direct contract or by other powers) should take appropriate action during the erection of the field panel to assure that no additions or deletions are made to the brick supplied by the distributor and manufacturer, unless written approval has been received from the manufacturer for such a change.

Field panels should be constructed from the production run that is intended for shipment to the project. In the event that the field panel has to be constructed for inspection and final selection before the production run for that project, the owner and the manufacturer should agree in writing upon such a use. The manufacturer may reserve the right to resample from the actual run before shipment commences. The owner or owner's representative should inspect and approve the new panel.

When the field panel has been formally approved, it is the manufacturer's responsibility to provide brick as represented in the field panel. A strap or control sample may be retained at the plant.

Typically, the general contractor and mason contractor are responsible for preserving and maintaining the integrity of the filed panel which is considered the project standard for bond, mortar, workmanship and appearance, and as the standard for comparison until the masonry has been completed and accepted by the owner or the owner's representative. If the owner or owner's representative elects not to have a field panel erected, the parties may choose to use the first 100 square feet of actual construction as the field panel.

Inspection and Examination

The general contractor or mason contractor normally receives the brick when they are delivered to the job site. The general contractor or mason contractor should properly protect the brick from the weather and damage. It is critical that the contractor inspect the brick before they are placed in the wall. If there are any discrepancies, the manufacturer or distributor should be notified immediately.

The owner or the owner's representative is responsible for acceptance of the work and, therefore, should inspect, as necessary, while the work progresses. This is especially critical at the start of the project to ensure that the color, texture and workmanship are representative of the field panel and are acceptable.

The selling party, whether the manufacturer or distributor should visit the job site, as necessary, and, in addition, should be available for meetings and consultation in the event the owner or the owner's representative discovers a problem.

In the event the work does not meet with the approval of the owner or the owner's representative, the owner should immediately notify the general contractor, and appropriate action should be taken to correct the problem. If necessary, this may require that the work be stopped and that all interested parties meet to resolve the problem.

References

Brick Industry Association, 11490 Commerce Park Dr., Reston, VA 20191, (703) 620-0010, www.brickinfo.org.

Mason Contractors Association of America, 1910 South Highland Ave., #101, Lombard, IL 60148, (630) 705-4200, www.masoncontractors.com.