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Using Offshore Building Suppliers for Building Envelope and Fenestration Products? BE INFORMED

Utilizing offshore (outside of the USA & Canada) building product producers or suppliers should be carefully measured. An offshore procurement or sourcing strategy could result in an increased likelihood of either poor initial quality or short term durability of building envelope and fenestration components & assemblies.

While there are more reasons than those provided in this newsletter, the following are several reasons why it may be prudent to avoid utilizing building envelope and fenestration components & assemblies produced offshore for use on North American building projects:

1. Potential for interruption of supply

The risk of supply interruption is always in play with any source of supply, and is likely heightened when the supplier is offshore. Strained diplomatic relations might elevate that risk even higher. In addition, there are other risks to consider, such as political unrest, trade disputes, closure of seaports, etc.

Supply interruption can be harmful in many ways, but some of the obvious potential effects are: delays, delay claims and product mismatching when alternatives are used.



3. Warranty issues

Warranties for offshore produced building products are often two or three times removed from the trade contract applicator/erector, and the identity of the warranting entity can often be unclear. Additionally, there are potential warranty enforceability and legal jurisdictional issues to consider.

2. Product quality concerns

Materials characterization, production and product QC for offshore products may not be in accord or alignment with North American technical standards (ASTM, AISI, AAMA, etc). In addition, lack of code compliance or ICC-ES evaluation(s) may be other concerns, as stated in the example below.

Example: On one construction project, connection bolts being used on site were contained in foreign marked packages and appeared to have embossed grade markings indicative of the specified criteria. Independent laboratory characterization of the bolts revealed that the actual grade of the bolts was less than 30% of the specified criteria.



Conclusion

Please do not misconstrue this newsletter, which is not intended to condemn foreign-made goods. On occasion, some products produced offshore can offer certain characteristics that may not be available in North American produced products. In those cases, however; it is often found that the specified standards criteria are not met.

Often times, offshore procurement strategies are driven by perceived lower initial cost. While the dollar amount of potential cost savings may appear to be inviting, there are numerous concerns that should be considered. Each and every member of the project team should carefully measure the potential pitfalls and any subsequent impacts of construction building products produced outside of North America.

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