

What's Happening in Masonry

by: Gary Porter



Concrete Masonry Units

Last week I attended the National Concrete Masonry Association (NCMA) convention in Salt Lake City. This convention is an annual meeting of concrete block producers and suppliers from across the country. They meet to discuss various aspects of the concrete masonry industry. They learn about new trends and refocus on this industry. This group has a lengthy history with several members recognized for many years of service.

We sometimes forget about the flexibility of concrete masonry is and how efficient it is for construction. In many cases concrete masonry units are the back-up or the support system for a structure and they are unseen, hidden from view. Concrete masonry units are known for high compressive strength and tensile strength to carry heavy loads and resist high wind loads. They have the ability to be manufactured beyond their typical strength design by the block supplier with additional cement or aggregates within the mix to carry even heavier loads. Along with the strength of the block, concrete block can be reinforced with rebar and grout to make walls carry even heavier loads.



Concrete block are known for their fire resistance. Concrete block DO NOT BURN! In many instances they are used to create a 4 hour rated fire wall, making a structure very safe and secure. Concrete block walls give firemen more time to extinguish what is on fire and provides an added level of security since the concrete block is not what is on fire. Concrete block can withstand the stream of a firehose being directed on it so the walls holding the structure do not fail.

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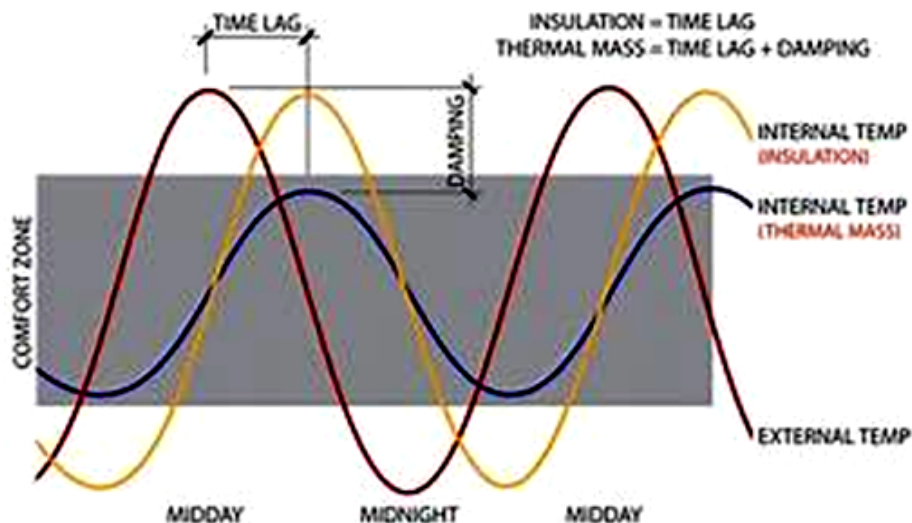
Concrete Masonry Units (cont.)



Concrete block stair and elevators outlasted the fire. Concrete block do not burn!

Have you ever slept in a hotel and been able to hear your neighbors' in the next rooms conversation? Concrete block partition walls absorb this noise and enhance the quiet by decreasing sound transmission.

Concrete block have the ability to store energy. Concrete block can absorb heat during the day from the sun and slowly release it overnight. Or conversely, absorb cold from the night and release it to a warm area throughout the day.



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Concrete Masonry Units (cont.)

One of the other benefits of concrete block is that it can be formed into many different architectural shapes and finishes. Concrete block can be a color, burnished (ground face), fluted or smooth face finish. There are even concrete block that can be shaped and colored to look like brick. Concrete block are readily available with short lead times to keep projects that have tight schedules to be delivered on time.

