

ICF Industry Supports NAHB's Concrete Home Building Council

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By Kate Driscoll

Invariably, winter brings about cold weather, Super Bowl parties, and the optimal time for builders and contractors to explore new building methods for the upcoming year. With the various trade show events available, many in the industry spend the winter months learning about alternative systems and new methods to enhance their business.

As attendees walk trade show floors in search of new and improved technologies, there is no shortage of information on one of the fastest-growing building systems available: insulating concrete forms (ICFs). With this technology's increasing popularity, representatives of ICFs no longer explain what an ICF is, but rather how contractors and builders can benefit from its use. Over the past decade, the use of hollow plastic foam “panels” filled with rebar and reinforced concrete have garnered an increasing share of the residential market—ultimately creating a need for a representative association for ICF industry stakeholders. Formed in 1995, the Insulating Concrete Form Association (ICFA) fulfilled that need.

ICFA's mission is to promote the use of ICFs and help overcome obstacles to industry growth. With the increasing use of ICFs in the U.S. housing market, ICFA and the National Association of Home Builders' Concrete Home Building Council (CHBC) were a perfect fit. As a founding member of the CHBC, ICFA continues to be a strong supporter of the council and its membership.

ICFA originally became involved with the CHBC in the interest of expanding the reach of ICFs to NAHB's builder membership. According to data collected by the Portland Cement Association (PCA), ICFs have become one of the fastest-growing alternatives to wood frame for above-grade perimeter wall construction. The number of single-family detached (SFD) homes built from footing to eaves with ICFs has increased approximately 25% each year. As the formation of CHBC began to develop, ICFA joined the effort with hopes of educating contractors and builders on the benefits of using ICFs and other forms of concrete housing.

Joseph E. Lyman, executive director of ICFA, feels that the results of the partnership between the CHBC and ICFA have been fantastic. “As we move forward, ICFA will continue to be a strong supporter of NAHB's Concrete Home Building Council, helping to sponsor education seminars, developing business resources, and providing assistance to



**Kate Driscoll Senior
Program Manager,
Concrete Home Building
Council, National
Association of Home
Builders**

homebuilders throughout the United States.”

ICFs continue to grow in the residential market as the industry develops ways to increase market share in both the above- and below-grade markets. According to Lyman, “Residential has always been the ‘bread-and-butter’ market segment, so we will work to continue technical advancements, code changes, and product research and development to support this vital market.”

A win-win partnership, ICFA offers an ideal opportunity for NAHB's membership to learn about the latest advances in ICF technology and to connect with ICF manufacturers, distributors, and contractors. And for ICFA, being a member of the CHBC has allowed for the development of educational courses with the University of Housing and Home Builders Institute, in addition to the NAHB Concrete Technologies Tour, to be held May 6–8.

In collaboration with ICFA, the CHBC has supported the development of two educational courses: *Building with Insulating Concrete Forms* that provides the traditional home builder with the information needed to evaluate and start using ICFs in their business, and *Insulating Concrete Forms Installation* designed to provide information and the basic skills needed in the construction of walls using insulating ICFs.

For more information on either of these classes, or to learn more about NAHB's Concrete Home Building Council and other cement-based building systems, go to www.nahb.org/concrete.
