An Investigation of Nailed Connection Performance in a Cyclic Humidity Environment

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Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University In partial fulfillment of the degree requirements of

MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN
FOREST PRODUCTS

Through the Department of Wood Science and Forest Products
In the College of Natural Resources

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July 23, 2004
Blacksburg, Virginia

Keywords: wood-based composites, connections, monotonic loading, durability, moisture cycling
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(ABSTRACT)

The effect of cyclic moisture infiltration on connections in light-frame wood buildings has received limited research attention. Specifically, the connections between wood-based sheathing materials (OSB, plywood) and solid wood studs are of interest. A comprehensive understanding of connection performance will enhance structure and material design, thereby improving the overall integrity and robustness of light-frame structures.

The focus of this research project was to evaluate the strength and stiffness of wood-frame connections exposed to cyclic humidity conditioning. Nailed sheathing/stud connection samples were tested for lateral resistance following various periods of moisture exposure. Elastic stiffness, 5% offset yield load, maximum yield load, and failure yield were computed and analyzed using the data collected. The parameters were compared among connection specimens receiving either 0, 1, 5, 10, 15, 25, or 40 periods of cyclic moisture conditioning. In addition, the bearing resistances of the materials were investigated for application to the general dowel equations for calculating lateral connection values, the current basis for design of single dowel-type fastener connections between wood-based members. An x-ray density profilometer was used to observe the de-densification processes within the composite sheathing materials throughout the moisture conditioning regime.

Results indicated moderate to extreme changes in the performance of cycled connections involving lower density sheathing materials. Higher density sheathing materials performed favorably at each cycle test period. Comparisons to the yield model were similar to the control results, but usually differed as cycling increased.

Analysis of connection performance following cyclic moisture loading is a vital component in developing a holistic model for service-life prediction of nailed connections in light-frame residential construction.
Acknowledgements

Many bright minds and helping hands contributed to the completion of my graduate work.

I am very grateful for my parents for providing unconditional love, support and motivation throughout my life and especially during my years of schooling at Virginia Tech.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to my committee chairman, Dr. Joe Loferski, for his keen insight, liberal guidance and inquisitive spirit. In addition, I thank my co-advisors, Drs. Fred Kamke and Dan Hindman, for their assistance, suggestions and expertise provided throughout this endeavor. I am extremely thankful for each committee member’s open-door policy and availability for discussion.

I am deeply grateful for the invaluable advice and direction given by Linda Caudill during my time with the Wood-Based Composites Center – first when I was an undergraduate lab technician, then as a graduate research assistant and recently as an anxious job seeker.

I am very thankful for the assistance given by Rick Caudill during my prolonged occupation of the Engineering Laboratory. His dedicated attention, support and management of the activities within the lab were a tremendous help.

Additionally, I would like to extend my thanks to Kenny Albert, Joanne Buckner, Sharon Daley, Dr. Jim Fuller, Debbie Garnand, David Jones, Angie Riegel, and Butch Sizemore for their service and support.

My thanks to my fellow graduate students for their help and friendship during the past two years.

My appreciation to David Sondel of UC Coatings Corporation for the donation of the wax end sealer.

I respectfully acknowledge the financial support of the Wood-Based Composites Center.
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