

editor's note



Tariffs and trade issues seem to be the topic du jour.

AISC's recent tariff webinar was one of the most watched online events we've ever hosted (you can see the video and access more information at www.aisc.org/tradetalk). And we're still receiving inquiries from fabricators, designers and the press.

From my perspective, the tariffs are a double-whammy. The design and construction market flourishes during times of stable and predictable prices. In the short term, the tariffs are introducing uncertainty to all steel products—structural steel, rebar, ductwork, piping and even appliances.

But more importantly, the steel tariffs as constituted will not have their desired impact. Because the tariffs are only on raw steel (such as beams and columns directly from a mill), countries can easily circumvent them by exporting fabricated steel rather than raw steel. As a result, domestic fabricators are twice disadvantaged: first by pricing and second by foreign fabricators, who aren't affected as much by the tariffs.

As soon as the tariffs became an issue, AISC urged that they should protect fabricated products—but as I write this, fabricated steel still hasn't received any protection. When we know more, we'll provide the information on our tariff-specific web page (www.aisc.org/tradetalk). Remember, unlike products made from steel, fabricated steel is simply steel; fabrication only prepares the material for installation.

And on a more personal note, I'd like to offer my hearty congratulations to my good friend and AISC president, Charlie Carter. Recently, both of his alma maters (Penn State, where he received his bachelor's and master's, and the Illinois Institute of Technology, where he received his doctorate) presented him with their Outstanding Engineering Alumnus and Professional Achievement awards, respectively. Next time you're at an AISC event and see him, please offer him your congratulations too!

One of the reasons that some people look only at raw steel rather than fabricated steel is the belief that steel is simply a commodity and all steel is the same. While material properties may be the same, steel produced in China and steel produced in the U.S. have dramatically different impacts on the environment. According to a new study by *thinkstep*, a sustainability software and consulting firm, the greenhouse gas emissions, measured as global warming potential, of hot-rolled structural steel sections produced in China are three times that of equivalent sections produced in the United States.

The products made in China and in the United States are functionally equivalent and can both be used in the production of fabricated structural steel for use in structural applications—though the Chinese products are obviously much more deleterious to the environment. The reports cover the same cradle-to-gate scope, representing raw material extraction, transportation and steel production. To learn more about the difference in sustainability between Chinese and U.S. steel, visit www.aisc.org/discover and click on "Global Warming Potential of Chinese and Domestic Hot-Rolled Structural Steel."

Remember, the more you know, the better you build.


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