



Foundations for scores of new homes in Oakland, Wayne and Macomb counties remained incomplete due to a lack of concrete. A strike by Teamster transit mix drivers is forcing builders to halt work on various developments such as this basement in the Farmington Hills Rolling Oaks Subdivision on Fourteen Mile near Drake. (Staff photo by Charlie Kidd)

Strike idles tradesmen

Work on new homes isn't the only type of construction suffering the effects of the concrete strike.

If the Teamsters Local 247 concrete transit mix drivers continue their strike, industry officials predict that most skilled tradesmen in the tri-county area soon might be without work.

"The potential is there to really hit industrial and commercial construction in the area," says Joseph Neussendorfer, a spokesman for the Builders Exchange of Detroit and Michigan.

"We're hoping that the strike will be settled soon because we see a prolonged concrete strike as very detrimental to new construction in the Detroit area. The Joe Louis sports arena is a good example. They can't get concrete to finish the job."

Work on that downtown Detroit riverfront sports facility is virtually at a standstill due to lack of concrete. Most skilled tradesmen involved in that project have been sent home until the strike is settled.

Housing industry threatened

Construction halts without concrete

By RON GARBINSKI

New construction in southeastern Michigan could grind to a halt in the next few weeks if a Local 247 Teamsters strike against the concrete industry continues.

About 1,200 Teamsters who drive transit mix trucks have been off the job since April 30 in a pay dispute with some 40 concrete companies serving Oakland, Wayne and Macomb counties.

That has forced builders to postpone many new projects and has hindered completion of homes started during the winter.

Building officials estimate that work on upwards to 10,000 new homes in the tri-county area are affected by the strike.

Work on the Sugar Maple subdivision in Troy, the Valley Stream subdivision in Avon Township, Rolling Oaks in Farmington Hills, and Forest Trails in Canton Township are among the scores of developments where construction already is at a standstill due to dwindling supplies of concrete.

Since concrete is an important element in all phases of new construction from start to finish, a lack of it would force work on new homes to stop.

Foundations and footings can't be poured. Sidewalks and other exterior work such as landscaping, driveways and streets can't be completed.

WITHOUT THE foundations finished, carpenters can't erect the building's frame or put up drywall. Electricians can't wire the structure. Plumbers can't install drains and pipes. All skilled tradesmen involved in the building are thrown off schedule.

If the flow of concrete to building sites is cut off, then builders must delay completion dates on new homes and commercial structures.

That means some 40-50,000 skilled tradesmen in the tri-county area could be laid off.

It also means buyers won't be able to move into their new homes on the date promised by the builder.

"This strike is causing a terrible hardship to home buyers," says Jim Raisin, president of the Builders Association of Southeastern Michigan.

"Not only is it delaying their taking possession of their new homes and moving their families in, it is causing some buyers to default on their purchase. Or they are losing their mortgage commitments and instead of paying nine percent interest, they will pay 11 percent or more."

Raisin says that when the strike ends, the building industry will face a double problem: Trying to complete work delayed on homes during the strike and building new homes.

That could push back completion dates even further since builders have to schedule certain concrete work weeks in advance.

"(THE BUILDERS Association believes) that the Teamsters and the transit mix companies have an obligation to the public to continue their negotiations toward a speedy settlement of their difficulties," Raisin adds.

He predicts that thousands of new home buyers in the tri-county will end up paying more for their homes because of the strike.

"They'll pay more in interest if their homes aren't finished. What we're asking lenders to do is give serious consideration on an individual basis to extending the mortgage commitments where the only incomplete interior work involves concrete," Raisin says.

Raisin and other Builders' Association members met with several major banks and saving and loan associations Wednesday. The purpose of those meetings was to discuss the building and interest rate problems with the lending institutions.

"Obviously, some lenders are going to say they cannot accommodate their homebuyers because they have to pay more for their funds today than they did when they made the commitment originally."

"But I think this is a situation where all of us have to make some sacrifices in order not to penalize the home buyer who is being made an innocent victim of a situation he cannot control," Raisin continues.

Builders say that homes promised for occupancy this spring probably will not be ready.

And other new homes scheduled for construction probably won't be started during the strike.

MANY BUILDERS weren't able to complete all of their new homes last year because of a nationwide shortage of cement. That combined with a "rough, wet spring" and builders are "going to eat some of the increased costs," Builders' Association officials say.

Homes are sold on a fixed contract where a builder promises to have the house completed by a certain date. Mortgages and interest rate commitments are dependent upon that completion date. If it is delayed, then builders must absorb much of the increased costs, Raisin explains.

"We can't extend the contract with the home buyers. Costs continue to rise on those fixed contracts. In some cases, the builder will be losing money if the strike isn't settled," the association president adds.

Housing costs have been increasing an average of one percent per month.

Builders also are reporting related problems at construction sites. Many are recording increasing incidents of construction material thefts since the tradesmen aren't on the job to watch over building supplies, Raisin says.

Raisin added that the situation could worsen if other groups in the construction industry with contracts expiring this spring and summer resort to a strike in order to enforce their bargaining demands.

Meteor tackles photo project

"Like building a jigsaw puzzle in reverse" is how a representative of Meteor Photo Co. described the challenge presented by the creation of the Dodge auto exhibit.

The Troy company was asked to create a 95-foot sweep of illuminated photography for the exhibit. The 16-foot high divider was filled with huge transparencies, some enlarged from single 35mm slides. The Dodge displays have been shown at this year's national auto shows.

"We were given blank pieces of 3-foot-wide plexiglass and had to match and mount the right portion of each enlargement on the right piece of plexiglass," said Harry Muenker, the Meteor chairman who explained the reverse jigsaw process.

"The panels were tongue-and-groove, so the end result could be a seemingly single mammoth transparency unblemished by cracks or poor register of the transparency between panels," he said. "Our tolerances were less than one-sixteenth of an inch."

The completed project is the largest transparency display in the U.S. It is 50 percent larger than

the 1,200-square-foot transparency display in New York's Grand Central Station. The Meteor display consists of 10 transparency units.

Dodge first selected outdoor scenes from Meteor's library of 35mm slides. The scenery became backdrops for six revolving turntables in the display. Product and product features were superimposed on some of the larger blow-ups.

Slides were enlarged to 8-by-10-inch transparencies. The images were fitted together and marked off in six vertical sections.

Each section was then exposed to a 3-foot-wide section of Chromagene transparency film, which can be up to 13 feet long. The exposed film was fed into an automatic processor.

Emerging from the processor two hours later, the strips were hung from the ceiling to dry. Six strips would be joined for a finished 12-by-18-foot scene. To insure uniform shrinkage, all six strips had to dry in the same temperature and humidity.

ANY SCRATCH or error requiring reprocessing of any strip required reprocessing of all six sections to assure uniform color.

When dry, the strips were bonded to plexiglass with cold pressure. The bonding required precise fitting. Once film touched the bond, it could not be moved, even slightly.

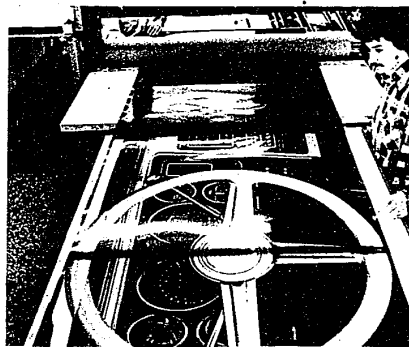
Meteor had to find a method of de-gassing the translucent mounting material, Muenker said. "This material sometimes emits a gas, which could cause an air bubble after the transparency is mounted," he said.

"To guard against this, we pre-baked each plexiglass panel in our drying oven."

The mounted transparencies were transformed into large light boxes by the George P. Johnson Co. of Warren. A 95-foot row of fluorescent lights was sandwiched between panels. The perimeters were framed.

Because the panels are only 3 feet wide, the display can readily be assembled and disassembled for storage and shipping. The display was seen in Detroit, New York and Chicago auto shows. Portions have been used elsewhere.

Meteor's efforts "helped open new possibilities for portable color transparency displays in dimensions previously thought unattainable," Muenker said.



From 35 mm slides comes a wall mural from Meteor Photo's studio in Troy. After two hours of automated processing, 13 foot strips of Chromagene 36 inch wide prints are cold laminated on tongue-and-grooved plexiglass.



HENRY: "What we saw at our hotels was more women checking in alone with briefcases. So we decided to do a study and find out if we were correctly serving women."

Expert advises women travelers

By SHIRLEE IDEN

Gina Henry is a travel expert who likes to walk to work.

Her morning walk takes her through the streets of the "Big Apple." But when she gets to the job, her work concerns the travels of millions of women who travel on business.

Just who they are has not traveled herself, she has logged tens of thousands of miles in her chores for Western International Hotels. On those trips she has come up with some interesting findings and useful tips.

On a recent visit to this area, she had her headquarters at the Michigan Inn in Southfield. But she says the Detroit Plaza in the Renaissance Center is one of her favorites hosteries.

The hotel chain owns and operates 50 hotels in 14 countries and therefore has interest in those women traveling on business.

For instance, during 1977, three million women spent 32 million nights on the road. According

to Department of Labor Statistics, 59 percent of all women over the age of 16 are now working and 20 percent of managers are female.

A large number of them are taking to the air and checking into hotels. United Airlines estimates that 16 percent of all business travelers are women.

"What we saw at our hotels was more women checking in alone with briefcases," Ms. Henry said. "So we decided to do a study and find out if we were correctly serving women."

Thousands of face-to-face interviews followed, backed up by mailed questionnaires sent all over the country and telephone surveys as well. The result was a little red booklet called "Tips for the Woman Business Traveler."

Anyone wanting a free copy can obtain it by writing to PO Box 1996, Seattle 98111.

The booklet will tell you that the number of women traveling for business is increasing three times as fast as the number of traveling businessmen.

Who is this traveler?

Typically, the average traveling woman is 38 years of age, six years younger than her male counterpart. Some 71 percent are in business with others working in sales, administration and personnel areas.

Her income is about \$25,000 for her household, compared to \$32,700 for the man's. She takes 10-12 trips each year, each averaging seven nights, while men average up to 19 trips but stay fewer nights on each. About 71 percent of women choose their own hotels.

Women, overwhelmingly, select downtown hotels by a 60 to 43 percent margin. Like men, they want cleanliness and convenience to business.

Women traveling alone don't choose airport motels or suburban locations to settle into. They prefer larger, centrally located lodgings with shops and services at their convenience.

Ms. Henry is aware there's a large contingent of persons out there who don't like to travel.

"People who don't enjoy traveling just are not aware of the things you can do to make it easier," she contends. "Airlines provide special diet plates, kosher food and services people fail to use. And every traveler can avoid problems by making reservations well ahead and getting to the airport early."

"The earlier you check in and get your seat, the better chance you have of not being bumped. And the thoughtful traveler knows exactly where she wants to sit on the plane, even which side if she's left-handed."

"You're paying, so you might as well enjoy." A very important way to travel more and enjoy it more as well is to travel light. Carry as little as possible, coordinate colors in your wardrobe so that one pair of shoes and one bag will do, she advises.

"You have to be self-sufficient, so the best way to go is to carry on just what you need so you are ready to get off the plane and on to business without problems or help."