STEEL HOUSE FRAMES

TECHNICAL BULLETIN TB-34

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This issue supersedes all previous issues

INTRODUCTION

This bulletin has been written to assist designers, builders and homeowners to realise the benefits of frames made from TRUECORE® steel. The coating of TRUECORE® steel complies with the durability requirements of the Building Code of Australia (BCA) *3.4.2.2. Volume 2.*

Only general information is provided in this bulletin and this is not a substitute for professional advice. BlueScope Steel recommends that you seek specific advice regarding the needs of your project.

HANDLING AND SITE STORAGE

As with all building materials, care should be exercised when handling and storing frames and trusses made from TRUECORE® steel.

Suitable gloves should always be worn when handling framing material. Framing material should be handled in a manner suitable to protect the coating, to avoid any adverse effects on product performance.

Minor scratches are unlikely to affect product performance, however if the coating is accidentally damaged and needs repair *(see Technical Bulletin TB-10 - Cut edge protection of zinc-coated and zinc/aluminium alloy-coated steel)*, the affected area can be treated by the application of a zinc-rich primer designed for this purpose.

Frames and trusses made from TRUECORE® steel stored on site should be kept dry. Minor amounts of moisture such as overnight condensation should simply evaporate. Frames and trusses should be stored on a flat, even surface and other loads not placed on top. Whilst TRUECORE® steel is a durable framing material, it is good practice to keep site storage time to a minimum. You should consult your supplier if material will remain on site and exposed to the weather for periods greater than 6 months.

TERMITE CONSIDERATIONS

The BCA is the principal source document that governs how buildings can be built in Australia and Part 3.1.3 of Volume 2 clearly recognizes that if primary building elements are made from steel, no termite barrier is required. Termites and borers cannot eat steel. Knowing the structural integrity of the home cannot be compromised should give homeowners peace of mind.

Owners thinking of installing a termite barrier to protect secondary building components such as skirting boards, architraves and cupboards manufactured from cellulose material, may wish to contact the National Association of Steel-framed Housing (NASH). NASH commissioned a study on the risk of termite infestation in steel framed and timber framed houses. This data provides evidence of the peace of mind that can come from choosing a steel frame. It is then the owner's choice whether they believe it is necessary to pay the additional cost for a barrier system.

WALL FRAMES

Use a Membrane

An impermeable membrane should be installed under all perimeter bottom plates fixed to concrete slabs on ground. The membrane should also extend up the weather side flange of the bottom plate *(see Figures 1 and 2)*. This is consistent with good building practice and is a condition of BlueScope Steel's warranty on house framing made from TRUECORE® steel.

When a frame is fixed to a suspended floor, an impervious membrane is not required if adequate ventilation is supplied and a minimum distance of 400mm is allowed between the underside of the floor framing and existing ground level. (The protection of internal bottom plates is not considered necessary. For "wet areas" refer to Australian Standard AS 3470). The type of membrane used should be "impermeable to moisture".

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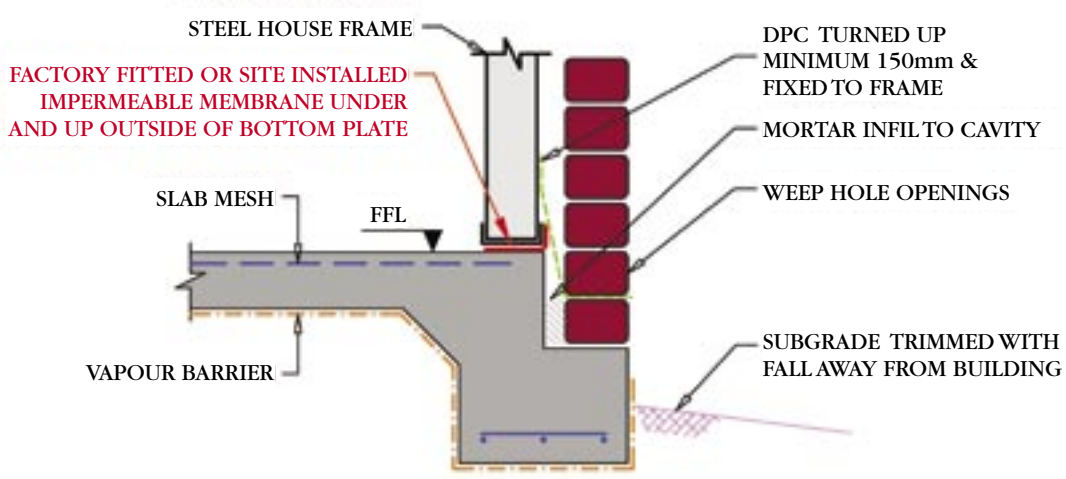
Figure 1: Deep Edge Rebates



PROPOSED REBATE SYSTEM

Note: Beam reinforcement shall be designed to suit soil classification.
Note: Termite management treatments have been omitted for clarity.

Suitable impervious membranes include:

- Bitustik by Grace Construction Products,
- Polyethylene and other products specified in BCA section Volume 2, 3.3.4.4
- Brushable Hydroseal from Tremco
- Kordon Termite Barrier (see manufacturer's specification for detail).

The protection of the weather side flange *(see Figure 1)* is necessary because this part of the frame is subject to moist air movement from the lower parts of the cavity as it tries to evaporate and move past the masonry damp-proof course.

Earth the Frame

For safety reasons, your house frame made from TRUECORE® steel should be temporarily earthed during erection. At the first opportunity your electrician should follow local electricity supply authority regulations and effectively earth the completed building frame via a connection to the main earth bar of the house switchboard.

Use Compatible Metals

Metals such as copper and lead are incompatible with framing components made from TRUECORE® steel and must not be used in direct contact with steel frame. (The use of incompatible materials will void your warranty. *See Corrosion Technical Bulletin CTB-12 - Dissimilar Metals for a complete list and explanation.*) Plumbing components should be isolated from frames or trusses using plastic or polymer grommets placed in pre-cut service holes in your wall frames.

Frames made from TRUECORE® steel should be isolated from contact with treated timber unless specific written advice has been obtained from your manufacturer.

ROOF TRUSSES

It is a condition of BlueScope Steel's warranty that roof trusses are completely enclosed within the building envelope, as described in the warranty terms and conditions. Building design should aim to minimise the ingress of any salt-laden, moist air. Avoid exposed eaves, creating an area of exposed but unwashed framing material *(see Corrosion Technical Bulletin CTB-8 - Building Applications).*

WALL INSULATION

House framing made from TRUECORE® steel offers many advantages, including tight dimensional tolerances, which can assist in achieving good insulation. One example of how tight tolerances can help is by reducing air leakage between the frame and insulating materials when heating a home in a cool climate.

Bulk insulation materials are commonly used with wall frames made from TRUECORE® steel. When insulating steel wall frames in cold climates or when building with cladding materials with low thermal resistance, such as metal, plastic or fibre-cement sheeting, rigid board or sheathing-type insulation products are recommended. These do not lose any of their insulating properties by being compressed into the cavity. If using bulk insulation with steel framing and lightweight cladding, batten the cladding out from the framing or use thin expanded polystyrene strips between the stud and the cladding. This will ensure good thermal performance and condensation control around the framing.

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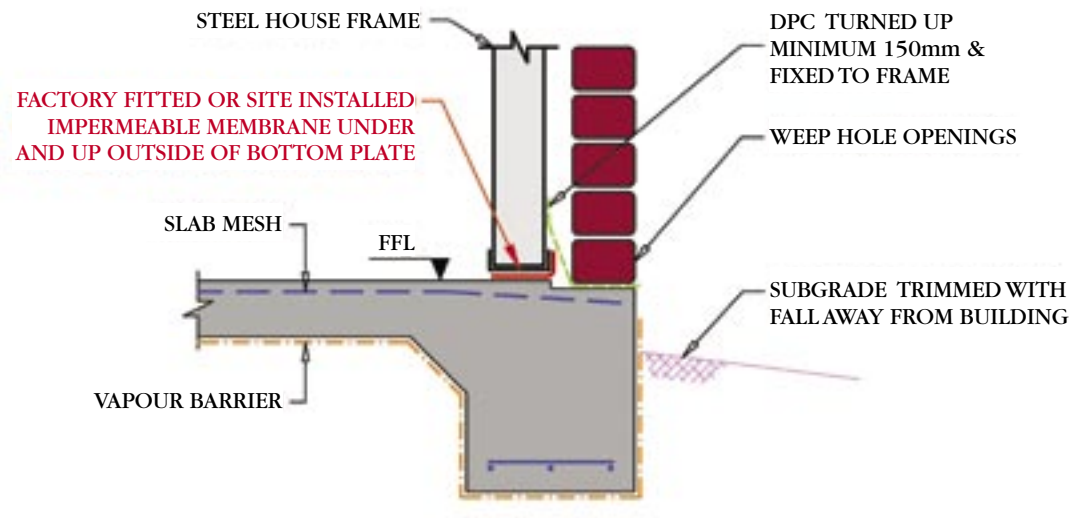
Figure 2: Shallow Edge Rebates



PROPOSED REBATE SYSTEM

Note: Beam reinforcement shall be designed to suit soil classification.
Note: Termite management treatments have been omitted for clarity.

WALL TIES

Sometimes a forgotten structural component, the choice of wall ties can be important to the structural performance of a building frame. Galvanized wall ties complying with AS 2699 are suitable for use with steel framing in most situations, although more durable ties may be needed within 1km from breaking surf and heavy industrial areas, refer BCA Volume 2, Table 3.3.3.1.

Polymer wall ties are now available and should provide good performance with a steel building frame in all environments.

Stainless steel wall ties, if used, must be insulated from the framing material to avoid the possibility of corrosion resulting from the use of incompatible dissimilar metals.

PHONE / RADIO RECEPTION

A steel frame should not affect your telephone, wireless computer network, radio or mobile phone or television reception.

NOISE

A study published by CSIRO has concluded that steel framed houses are no “noisier” than houses with other types of frames. Whether a steel frame is mechanically jointed or welded, movement caused by changes in temperature should not cause significant noise in a properly constructed and insulated home (Source: *NASH*).

FASTENERS

The correct choice of fastener is critical to long-term performance when fixing premium steel products. Fasteners used to fix your steel framing should conform to AS3566 Class 3 or better. Do not use stainless steel fasteners with steel framing.

LIGHTNING

As mentioned previously, steel frames are earthed and therefore this provides a direct path for the energy in the unlikely event of a lightning strike.

WARRANTY

A 50-year warranty is available on application for residential framing made from TRUECORE® steel erected greater than 300 metres from the high water mark of coastal water including breaking surf or greater than 100 metres from calm inland salt or brackish water. Warranties must be applied for prior to installation of TRUECORE® steel framing (subject to terms and conditions). If you have any questions regarding this bulletin and for a copy of the full Warranty terms and conditions please contact your local BlueScope Steel office or BlueScope Steel Direct on 1800 800 789 or visit www.truecore.com.au

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RELATED BLUESCOPE STEEL TECHNICAL BULLETINS:

Technical Bulletin TB-10 - Cut edge protection of zinc-coated and zinc/aluminium alloy coated steel.

Corrosion Technical Bulletin CTB-8 - Building Applications

Corrosion Technical Bulletin CTB-12 - Dissimilar Metals

Please ensure you have the current Technical Bulletin as displayed at www.bluescopesteel.com.au

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