Mr. Russell A. Walker  
President  
Ramco International  
P.O. Box 12747  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15241

Dear Mr. Walker:

Thank you for your letter of November 1, 1994, to Mr. Nicholas Artimovich of my office regarding Poly Lumber. Your letter transmitted static test data of Poly Lumber specimens compared with similar specimens of wood and other recycled plastic products. You submitted additional information regarding the tests on December 20, 1994. A summary of these test results, as certified by the United States Testing Company, Inc., is found below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average Test Results</th>
<th>Redwood</th>
<th>Treated Pine</th>
<th>Poly Lumber</th>
<th>Rec. Plastic*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compressive Strength</td>
<td>88,700 lbs</td>
<td>137,900 lbs</td>
<td>85,300 lbs</td>
<td>63,900 lbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[4x4] Maximum Flexure Load</td>
<td>5590 lbs</td>
<td>5490 lbs</td>
<td>2730 lbs</td>
<td>1730 lbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[4x4] Deflection at Max. Flexure</td>
<td>.69 in</td>
<td>.66 in</td>
<td>2.32 in</td>
<td>1.19 in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[6x6] Maximum Flexure Load</td>
<td>14,500 lbs</td>
<td>21,600 lbs</td>
<td>8,400 lbs</td>
<td>5,000 lbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[6x6] Deflection at Max. Flexure</td>
<td>.77 in</td>
<td>1.19 in</td>
<td>1.21 in</td>
<td>0.72 in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screw Withdrawal</td>
<td>1,100 lbs</td>
<td>900 lbs</td>
<td>1,680 lbs</td>
<td>1,440 lbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nail Withdrawal</td>
<td>230 lbs</td>
<td>218 lbs</td>
<td>215 lbs</td>
<td>234 lbs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Recycled Plastic with Wood Fibers.  
[4x4] and [6x6] refer to the actual size of the test specimens, namely 4 inches square and 6 inches square, respectively.  
SI Conversion: 1 in = 25.4 mm; 1 lb. force = 4.45 Newtons.
To date, we have found guardrail blockouts manufactured from steel, wood, recycled plastic, and recycled plastic with wood fibers, to be crashworthy when tested according to the National Cooperative Highway Research Program Report 350 Recommended Procedures for the Safety Performance Evaluation of Highway Safety Features. The information you supplied on the compressive strength and the maximum load under bending of Poly Lumber specimens indicates that Poly Lumber is at least comparable to recycled plastic with wood fibers and, based on past experience, that nominal 6-inch by 8-inch blockouts of Poly Lumber will perform satisfactorily if used with wood posts of a similar cross section. Therefore, nominal 6-inch by 8-inch Poly Lumber blockouts used with compatible wood posts will be acceptable for use on the National Highway System if proposed by a State. Additional information will be needed before we can extend acceptance to your company's blockouts for use with steel guardrail posts. The required information includes details on blockout geometry and how the blockouts will be fastened to the posts to prevent rotation.

We have not found any form of recycled or composite plastic materials to be acceptable for use as guardrail posts. Because the static bending test results of Poly Lumber are much lower than for wood, your company's material will not be acceptable as guardrail posts unless proven through full-scale crash testing.

We anticipate that the States will require certification from Ramco that the blockouts furnished have essentially the same composition and physical and mechanical properties as the material used in the static tests.

Because Poly Lumber is proprietary, to be used in a Federal-aid Highway Project: (a) it must be supplied through competitive bidding with equally suitable unpatented items; (b) the highway agency must certify that it is essential for synchronization with existing highway facilities or that no equally suitable alternative exists; or (c) it must be used for research or for a distinctive type of construction on relatively short sections of road for experimental purposes. Our regulations concerning proprietary products are contained in Title 23, Code of Federal Regulations, Section 635.411, a copy of which is enclosed.

Sincerely yours,

Jerry L. Poston, Chief
Federal-Aid and Design Division

Enclosure

Geometric and Roadside Design Acceptance Letter Number B-29
requests for waivers may be made for specific projects, or for certain materials or products in specific geographic areas, or for combinations of both, depending on the circumstances.

(4) The denial of the request by the FHWA may be appealed by the State to the Federal Highway Administrator (Administrator), whose action on the request shall be considered administratively final.

(5) A request for a waiver which involves nationwide public interest or availability issues or more than one FHWA region may be submitted by the FHWA to the Administrator for action.

(6) A request for waiver and an appeal from a denial of a request must include facts and justification to support the granting of the waiver. The FHWA response to a request or appeal will be in writing and made available to the public upon request. Any request for a nationwide waiver and FHWA’s action on such a request may be published in the Federal Register for public comment.

(7) In determining whether the waivers described in paragraph (c)(1) of this section will be granted, the FHWA will consider all appropriate factors, including but not limited to cost, administrative burden, and delay that would be imposed if the provision were not waived.

(d) Standard State and Federal-aid contract procedures may be used to ensure compliance with the requirements of this section.


8 365.41 Material or product selection.

(a) Federal funds shall not participate, directly or indirectly, in payment for any premium or royalty on any patented or proprietary material, specification, or process specifically set forth in the plans and specifications for a project, unless:

(1) Such patented or proprietary item is purchased or obtained through competitive bidding with equally suitable unpatented items.

(b) The State highway agency certifies that such patented or proprietary item is essential for synchronization with existing highway facilities, or that no equally suitable alternate exist; or

(c) Such patented or proprietary item is used for research or for a distinctive type of construction on relatively minor parts of road for experimental purposes.

(6) When there is available for purchase more than one unpatented, nonproprietary material or product that will fulfill the requirements for an item of work of a project and these available materials or products are judged to be of satisfactory quality and equally acceptable on the basis of engineering analysis and the anticipated prices for the related item(s) of work are estimated to be approximately the same, the PS&PE for the project shall either contain or include by reference the specifications for such material or product that is considered acceptable for incorporation in the work. If the State highway agency wishes to substitute some other acceptable material or product for the material or product designated by the successful bidder or bid as the lowest alternate, and such substitution results in an increase in costs, there will not be Federal-aid participation in any increase in costs.

(c) A State highway agency may require a specific material or product when there are other acceptable materials and products, and when such specific material or product is approved by the Division Administrator as being in the public interest. When the Division Administrator's approval is not obtained, the item will be nonparticipating unless bidding procedures are used that establish the unit price of each acceptable alternative. In this case Federal-aid participation will be based on the lowest price so established.

(d) Appendix A sets forth the FHWA requirements regarding (i) the specification of alternative types of culvert pipes, and (ii) the number and types of such alternatives which must be set forth in the specifications for various types of drainage inclusions.

(e) Reference in specifications and plans to single trade name materials will not be approved on Federal-aid contracts.

8 365.43 Guaranty and warranty clauses.

(a) Except as provided in paragraph (b) of this section, clauses that require the contractor to guarantee or warrant materials and workmanship or to otherwise maintain the work for a specified period after its satisfactory completion by the contractor and its final acceptance by the State, will not be approved for use in Federal-aid contracts. Work performed and materials replaced under such guaranty or warranty clauses after final acceptance of work are not eligible for Federal participation.

(b) Contracts which involve furnishing and/or installing electrical or mechanical equipment should generally include contract clauses that require:

(1) Manufacturer's warranties or guarantees on all electrical and mechanical equipment consistent with those provided as customary trade practice, or

(2) Contractors' warranties or guarantees for satisfactory in-service operation of the mechanical and electrical equipment and related components for a period not to exceed 6 months following project acceptance.

8 365.47 Convict produced materials.

(a) Materials produced by convict labor may only be incorporated in a Federal-aid highway construction project if such materials have been:

(1) Produced by convicts who are on parole, supervised release, or probation from a prison or

(2) Produced in a qualified prison facility and the cumulative annual production amount of such materials in any use in Federal-aid highway construction does not exceed the amount of such materials produced in such facility for use in Federal-aid highway construction during the 12-month period ending July 1, 1987.

(b) Qualified prison facility means any prison facility in which convicts,