

## Cascade to offer high-strength fabricated rebar

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NEW YORK — Cascade Steel Rolling Mills Inc. has signed a supply agreement with Precision Rebar & Accessories Inc. that will allow it to offer fabricated high-strength reinforcing bar to its customers.

McMinnville, Ore.-based Cascade's agreement with the Vancouver, Wash.-based fabrication shop applies strictly to the A615/100 and MMFX ChromX grades of fabricated rebar, the company said in a letter to customers.

“This agreement will greatly enhance Cascade Steel’s offerings by positioning us to provide fabricated high-strength rebar,” according to Cascade, a subsidiary of Portland, Ore.-based Schnitzer Steel Industries Inc.

Cascade will not bid, estimate or do detailing work, with Precision Rebar acting as a subcontractor to Cascade. Cascade does not plan to compete with rebar buyers by fabricating any types of rebar other than this limited high-strength niche product, company executives told AMM.

Many rebar fabricators face difficulties fabricating and storing high-strength rebar themselves despite growing demand for the high-strength construction product, Cascade president Jeff Dyck said. Equipment and inventory obstacles at fabricators drove demand for this partnership, he added.

“We’ve listened to a lot of customers’ concerns with respect to high-grade steel, with respect to their inventory, high costs with small volumes, and equipment issues,” Dyck said.

Buyers typically order much smaller volumes of high-strength rebar, and maintaining dual inventories and smoothly fabricating high-tensile strength steel can represent too much work for a small fabricator, he said. Unless fabrication equipment was bought in the past nine months, benders and shears were not built to handle steel with yield strengths above 100 kilopounds per square inch (ksi).

Target markets will range up and down the West Coast, from San Diego to Vancouver, British Columbia, although Cascade can also sell nationally.

It will take time for high-strength rebar to gain market share because the American Society for Testing and Materials A615/100 specification has only just been approved, so building codes often don’t explicitly recognize the material, Cascade general sales manager Larry Cummins said. “It’s going to be relatively small tons. ... It’s going to take a little while to get it into the marketplace.”

The development is emphatically not a first step toward Cascade transforming into a mill fabricator, like other steelmakers who sell their rebar to their own downstream fabrication shops, according to Cummins. “Nothing could be further from the truth,” he said.

Some of the popularity and demand behind high-strength rebar on the West Coast is due to two top rebar design engineers, based in Seattle, who have sparked local and regional interest, Cummins said. Cascade and other nearby West Coast mills have shown leadership in selling high-strength rebar, he added.

“The whole market is moving to higher strength. We’re doing more and more 75 (ksi) and 80 (ksi) grades every year. It’s becoming bigger in the mix,” he said.

Cascade has sold more than 80,000 tons of high-strength rebar to date since it began selling such steel more than a decade ago, according to Dyck.

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