



New Perma-Column technology eliminates rotting posts

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By Lura Roti, Reporter

After a tornado took out his more-than-a-century-old barn two years ago, Darwin Hoeck, Hills, Minn., was eager to replace it with a structure that would last another hundred years. When a neighbor told him about Perma-Column he decided to give the new technology a try in the pole barns he was planning to build.

"My neighbor brought a brochure on Perma-Column back from Dakotafest," said Hoeck, a third generation farmer. "I guess you could say he pushed me into it, but I was also interested in how it prevented wood rot."

Perma-Column is an innovative and simple solution to wood rot in post-frame buildings.

"We have not changed the construction of the post-frame buildings," said Phil Ehnle, operations for Perma-Column, Peoria, Ill. "We have eliminated the bottom five feet that is susceptible to rot by eliminating the treated wood post and replacing it with concrete."

Made of 10,000 pounds per square inch (psi) pre-cast concrete, Perma-Columns have a lifetime guarantee. Inside the pre-cast poles are four weldable rebar rods. These rods are welded to a steel powder-coated "U" connection bracket that the wood columns are then bolted into. According to Ehnle, the "U" connection technology has been approved by engineers at Purdue University and University of Wisconsin.

Once Perma-Columns are ordered, Perma-Column Inc. provides everything needed for on-site assembly. Hoeck's builder, Gregg Beldin says that Perma-Column makes a lot of sense.

"With the new ways that they are treating wood I do not have faith that a regular post building will last more than 10 to 15 years, especially if it houses cattle and is exposed to manure or in a wet environment," said Beldin, owner of Gregg Beldin Construction, Larchwood, Iowa. "If you are going to put money into a new building why put wood into the ground, especially if you know it is in a wet environment."

Hoeck had Beldin and his son Justin build two 35-foot-by-56-foot pole barns, one for his machinery and one for his cattle. Beldin says that using Perma-Column in construction of the pole barn was not difficult, in fact, he says that in some ways it made construction of the buildings easier.

"I liked working with it because you only had 5-foot posts to secure in the ground and level instead of dealing with the entire column," Beldin said. "The only difference I saw was that the bottom board is secured to the concrete using a hammer drill and stainless steel pins."

Perma-Column technology was first made available six years ago and is just recently being used in the region. Hoeck's buildings were the second built in the area using this technology. Perma-Column posts cost about \$60 each. Using this technology is about a third of the cost of a concrete foundation.



Producer Darwin Hoeck is pleased with the results of Perma-Column. He is pictured in his new pole barn with builders Gregg and Justin Beldin. Tri-State Neighbor photo by Lura Roti

Beldin says that when you consider that you then purchase shorter wood columns, using this new technology is not much more expensive, especially when you consider that you do not need to pour concrete.

"After I built Darwin's barns, a friend called me. He had just dug the holes for a building in Larchwood, Iowa, and they filled with water. He wanted to know what he should do with the standing water," Beldin said. "I suggested using Perma-Columns. This was a lot less expensive than filling the holes with concrete and the wood would have just rotted at the base of the concrete anyway."

To learn more about Perma-Column, go online to www.permacolumn.com.

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