

Setting the Standards for Rack Storage



RMI develops specifications and guidelines that improve the performance and safety of rack storage systems.

The Rack Manufacturers Institute (RMI) celebrated its 50th anniversary back in 2008, but the organization has not been content to rest upon five decades of achievement. RMI's 22 members—the companies that produce most of industrial storage racks installed in the U.S.—continue to work hard to improve their industry through research, consensus building and education.

RMI is an affiliated trade association of MHI and is the American National Standards Institute (ANSI)-accredited developer of product and safety standards for U.S. industrial steel storage racks and welded wire rack decking. RMI representatives sit on a number of code and fire safety bodies and contribute to discussions about changes

in building codes. They produce educational resources for purchasers and users of rack storage systems.

But RMI may be best known in the material handling industry for its creation of the R-Mark Certification Program in 1999. Under the program, which RMI continues to administer, manufacturers submit data and testing information about their rack systems to qualified independent engineers for their review and approval. Rack systems that meet the current ANSI specifications (ANSI MH 16.1-2012) receive the R-Mark certification.

“RMI puts safety protocols in place so



that everybody who is manufacturing for the U.S. is playing according to the same rules,” said Jeff Woroniecki, RMI managing executive. “The R-Mark certification has really taken effect because there are lots of customers out there—especially the big box retailers—who will mandate that they have to have R-Mark designed racking systems. It gives those companies peace of mind and also lets the manufacturers know that if they’re going to play in this arena they have to go out and get certified.”

All RMI members have voluntarily agreed to be guided by the relevant RMI/ANSI standards and to participate in the R-Mark Certification Program.

Guidelines and specifications

RMI's specifications advisory committee reviews various documents, guidelines and specifications before presenting them to the general membership. Those members approve, disapprove or direct further action on the technical committee's recommendations.

One of RMI's current activities is the development of a specification for cantilever storage systems, something that has not previously existed. The specification has been a work in progress for about a decade, according to Dave Olson, national sales manager at Ridg-U-Rack and previous president of RMI.

“It's another type of storage system and different enough that the RMI pallet rack specification does not apply,” said Olson. “Getting to the first draft is always tough, but we're getting close, reviewing that first draft right now.” The new cantilever rack standards could be voted on by the entire membership and receive final approval by the end of 2014.

RMI also produces guidelines that represent industry consensus on other topics related to rack storage systems. Last year RMI published *Considerations for the Planning and Use of Industrial*



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Steel Storage Racks, a complete guide for purchasers of rack storage systems. It provides information on topics ranging from system planning and design to using installed racks properly and safely.

RMI’s most recent publication—released at the MODEX show in March—is *Guidelines for the Assessment and Repair or Replacement of Damaged Racks*.

“This is something that the community was really calling for,” said Stephen Rogers, vice president at Hannibal Industries Inc. and current RMI president. “It’s an all-encompassing document that covers how end users can tell what the damage is and what they need to do to repair or replace a damaged rack. The material handling world will benefit greatly from having it.”

Sharing the knowledge

Rogers believes that RMI has three main purposes. “First are our standards,” he said. “We work within the building code-writing community to have a seat at the table. When they’re discussing possible changes in the code we want to be part of the discussion and add what we know.”

Working within the academic community is important as well. “We want to inspire interest in what we do so that we can ensure the future of the organization going forward,” Rogers said. MHI works with organizations like the College Industry Council on Material Handling Education and sponsors scholarships for students to promote interest in material handling careers.

“RMI also wants to be the go-to resource for education in the material handling industry,” said Rogers. “We want to educate people in the proper usage of our products after the initial design and construction is complete. We know in the real world that people

do things with our products that maybe they should not be doing; we have to educate them about that.”

RMI shares many educational resources on its website at mhi.org/

rmi. It offers its current specifications and guidelines for sale, and provides a Q&A section that offers both basic and technical information for rack users. In addition, RMI reaches out to other agencies such as the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) with information about rack design, damage and safety.

“MHI is reconfiguring how it works, with a goal of becoming more of a resource for end users,” said Rogers. “I think RMI is going to play a very important role in that.”

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