

# 8 Reasons Why GCs like Precast Concrete

Successful general contractors prefer precast to minimize headaches on the job.

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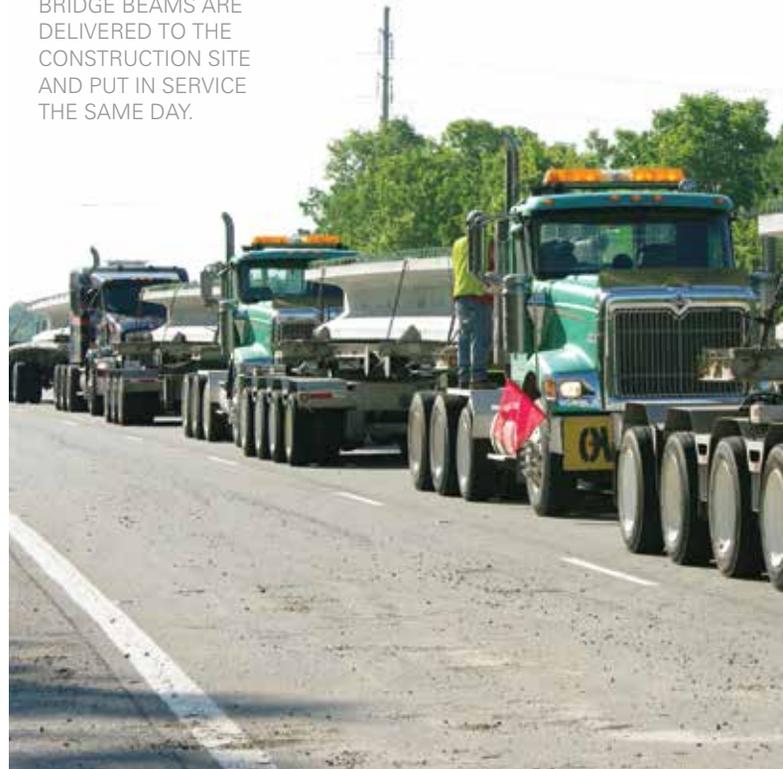
It's a constant challenge for producers to convince specifiers of the advantages of precast. General contractors work with all types of construction materials, but the reality is that they often propose – and prefer – precast concrete solutions based on their own experience with successful jobs. What keeps general contractors coming back to precast concrete? Hear it straight from them, and add these bullets as ammunition to your sales and marketing pitch.

## Where's the laydown yard?

Whether GCs are working in downtown Chicago or repairing existing facilities in the suburbs, adequate space for equipment and material storage is a must. Enough maneuvering room for large cranes and delivery flatbeds is always one of the contractor's first questions. Materials for a GC's initial tasks – work trailer siting, power access connections and excavation – require securable, safe space at the work site. Then there are space demands for steel, wood, bricks, saws, welding and fabricating machines, pipe, backfill materials, mobile cranes, man lifts, tarps for rain and space heaters for the cold. The list goes on, and we haven't even mentioned critical items like parking space for workers and the ubiquitous (and seldom leveled) porta-potties. Everything must be easily accessible to workers, yet it cannot interfere with construction activities.

Now let's compare the space required for precast concrete erection. Structural and architectural precast products are typically hoisted directly from the transport truck by crane or forklift and set into final position ready for service, thus eliminating the need for on-site laydown areas. That's one less problem for the GC.

PRECAST CONCRETE BRIDGE BEAMS ARE DELIVERED TO THE CONSTRUCTION SITE AND PUT IN SERVICE THE SAME DAY.



## Who's going to haul this junk to the dump?

GCs struggle to remove mountains of waste material and debris from construction sites. On large projects, pouring concrete on site can create heaps of formwork waste that must be hauled away. Not so with precast concrete – it is fabricated off site. Just-in-time finished product delivery goes hand-in-hand with minimizing site impacts. No on-site storage equals less site impact. Two more labor-intensive and potentially contract-bending issues solved for the GC.

## Several trades in small spaces: safety concerns

On a fast-paced project, construction sites can become overly crowded with multiple subcontractors vying for the same workspace. This worker congestion can create an environment less than conducive to safety. OSHA statistics tell us that whether on site or in a precast plant, construction workers are at a high risk for injury and even death. So how does precast concrete reduce on-site safety risks?

Precast building systems can be installed by a relatively small crew in a timely manner. Since the product is manufactured off site and installed quickly, there are fewer workers to bump into each other at the construction site. Intentionally or unintentionally, precasters take some of the worker-safety liability away from general contractors thanks to off-site production – a fourth avoided migraine for the GC.

**“The No. 1 reason is efficiency. In construction, time is money, and precast concrete saves time, saves labor and saves money.”**

– **Scott Sweeney, vice president, Gradex Inc.**  
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NPCA file photo

**“It’s easy to install. We can install a 200-ft run in two days instead of two weeks.”**

– **Dave Hardin, executive vice president and chief engineer, Gohmann Asphalt and Construction Inc.**  
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job-site meetings, asking the owner and general contractor if there are any issues. In fact, some precasters today are using the same project management software as the GCs who are running the projects. Voila! Smooth supplier coordination and logistics, good communication and product service (like a thorny connection problem solved by the precast engineer): a GC’s dream – advantage six.

**Wind, rain and cold: no friends of the GC**

A general contractor’s greatest nemesis is the weather. It is uncontrollable and can completely ruin a project schedule. Since a big part of being a general contractor is managing risk, it makes a lot of sense to eliminate some of the uncertainty about meeting the schedule. Precast concrete virtually eliminates weather-related construction delays. Again, depending on the project, contractors may choose precast concrete over cast-in-place concrete to reduce some of the risks to their project schedule – the seventh incentive to stick with precast.

**“Buy America” and supporting local jobs**

These days, construction materials are manufactured just about everywhere. Materials can be shipped across land and sea in a matter of weeks or even days. Employing local manufacturers and supporting local job creation matters to most GCs. Moreover, there is something to be said for a GC or owner who can get in his car and drive to the precast plant to take a look at a product being manufactured for his project.

This industry access is an intangible benefit that precasters offer to contractors, engineers and architects. This often overlooked perk should be used to the precaster’s advantage whenever possible, as few competing products can offer the same insight to project principals. Consider it the eighth reason why GCs like precast

**Final thoughts**

All of these reasons to use precast are no-brainers for plant owners and their sales teams, but that’s exactly why they bear repeating. It’s easy to forget that the general contractors you’re selling your product to don’t know everything you know about the advantages of precast. And even if they do, it doesn’t hurt to remind them. Rather than assuming or taking for granted that these advantages are common sense, share them often. ■

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**“Another advantage is that you reduce the site impact by not having to provide a level area for forms, reinforcing and truck washout.”**

– **Mike Jaskela, sales manager, Rieth-Riley**  
*Mjaskela@rieth-riley.com*

**“Time is money” – overused expression, but still true**

The use of precast concrete means there is no schedule delay or waiting around while cast-in-place concrete cures and gains strength. Precast can be delivered to the site, installed and put in service on the same day. For transportation projects, the use of precast concrete paving slabs or infrastructure products means that traffic can be reopened just a few hours after installation. Angry complaints about extended road closures from the driving public and businesses are minimized. In construction, time is money, so being able to complete projects faster can mean incentive pay and more profit for general contractors. No project delays and more profit = the fifth (and maybe the best) part for GCs.

**How do I fix this fast?**

Many precasters pride themselves on providing a high level of service along with their high-quality products. An overriding mantra heard throughout the industry is that producers want to “make it right” on every contract. This means not cutting corners and fixing problems the way they are supposed to be fixed.

Depending on the size of the precast operation and the type of products manufactured, precasters may designate a project manager to see projects through from the time they hit the production line and through to installation and service. Precast project managers or customer representatives will often attend