

Filling in the voids

Volume #8

Jobsite Access

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CORESLAB[®]
STRUCTURES
(ORLANDO) INC.

11041 Rocket Blvd., Orlando, FL 32824
Ph: (407) 855-3190 Fax: (407) 855-6870
www.coreslab.com

One of the biggest and most common obstacles we encounter on project sites is accessing the structure. That may sound funny you might be thinking 'there's the building, go to work' or 'what do you mean "access", you have permission and, after all, there are no doors on the building so help yourself' but that's not what we're referring to.

Let's try this... *all-weather, stabilized, firm, level and unobstructed roadway permitting suitable access so trucks and cranes can move under their own power to various points of erection...* we'll break this down later, but for now what we're talking about is getting the men, materials, and their equipment where they need to go along with a suitable base, or bases, for the crane.

We've put together a list of the top five excuses offered for not providing suitable access and crane pads for precast erection and the reasons why each has little merit.

1. *We've had all kinds of deliveries and nobody else has gotten stuck.* This is the most commonly used line. Aside from the site contractors equipment and ready-mix and block delivery trucks (most of which are all-wheel drive), the precast erectors crane and manufacturer's trucks are among the major deliveries that will arrive at any jobsite. They are most likely the heaviest single members, or groups of members, and since the bulk of the trip to the site takes place on paved roads, the delivery trucks are over-the-road haulers. And while the crane itself might (emphasize might) be able to get into position, it's counter-weight delivery, not to mention the loads of precast material themselves, may not be able to get to it so therefore it's pointless. They can and will get stuck on your site unless you take some friendly advice.
2. *Don't worry, we'll have the site contractor here and he'll get you in and out even if he has to pull you where you need to go.* If that's your idea of a good solution, perhaps you can talk the site contractor into transporting the precast to the site and then he can pull his own equipment where it needs to go. We doubt he'll take you up on that offer. Turn that around and you can see why the trucking company doesn't want to have their vehicles pulled around either. Closely akin to this one is an offer to 're-dress' the access as needed or between loads. That almost universally makes it worse creating a muddy ditch in the process. If the site contractor is there anyway, pay them to bring in and place some decent material and be done with it.
3. *I'll wet it down and roll it. It'll be fine.* This has about the same chance of success as forgetting your wedding anniversary. Considering that a single typical semi load of precast is about 40-45 tons, combined with between 10 and 15 loads on the average deck, then add to that for jobs with multiple floors, phases, or mobilizations and you should be able to see why hosing down and rolling the type of sandy soil we have in Florida will never work.
4. *We don't have any money in the budget for temporary roads, crane pads or stabilization.* Honestly the cost of adequate stabilization is quite a bit cheaper than the alternative. When

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you add together charges for return loads, demobilization, remobilization, and redelivery, you can't afford not to make it right from the beginning. After all that you'll end up having to provide it anyway to schedule redelivery as the erector won't confirm moving back in without it.

5. *It is what it is.* The ultimate lazy and uninformed response. And it may be the case in the view of an overworked superintendent. Nevertheless, his or her project will end up having to be put on hold until it becomes what it should be...what it needs to be. Nobody wants to have their job held up over something like poor access, and no precaster relishes having to do so. But considering that attempting to mobilize with bad access cost's both time and money, time alone is the cheapest option for everybody.

So let's break down that statement from above:

<i>...all-weather...:</i>	Rain shouldn't wash it out and it shouldn't crumble under dry conditions. All-weather means just that.
<i>...stabilized, firm, level...:</i>	The stabilization needs to have depth and be much more than just a surface treatment. It should also be well compacted, reasonably level, and you should have a plan to maintain it. Turning over a crane or load of precast can change an inconvenience into a nightmare.
<i>...unobstructed roadway...:</i>	No low hanging tree limbs, wires, streetlights, no ditches, stored building materials, scaffolding, vehicles, etc., and it should be easily recognizable as a 'road' not a path or muddy track.
<i>...so trucks and crane can move under their own power to various points of erection...:</i>	No pushing, pulling, dragging, etc. to get vehicles in, out, or to various points of erection (where they need to get to where they must perform their work) under their own power.

Your precast manufacturer really does want to help you get your project built and many have field services personnel or subcontract erectors that would be glad to meet with you so that the access you plan to build will match their requirements. Nobody wants to see you do more work or spend more money than you need, and we really think open communication is mutually beneficial. A huge added plus is that your new stabilized roadway can be used by all your subs making their crews more efficient as well.