

From FastEST, Inc.

We are quickly approaching the completion of the FastDUCT Sheet Metal Estimating program. I know many of you have been patiently waiting for our sheet metal program, which should resemble FastPIPE in its look and feel. Our aim is to provide a program that will be familiar to FastPIPE users, yet versatile enough to handle the different issues faced in sheet metal estimating.

The program and its database will be flexible enough to provide contractors with choices to match their company's standards for doing sheet metal work. For example, Spec setup for straight duct will allow for coil line, hand layout, or purchased ductwork.

FastDUCT will have the capability of doing takeoffs of oval, round, and rectangular HVAC or industrial ductwork. Duct takeoff will automatically calculate hangers, joint materials, duct liner or insulation, stiffeners, and tie-rods.

The first release of FastDUCT should be out before the summer is over. For a sneak preview of the program, call us and we can show you the program over the internet.

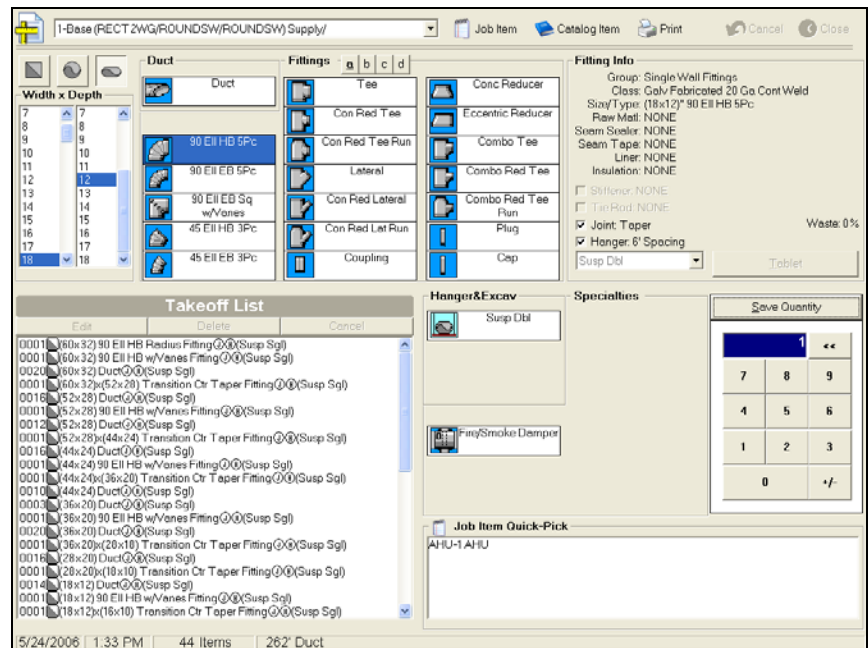
If you have any suggestions for the newsletter, call me toll-free at 800-828-7108, or send an e-mail to mark.oxler@fastest-inc.com.

Thank you,



Mark Oxler, President

Transition to FastDUCT Sheet Metal Program should be easy for FastPIPE Users



The FastDUCT takeoff screen should look familiar to FastPIPE users. Icons above the size selection allow the user to toggle between Rectangular, Round, and Oval systems.

FAST DUCT

If one thing is apparent to FastPIPE users upon viewing the FastDUCT Sheet Metal Estimating program, the two programs are very similar. This is no accident. We have tried to maintain the look and feel of FastPIPE in the development and design of FastDUCT, because our customers have indicated that it's among our strengths.

The Spec setup allows for catalog selection of duct, fittings, liner, joints, stiffeners, tie-rods, and specialties for Rectangular, Round, or Oval ductwork. Selecting size ranges is very similar to FastPIPE.

The Takeoff screen (shown above) operates very similarly to the FastPIPE takeoff screen. Three icons allow the user to toggle between Rectangular, Round, and Oval Specs within a single takeoff section. An extra size selector will appear for Rectangular and Oval takeoff to allow for selection of width and depth. Duct liner, joints, hangers, stiffeners, and tie-rods will be automatically generated (when specified) during ductwork takeoff.

Release of FastDUCT is coming this summer.

Keeping up with Changing Material Prices

I was a mechanical estimator for twenty years in the commercial market. Back in 1981, the company where I worked used a rate of \$.36 per pound for galvanized sheet metal. For those twenty years a contractor could have used the same rate and been pretty close to the market price.

In the three years since I moved out of the world of contracting, prices of steel, copper, and plastics, have risen like never before seen in modern times. I received an e-mail awhile back that showed the list price of 1/2" Type copper tube changing 12 times from January 2005 through April 2006. It more than doubled over that period, changing from \$1.61 to \$3.38! Copper fittings, steel pipe, and plastic products are also rising faster than in previous years.

This presents a new challenge for contractors, who need to be on top of their material pricing. I would make a couple of recommendations.

1. **Get up to the date material pricing when bidding your jobs.** Word does not often get to contractors soon enough about price increases, especially if they sit back and wait to hear from suppliers. Using FastPIPE's Material Detail Cost Report with Blanks instead of prices, you can quickly generate a bill of materials and send it to your suppliers for pricing. This can be done for the entire bill of materials or for the material groups, which make up the large portions of the cost of the materials on a job. The quoted prices from the suppliers can then be compared to your FastPIPE's net prices and the multipliers can be adjusted accordingly.
2. **Build material escalation into your pricing.** As mentioned above, during my estimating career prices didn't change that drastically. Since the duration of most projects does not span a long period, contractors haven't been in the habit of addressing material escalation on their estimates. This practice went by the wayside for many during the 1980's when pricing stabilized and markets became very competitive. You can add a value for material escalation to your recap sheet or add a value to each multiplier as you adjust your materials pricing you receive from your suppliers.

One way to keep your catalog updated with manufacturers' list pricing is through the pricing services offered by Harrison Publishing House's e-Office program. They are in the business of keeping on top of manufacturers' pricing for our industry. They produce updates, which are formatted for FastPIPE and can be loaded into your FastPIPE Master Catalog. They periodically (every two or three weeks) will post an update for FastPIPE users. The e-Office program also includes a feature which allows you to produce specific manufacturer updates. If you hear Mueller copper tube has had an increase, you can quickly create an update to your FastPIPE catalog, so that your list prices will match the prices your local suppliers are using. Call us if you are interested in finding out more about Harrison Publishing House.

New FastPIPE Customers

Paul S. Yoney, Inc. Bridgeport, CT	Critical Care Plbg & Htg Services Biddeford, ME	Now Plumbing Mableton, GA
Weber Plumbing & Heating, Inc. Mankato, MN	All Property Services Signal Hill, CA	MetroCorp Plumbing, Inc. Howell, NJ
E. L. Plumbing & Mechanical, Inc. Detroit, MI	MEC Services Garrison, ND	The Water Works of Tampa Bay Ruskin, FL
A & E Plumbing Overland Park, KS	Triton Plumbing & Mechanical Kelso, WA	Heritage Plumbing Co. Hoffman Estates, IL
Signature Mechanical Minneapolis, MN	Herlocker Mechanical Systems Pineville, NC	Hurley Plumbing, Inc. Casper, WY
J. Marks Plumbing, Inc. Fort Myers, FL	A & S Plumbing Watertown, WI	Wayne Plumbing Installations, Inc. Milford, IN
Eagleview Construction, LLC Orem, UT	Faithful & Gould Boston, MA	Crown Services Shawnee, KS