Electronic Steel Inquiry

Overview

The Electronic Steel Inquiry (ESI) standard is a data standard for the structural steel fabrication industry allowing buyers to make pricing inquiries to steel suppliers. The purpose of the RFQ standard is to present a common data format for steel buyers to send “request for quote” material lists to steel suppliers. The data format is XML and the current method of transmittal is as an e-mail attachment. The standard is being developed with over-site from the American Institute of Steel Construction therefore the product emphasis is on steel for use in structural steel buildings but could be used for other steel industries.

The advantage for the steel supplier is that a quote request will be received in a standard electronic format that can be imported into their software. The received data will include date quote required, date(s) delivery required, purpose of the quote (estimate, purchase, etc.), contact information and the materials list in a standard and consistent format along with other necessary information. The standard allows for lists of required finish sizes where nesting of the materials is required or the quote request can be for standard stock sizes. In either case, re-keying of the material list (along with data entry errors) would be eliminated.

In addition to the contact information, etc. each RFQ will include “Purpose of Inquiry” – either:

ESTIMATE
PURCHASE
AVAILABILITY

For each product in the material list, the request will be to “Furnish” either:

STOCK SIZES FOR BUYER CUTTING – normally, a list of available lengths with cutting instructions would be supplied when this option is requested.

CUT TO SIZE – the supplier would quote cut to size material with the supplier retaining drops or remnants.

CUT TO SIZE WITH REMNANTS – the supplier would quote cut to size material and send remnants to the buyer.

STOCK SIZES – supply specified stock sizes without cutting.

The standard is intended to enforce a strict format for descriptions and sizes so the supplier does not have to deal with trying to decipher non standard

descriptions or have to guess as to weather a dimension is in decimal feet or decimal inches. The burden would be on the buyer and the buyer's software to accurately describe the products and sizes. Currently, the standard covers steel products including structural shapes, angle, flat bar, round and hex bar, square and rectangular tube, round tube, structural pipe, schedule pipe, plate, sheet and floor plate.

A beta version of the Romac Nesting Data Import program is available to import XML ESI data and other data formats. The imported data can then be converted to files that are compatible with Romac Length Nesting 2.0 and Romac Plate Nesting 2.0. The beta program can be downloaded from www.romacinc.com. Additionally, Romac Computer Services is developing a module that will create the XML ESI file from Excel, text, Kiss and selected other file formats.

Fabtrol Systems has a program that will create the XML ESI file.

The ESI standard is available for anyone to integrate the data exchange format into their application or to develop a software application around the standard.