



Frequently Asked Questions

ITI Benchmark BIM Training Software

BENCHMARK
BUILDING INFORMATION MODELING SOFTWARE
"From Concept to Completion"

1. WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF THE BENCHMARK BIM TRAINING SOFTWARE PROGRAM? WHY DID YOU DEVELOP YOUR OWN SOFTWARE PROGRAM INSTEAD OF COLLABORATING WITH EXISTING VENDORS?

In January of 2004 the ITI decided to set up a joint task force to develop detailing training with SMACNA contractors. The task force first met in May of 2004 and agreed that detailing and Building Information Modeling (BIM) were fast-emerging markets and that a curriculum needed to be created to help the industry stay current. Collaboration with an existing vendor was discussed but the task force concluded that this was the wrong way to go. During the discussions, they determined that all of the existing commercial 3D modeling software was limited in scope. While most allowed detailing and downloading (and at least one included estimation), none offered the full package of true BIM functionality. The task force decided that this lack of comprehensive focus would lead to disjointed training. For example, the field tracking software currently available does not communicate with the 3D modeling and downloading software. Creating the Benchmark software enabled the training to be seamless, while encompassing the totality of the BIM industry in an economical way. Furthermore, the training that the member receives using the Benchmark software is easily portable to software that a contractor may be using, thereby greatly reducing the learning curve.

2. IS THE BENCHMARK SOFTWARE SOLELY A JATC TRAINING TOOL OR A STAND ALONE SOFTWARE PACKAGE AND IF BOTH, EXPLAIN THE DISTINCTIONS?

Benchmark is a unionized industry training tool. As such, it is utilized by JATCs to provide a solid educational foundation for SMWIA members, allowing them to continue learning at their place of employment. The ITI encourages members to utilize any and all ITI training materials at their place of employment. There is essentially no difference between a member using an ITI textbook, calculator, or the Benchmark software at the employer's workplace. It all falls under the category of on-the-job training.

3. IS THE BENCHMARK SOFTWARE OUTPUT COMPATIBLE WITH EXISTING INDUSTRY SOFTWARE (REVIT, AUTOCAD, NAVISWORKS, ETC.)? IS IT COMPATIBLE WITH THE INDUSTRY FOUNDATION CLASSES (IFC'S)? IF NOT IFC, WHAT OTHER OPEN PLATFORM HAS THE BENCHMARK SOFTWARE ADOPTED?

Benchmark is compatible with IFC's and will soon be applying for IFC certification. This being the case, Benchmark is compatible with Revit, Navisworks and AutoCAD. This is the current state of the art, and Benchmark meets these needs.

4. IN ADDITION TO BASIC DETAILING, WHAT CURRENT/FUTURE MODULES/COMPONENTS ARE CONTAINED IN THE BENCHMARK SOFTWARE?

The current modules are: Detailing, Fabrication, Fitting Input, Project Management, Estimation, Shop Foreman, Field Foreman and Land Based Positioning (LBP) Technician (Total Station). Commissioning (TAB) is scheduled for future release.



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5. HOW WOULD A SMACNA CONTRACTOR OBTAIN ACCESS TO THE BENCHMARK SOFTWARE? WOULD THE SMACNA CONTRACTOR HOLD THE LICENSE TO THIS SOFTWARE?

The SMACNA contractor can access Benchmark when an SMWIA member who is ITI certified to use Benchmark is hired by the contractor. The ITI owns the software and can legally only license Benchmark to an SMWIA member. Unless the SMACNA contractor is an owner/member and is ITI certified, the ITI cannot license Benchmark to the SMACNA contractor.

6. IF THE BENCHMARK SOFTWARE IS LICENSED ONLY TO A CERTIFIED SHEET METAL WORKER, WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THAT PERSON LEAVES A COMPANY? HOW DOES THE SMACNA CONTRACTOR ACCESS HIS DATA FOR THE DRAWINGS AND CAN THAT DATA THEN BE MODIFIED OR IMPORTED INTO OTHER INDUSTRY SOFTWARE PACKAGES? WHAT IS THE PROGRAM'S FILE FORMAT FOR DRAWINGS?

Everything created with Benchmark is in a standard file format. For example, Benchmark uses AutoCAD and therefore the shop drawings are created as a .dwg file format. Reports are created as .pdf or .doc file formats. All of these are stored where the contractor chooses and they are fully accessible by anyone in the company. Only the software functionality leaves when the employee leaves.

7. IF THE BENCHMARK SOFTWARE IS NOT LICENSED TO THE SMACNA CONTRACTOR, THEN WHO HOLDS THE LICENSE AND HOW IS THE SMACNA CONTRACTOR PROTECTED? HOW IS THE WORK HE DEVELOPS WITH THE SOFTWARE PROTECTED FOR HIS COMPANY USE/ACCESS?

Although Benchmark is licensed to the SMWIA member, the SMACNA contractor is well-protected. First, it is illegal for a member to steal from the employer. The only item licensed to the member is the software. The employer owns everything created with the software. It is no different than ductwork that is created by the member. The member cannot take the ductwork without risk of prosecution. Second, as a condition of certification, the ITI requires each member to agree to make every effort to ensure that the contractor realizes his investment. Should the member fail to comply with this condition, he is at risk of losing his certification and his Benchmark license. All violations are subject to review by the ITI trustees which has equal representation from SMACNA and the SMWIA. Finally, when a member voluntarily leaves a company or is forced to leave, the company has the freedom to decide whether or not to uninstall the software. When members leave, they take the licensing with them; the software can remain on the system and when a new member is hired, that member would only need to license the software.

8. WHY USE BENCHMARK SOFTWARE IN LIEU OF OTHER INDUSTRY SOFTWARE PACKAGES?

Benchmark currently offers the user the ability to perform all of the functions that are commercially available, including new modules that are only available from the Benchmark software. The member who is certified to use Benchmark is fully trained to operate it. Finally, Benchmark provides economic benefits in that it is provided to the contractor at no cost through an ITI-certified SMWIA member.

9. WHAT SUPPORT FUNCTIONS FOR THE BENCHMARK SOFTWARE DOES THE ITI HAVE IN PLACE NOW AND FOR THE LONG-TERM FUTURE TO MAINTAIN ITS RELEVANCE TO THE SMACNA CONTRACTOR? HOW MANY SHEET METAL WORKERS ARE CURRENTLY CERTIFIED TO USE THE BENCHMARK SOFTWARE?

The ITI has fully dedicated itself to supporting the Benchmark software. The ITI maintains a help desk of dedicated programmers ready to provide telephone and web-based support, based on a "triage" timeline for addressing mission-critical issues and enhancement requests. There is also a BIM team available 24/7. The ITI's service has received high praise from those who use the software. Also, the ITI will add support staff as the demand for support grows. We know that if a contractor's software isn't operating that the contractor is not being competitive. This is a serious issue that the ITI is fully committed to address.

There are more than 434 certified members, with the number growing weekly.

10. HOW MANY SMACNA CONTRACTORS ARE CURRENTLY UTILIZING BENCHMARK SOFTWARE?

There are 65 contractors who use Benchmark as a tool at their companies, with the number growing weekly.



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