

Standards #1

Welcome to the first of which I hope to be many of the CADNET Corner articles. The purpose of this article is to give you everyday tips and tricks (and even some training) that you can use everyday and help to make your CAD software a more productive tool for you.

I will start this off with a simple theme about standards. Standards are the first step to having a successful and profitable CAD tool. As most people know, CAD has made the life of a drafter much easier. If not in the original drafting, certainly in the revision stage. In order for the CAD experience to be painless, a set of standards needs to be developed, distributed and most importantly adhered to. In this instance, one bad apple can spoil the whole bunch.

When a drafting or design department standardizes on something as simple as a set of layers, even one person deviating from that standard can cause many problems. First off, the next person to work on that project is confused as to what they are looking at. The next step is lost productivity in converting the non-standard drawing to company standards, and then the actual work takes place. On a small drawing or project this may be only a couple hours wasted. On a large project or one containing many drawings, this can wipeout the budget.

The first thing a CAD department needs to do, regardless of what CAD system they use, is to create a set of standards. This can be as simple as some lists of layers, linetypes, symbols, etc. Or it may be complex including file naming conventions, procedures for creating new drawings and projects, or file management. Some of these standards may carry over into other parts of your company. A good example is the survey field crew. The standards should contain the descriptions and description keys that are being used in the field. This would eliminate some of the need for questioning the field crew as to what a particular shot is supposed to represent. As with most standards in Land Desktop, these description keys can be set to be used automatically on each and every project.

With AutoCAD 2002 we now have a built in program for standards use. You can create a set of drawing standards and ensure that all future drawings meet those standards. The program is CAD Standards. CAD Standards is actually a very simple routine to use. All you need is a drawing that has all the elements you would like to have in all drawings, layers, linetypes etc. From that drawing you will create a standards file. You can then compare new drawings to the standards file and make any changes that need to be made. CAD Standards is located on the Tools menu of AutoCAD 2002. You will also find it in Land Desktop 3.

This is a great way for CAD Mangers and drafters to check that all drawings look and act the same for all users. CAD managers can perform a batch CAD standard audit for all drawings in a project and create a report identifying any inconsistencies. It can also ensure that each plotted drawing looks similar to another. Years ago, before CAD, most plans clearly identified the company it came from. With CAD, the ability to create new layers, colors, and linetypes is so easy, that plans can look different from desk to desk within a company. Creating company standards can help to make all plans look the same.

Another standard to consider: File naming conventions. Can you simply look at a drawing name and know exactly what that drawing is? Years ago when we were limited to 8 characters, (Remember DOS?) file names had to be abbreviated or coded. Now we can use longer names to define our drawings. AutoCAD still has some limitations as to file name size. One example is XREF's. So, a file-naming standard should be in place for all users. This will save time from having to open multiple drawings looking for the correct one. An example may be Project number related: 1111EXCOND.DWG or 1111BOUNDARY.dwg.

If you want to discuss Standards or any other CAD or Network related issues, call me at CADNET Services, 866.5CADNET or email me at rladd@cadnetserv.com. You can also check out our website at www.cadnetserv.com