

FOREWORD

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The building materials market is now the focus of intense interest in the steel industry. Although Japanese industry is still feeling the effects of the “bursting of the financial bubble,” after the boom years of the late 1980s, we are confident that this market will remain strong, based on the outlook for ¥430 trillion in spending to expand domestic demand in the coming years. An additional reason for our keen interest is that, among the industrialized nations, Japan’s per capita steel material consumption in building materials is two to three times greater than that of the United States or the former West Germany. In fact, building and construction account for more than 50% of domestic demand for steel materials in Japan.

It is a great honor to present this special issue on construction materials and to introduce the new construction material technologies and products of the Kawasaki Steel Group to our customers. Because steel offers a variety of outstanding features as a material, including strength, toughness, and workability, it plays a crucial structural and functional role in construction. The trend in recent years, however, has been toward larger-scale structures and high-rise construction, and from the functional viewpoint, the market for steel materials has increasingly required higher strength, shorter work periods, and manpower savings. In addition, much greater importance is now attached to design features which improve the environmental and architectural features of structures.

Over the last ten years, steelmakers have competed in developing and marketing high performance steels for general consumer items such as automobiles and household appliances. Based on these materials, manufacturers are now moving quickly to develop applications for these materials as new value added construction products, not only as structural materials in building construction, but also as finish materials, such as outer and inner decorative panels, and as interior structural products. Several of our most recent achievements in this area are highlighted in this issue.

Kawasaki Steel Corporation and the Kawasaki Steel Group companies are committed to strengthening their presence in the building materials industry as a total-service industrial group with supply capabilities ranging from basic materials to structural and finish products, and to satisfying the needs of all our customers in the construction industry.