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Inside the trade performance gap in data center construction

Demand for data centers is accelerating fast. Construction performance isn't keeping up.

We analyzed 25,000,000 sq ft of global data center projects to see how MEP trades are actually performing against plan.

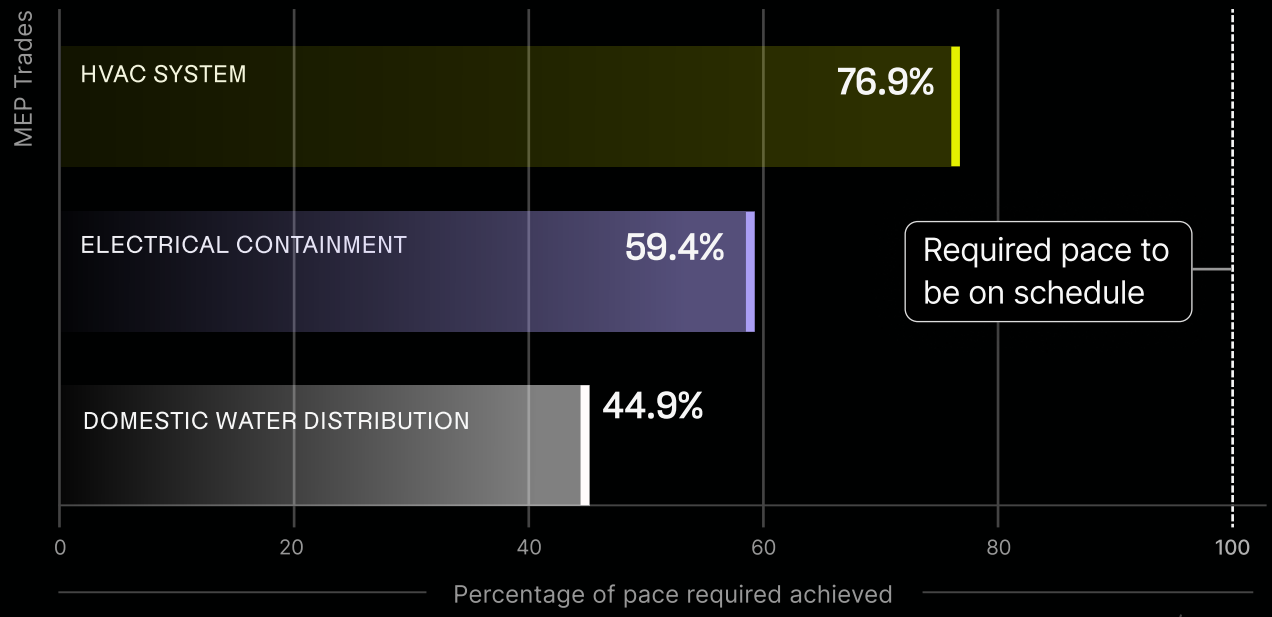
Three clear patterns emerge. Each one has direct implications for schedule certainty, commissioning timelines, and how reliably projects hit their power-on dates.

01 MEP trades are operating well below required pace

Across 2025 data center projects, major MEP systems are progressing far below the pace required to hit target completion dates. HVAC systems are achieving 76.9% of required pace, electrical containment 59.4%, and domestic water 44.9%.

Even small weekly shortfalls compound over time, eroding commissioning buffers and increasing late-stage schedule risk.

Actual weekly production rate vs. pace required to hit deadline



Do you know, week to week, if your trades are on the pace your schedule assumes?

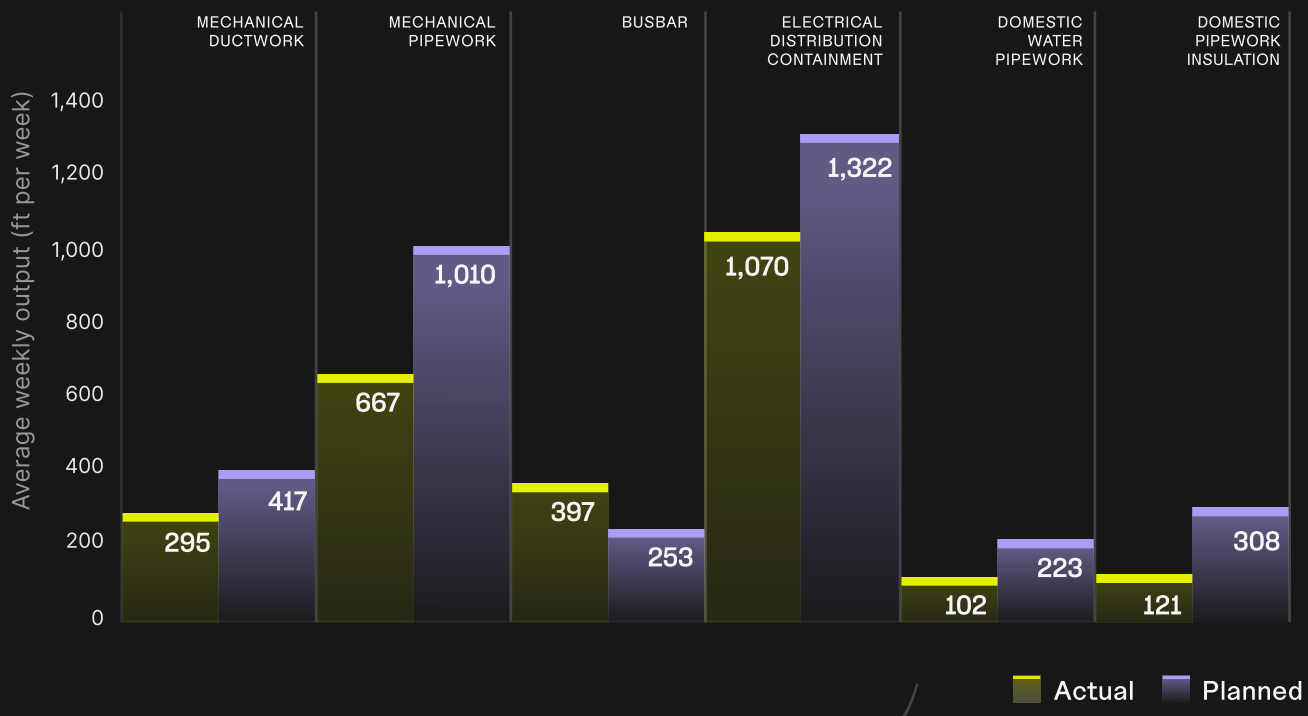
02

The gap between trades' planned weekly output and what they actually deliver is 20-50%

There's a consistent gap between planned weekly output and actual delivery. For example, electrical distribution is typically planned at 1,322 ft per week but averages 1,070 ft. Domestic pipework insulation planned at 308 ft per week, but delivers 121 ft.

This suggests systemic overestimation of trade capacity. In other words, schedule risk is built in at the planning stage rather than in execution.

Average weekly output in 2025 shows shortfalls across trades



What data are your planning assumptions actually built on?

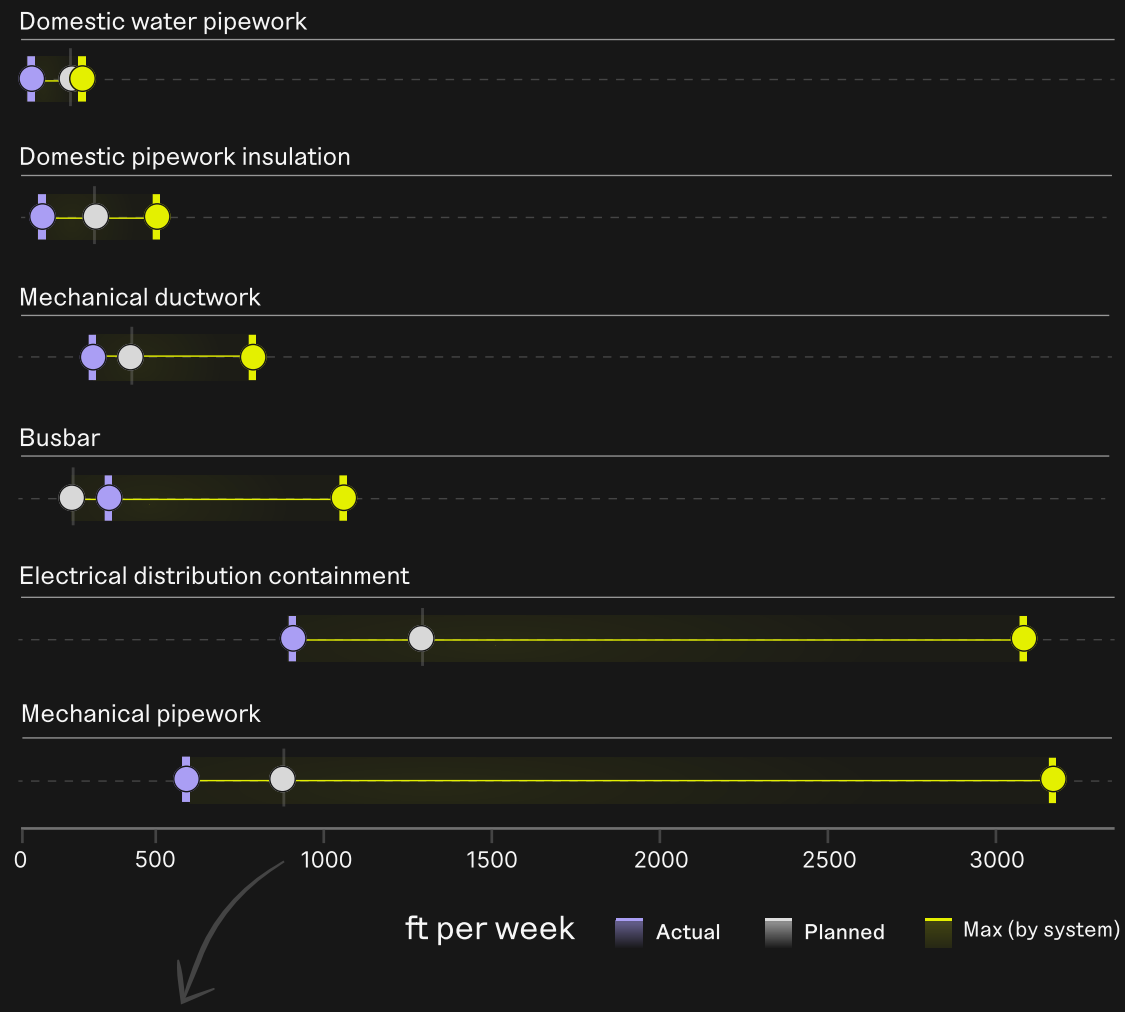
03

Trades do 3-5x more in their peak weeks than they do in average weeks

Our data shows that MEP trades can work 3 to 5 times faster than their typical weekly average. When a team can hit 3,000 ft in a peak week but usually averages closer to 600 ft, it's clear that capability isn't the issue.

That gap points to site-level friction limiting repeatable performance, and a lot of untapped capacity on most projects.

How fast MEP trades can work vs. how fast they usually work



What's happening on your site today that's limiting repeatable peak performance?

We're planning for production rates that projects aren't consistently delivering

Unless planning assumptions realign with performance reality, the gap will continue to compound across the industry – pushing back power-on dates and project completion.

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About Buildots: Buildots is the world's most advanced construction intelligence platform. By comparing schedules and BIM against site reality, its advanced AI transforms granular data into insights that unlock operational excellence. Fortune 500 contractors and owners trust Buildots, including Turner Construction, JE Dunn, Intel, and Bouygues. Its impact is proven at every scale, from multi-family projects to multi-gigawatt data centers.

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