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FALL/WINTER 2021



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MESSAGE FROM EASTERN CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT AND CEO, **TODD HELFRICH**

In addition to doing good work for our clients, the construction industry values safety above all else. I'm not just talking about personal protective equipment (PPE) and performing work functions safely on the jobsite; I am also referring to safety against COVID-19.

A recent study has shown that construction workers are the least likely to get vaccinated, but we want to change that. Here at Eastern Contractors Association, we believe it's important to get vaccinated against the coronavirus. Studies show that vaccinated individuals are less likely to contract COVID-19 and those vaccinated individuals are less likely to be seriously sickened or die if they do come down with COVID-19. On top of government mandates regarding vaccinations, we are pleased to see more and more project owners making vaccination a requirement.

The CPWR – The Center for Construction Research and Training offers the following suggestions to help construction employers encourage their

workforce to get vaccinated:

- As an employer, you can be a vaccine champion and encourage other leaders at your worksite to be vaccine champions, too. Share your personal reasons for getting vaccinated and remind employees why it is important to be vaccinated.
- Make vaccination easy for your employees:
 - Allow for time off to get the vaccine.
 - Connect employees to a vaccination site if possible.
 - Offer more than one opportunity for vaccination for workers who do not get the vaccine right away
- Share messages with workers about the benefits of protecting themselves, their families, coworkers, and community by getting vaccinated. Provide regular updates on topics like the benefits, safety, side effects, and effectiveness of vaccination.

More resources from CPWR can be found at www.covid.elcosh.org.

Our Building Trades Union partners are also taking initiative by sharing vaccine information across the industry by providing resources and expertise, developing and assisting in the implementation of COVID-19 safety and education materials, sending representatives to job sites to educate and listen, and articulate needs of their workers and families when policies are being considered by governments and/or agencies.

A vaccinated workforce is also important for our industry. We encourage you to listen to science and medical professionals when they say the vaccine will protect you against serious COVID-19 symptoms, so we can get back to the things we enjoy doing. As always, continue wearing masks, washing your hands, sanitizing your workstation and tools and working while socially distanced. We will see this through. ☺

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- Encouragement of safety in the workplace
- Advancement of economic growth
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Eastern Contractors Association, Inc. (ECA) is a trade association of union signatory general contractors and subcontractors, suppliers and service firms engaged in commercial, industrial and institutional construction throughout eastern New York. ECA traces its history to 1890 and is the region's only "full-service" contractor association serving the needs of all segments of the construction industry, providing labor relations assistance, planroom services, networking opportunities and other valuable membership benefits.



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GOING FOR THE GOLD

By Cindy Chan

Photos courtesy of the Gilbane Building Company.



Several Olympic-sized projects are taking place in Lake Placid to accommodate not only the 2023 World University Games but also a massive array of events and activities for decades to come.

The Olympic Regional Development Authority (ORDA) is charged with maintaining the Olympic facilities from the 1932 and 1980 Winter Games in Lake Placid, as well as Gore and Whiteface Mountains. The venues are accessible to the public for recreational use and enjoyment.

Several facilities at the Olympic Center are being renovated. These include the 1932 Rink/Jack Shea Arena and 1980 Rink/Herb Brooks Arena, the refrigeration plant, the James Sheffield Speed Skating Oval, and the guest areas within the Olympic Center Building, says Robert Hammond, director of environmental, planning and construction for ORDA.

“That’s just at the Olympic Center. Out at Whiteface Mountain, we are finishing up the Whiteface Mid-Station Lodge after the original structure burned down two years ago,” Hammond adds. “We’re also installing a new lift there and reconstructing the snowmaking system. At the Olympic Jumping Complex, we’re in the home stretch of rebuilding our ski jumping outruns.”

Gilbane Building Company’s Keith Leal, area manager and ORDA program director, and Christian Calabrese, ORDA program project executive, were approached by ORDA to provide program and construction management in preparation for the 2023 World University Games. A fun fact is



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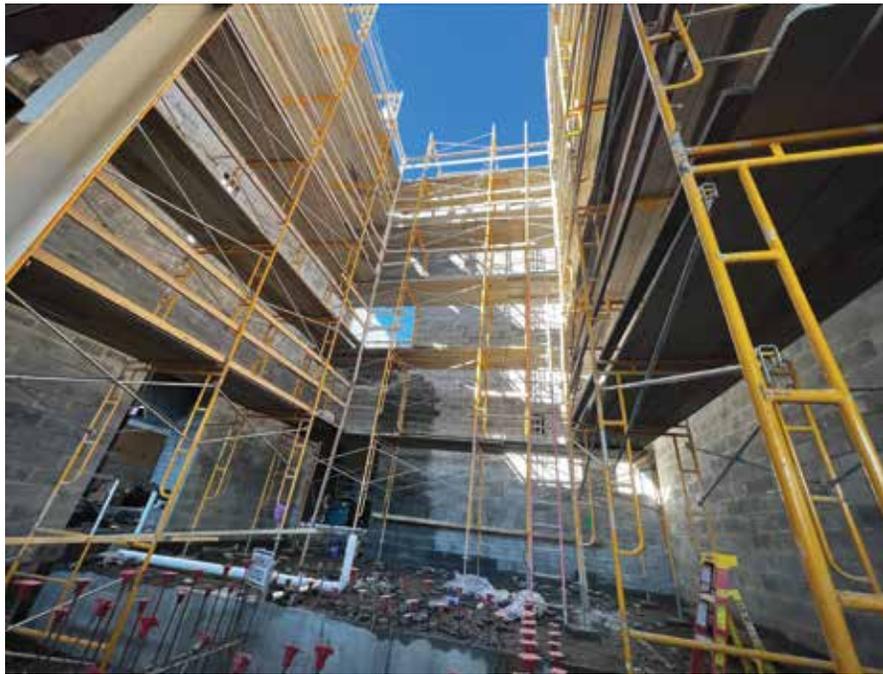


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that Gilbane Building Company was the construction manager for the original facilities built for the Olympics in the 1970s, so it was a rewarding, full-circle moment for them to work with ORDA and the State of New York again.

“It’s incredible to be back at some of these venues that were built by Gilbane teams 40 years ago, and to refurbish, demolish, and build new,” Leal says.

“We were involved in all stages of preconstruction, putting together schedules, performing estimates, and checks to make sure we were adhering to ORDA’s budget,” Calabrese says. “Once trade contractors were on board, we oversaw their schedule and quality performance, as well as making sure the trades’ work goes smoothly and are meeting deliverables.”

Ryan Faulkner, project executive at LeChase Construction Services, says he worked on two of the revitalization projects – the James Sheffield Speed Skating Oval and the Olympic Center Link Building.

The James Sheffield Speed Skating Oval project included demolition of the original oval, and construction of a brand new facility that includes all new refrigeration lines throughout the track. The oval consists of four zones that are each 14,000 square feet.

“Each one of those zones has multiple layers. There’s a sand layer, insulation, rebar, refrigeration lines, mesh, and then concrete,” Faulkner explains. The pours were done at four different times. A mini hockey rink – also known as the Hockey Box – was also constructed near the speed skating oval.

“We are doing a complete rebuild of the Olympic Center Building, including additions and all the associated site infrastructure improvements and road upgrades,” Faulkner says, adding the existing facility was demolished down to its steel structure.

The two-story Link Building houses the Olympic Museum, administrative offices for ORDA staff, restaurant, kitchen, an Olympics store, restrooms, and a glass elevator. The Olympic Center Link



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Building connects the 1980 rink to the 1932 rink on the concourse level. The Olympic Museum includes the second largest collection of Winter Olympic artifacts in the world.

Hammond says the renovations also include installing an outdoor raised deck system off of the restaurant, giving people greater access to views of the speed skating oval and surrounding mountains.

A lot of construction projects have been completed but plenty are still ongoing. The 1932 rink opened for public skating in November 2021. The speed skating oval project started on April 26, 2021, and is slated to be complete this winter. The Olympic Center Link Building project began in June and is expected to be complete in the fall of 2022. Hammond says the refrigeration plant construction work recently achieved its substantial completion milestone.

TEC Protective Coatings worked on the 1932 and 1980 arenas, providing paint upgrades on both buildings with structural steel and concrete fireproofing and high-performance coatings on interior and exterior areas, including all seating and pedestrian areas, concessions, bathrooms, and locker rooms. They have also begun work on the James Sheffield Speed Skating Oval and Olympic Center Link Building.

“TEC has and will continue to work with multiple general contractors on this project. It has been a pleasure to work with the ORDA committee,” Tom Carney, owner of TEC Protective Coatings, says.

These projects will make Lake Placid one of the world’s premier winter sports capitals. Before the modernization, some of the facilities had become dated, difficult to maintain, or were not meeting the standards for elite international competitions to be held. The future for Lake Placid is looking brighter than ever, and the World University Games in January 2023 will welcome 2,500 athletes from 50 countries and 600 universities for 86 different medal events happening throughout the Adirondack region.

For Faulkner, working on this project has fondly reminded him of his own past,

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DAVE DEMARCO
President and CEO





Work on zones of the speed skating oval.



Work progressing on oval and Link Building.



Link Building under construction.

when he used to play hockey at the 1932 and 1980 rinks. He recalls walking back and forth between the two rinks via the link, but there hadn't been a restaurant back then.

"This restaurant now will have a balcony that overlooks all of Lake Placid," Faulkner says. "You can see the speed skating oval, ski jumps, and Whiteface in the distance."

Leal says ORDA and the State of New York have gone out of their way to make sure these sites are open to the public when Olympic events are not taking place. For example, a new biathlon track was built for the games, but it is also used by the public for walks, hikes, and cross-country skiing.

For more information, visit orda.org. ☺



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PROTECTING FEMALE CONSTRUCTION PERSONNEL FROM SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND JOBSITE INJURY

By Thomas H. Welby, P.E. Esq. and Geoffrey S. Pope, Esq.

Approximately 800,000 women are employed in the U.S. construction industry. About 200,000 of them wear hard hats, and work (mostly) as laborers and helpers, painters, carpenters, repair workers, electricians, drywall installers, truck drivers, HVAC mechanics, plumbers, and flaggers. In addition, about 600,000 women work in administrative and office positions in construction businesses.

We will discuss below several nuts-and-bolts health and safety issues that affect, in particular, women working in the trades. There are serious issues, however, of the mistreatment of women in the industry,

which occur both on the jobsite (where some men are enraged by the sight of a woman wearing a hard hat) to the office (the workplace, generally, of men who feel entitled to indulge in sexual harassment, or sexual assault).

While women in construction do not get as much attention as Hollywood actresses, construction accounts for more jobs, and is a larger component of the U.S. economy, than making movies. You will, we hope, be horrified to learn that sexual harassment is every bit as bad a problem in construction, as it is in the movie industry.

Sexual harassment in construction

is pervasive. It ranges from being stared at or seeing “pinups” of unclothed women in the job trailer, to unwanted sexual remarks, lewd acts, inappropriate touching and outright sexual assault. A *USA Today* analysis of EEOC and Bureau of Labor Statistics data suggested that construction is the No. 2 industry in the country (behind mining) for the number of reported incidents of sexual harassment reported per thousand employees. This, obviously, is unacceptable.

Even where the offensive behavior does not include fondling and assault or sex as an express condition of employment, women in construction, as in most

traditionally male occupations, are frequently the targets of belittling remarks and other microaggressions. Often, they will be given “friendly advice” that career prospects will be enhanced by being receptive to sexual advances, or tolerating degrees of sexual misbehavior.

While obviously sexual harassment is objectionable on additional grounds, it would be a mistake to discount its impact on safety. While having to see sexy photos in the trailer isn’t as overtly dangerous, obviously, as working aloft without fall protection, construction safety depends largely on mentoring, mutual trust, and workers looking out for one another and reporting unsafe conditions. If women don’t get the same training and mentoring – whether as payback for not going along with sexual misconduct, or due to male resentment provoked merely by their presence in the trades – that’s a safety issue. If women on your jobsite are more reluctant than men to report safety violations for fear of retaliation, that also affects safety, and is not merely a result of boys being boys. (We acknowledge, in passing, that fewer than 100 percent of the culprits in incidents of sexual harassment and assault are heterosexual men, and not every victim is female).

For some years, construction-industry organizations and employers have worked to increase the numbers of women working in the construction trades, as well as in management. The results of these efforts have been valuable, but, on the whole, somewhat disappointing. We suggest it will probably be a condition of achieving higher levels of success in recruiting women that the industry first acknowledge, and then take an aggressive leadership stance, in stemming sexual harassment.

The overall culture, clearly, is changing. Women, including flight attendants, restaurant servers, the armed forces, and the entertainment industry, are pushing back against being fondled, if not raped, and persistent belittlement as parts of the job description. All indications are that,

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going forward, companies (and managers) who keep their heads in the proverbial sand on this issue are going to pay a price for doing so.

Turning to some of the nuts-and-bolts safety matters, we will note, first, that the primary causes of death for women in construction are “struck-by” incidents (think flaggers struck by vehicles) and other transportation accidents, homicide and falls.

A widespread problem for women is the lack of PPE (personal protective equipment) in the smaller sizes generally needed to fit women. The “protective” can vanish from “PPE” if the respirator, protective clothing, etc. is too large or does not fit properly. A respirator that doesn’t fit is virtually useless. Safety footwear that is too large can cause trips and falls. Too-large clothing items can get snagged in equipment, resulting in serious injury. PPE items often found to be too large for female users include, but are not limited to, respirators, fall-protection harnesses,

safety shoes, gloves, coveralls, hard hats and safety goggles.

Procuring PPE items in sizes that will fit smaller women will often require extra effort. Some items are not regularly stocked by distributors, and others may not be widely manufactured in the United States (where people tend to be on the large side). One resource is the International Safety Equipment Association, which lists companies and suppliers offering PPE, sized and designed for women.

Women suffer higher rates of sprains/strains and nerve conditions of the wrist and forearm than men. The cause of this is not fully established, but it may be a product of women, typically having less upper-body strength than men, being more commonly being assigned repetitive tasks leading to sprains/strains and nerve conditions. Where women are expected to keep pace with their male counterparts in lifting heavy objects, back injuries are common, as well.

Hand tools are also designed in most instances for the average-sized male. Women, typically, have slightly shorter hands and lesser grip strength than men. Wrenches and other hand tools may be sold as “one-size-fits-all” but, actually, with many varieties of small tools, one size doesn’t fit all. Many hand tools need to be made available in sizes that will fit women (and smaller men).

Efforts should be made to fight the perception (and such basis as it has in reality) that, since women are typically less senior in their trades in their male colleagues, they may be putting their jobs in jeopardy if they raise concerns about substandard safety conditions (or sexual harassment). This perception is probably even more acute when hazards complained of affect women more than men.

Two such hazards are reproductive hazards, and access to sanitary facilities. More research is needed on potential reproductive hazards to both sexes



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from conditions on construction sites (including both impairment to the ability to get pregnant, and harmful effects on fetuses). Polychlorinated biphenyls and hypothermia are two known hazards. Ionizing radiation, to which hazardous waste workers may be exposed, is a third. Agents such as lead, solvents and pesticides have been identified as adversely affecting sperm development in men.

Prolonged standing has been linked to premature births, and strenuous activities, such as lifting and climbing, can be hazardous during the latter stages of pregnancy. We think it qualifies as a “reproductive hazard,” too, that few construction employers offer pregnancy, family and medical leave to their employees.

A further hazard that affects women in particular is a lack of access to clean, private sanitary facilities on construction sites. According to one study, 80 percent of women construction workers complained of facilities with filthy toilets, no toilets or toilets in poorly lit areas or at an unreasonable distance from the work area. Many toilets cannot be locked, and if located in poorly lit areas, pose a special threat to women working at night. Many women report taking measures to minimize having to use inadequate, dirty and unlocked unisex toilets such as holding their urine, and drinking less water while working, which can lead to heat stress, and kidney and bladder infections.

As to both sexual harassment and more mundane issues where women’s health and safety are at risk, all construction employers have both legal and ethical obligations. The industry (particularly on the issue of sexual harassment) has some catching up to do. That starts, we think, with the issues being acknowledged and discussed.

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JUDGMENT CAN BE HAZARDOUS TO SOMEONE ELSE'S HEALTH

By Jamie Becker

Did you know the average dieter tries between 55 and 130 diets in their lifetime? Or that smokers average 30 attempts before they successfully quit smoking? Or that most New Year's resolutions are kept for 10 days?

These numbers confirm what we already know – behavior change is hard. As a society, we don't expect people to make lasting behavior changes on the first try. In fact, it would be a surprise if someone succeeded in quitting smoking, losing tons of weight or sticking to an exercise plan on their first attempt. Yet, when people try to achieve sobriety for a drug or alcohol use disorder, our society doesn't show the same level of tolerance, compassion or understanding.

Like other behaviors that people try to quit, statistics show that most people don't manage to quit their substance use disorder (SUD) on the first attempt. They

may try and fail a number of times before they achieve long-term sobriety. There is no magic number or formula for how many recovery attempts a person must make before they get it "right."

ADDICTION IS A DISEASE

Despite many advances over the last 60 to 80 years in treating addiction, little has changed in the way society views people who have a SUD. Many people refuse to see addiction as a disease and instead view every person with a substance use disorder as irresponsible, worthless and a drain on society. This view comes from the belief that behavior driven by a SUD is a decision, when nothing could be further from the truth. As someone in recovery once said, "We no more choose to be an addict or an alcoholic than we would choose to have cancer."

Addiction is defined as a disease by most medical associations, including the American Medical Association and the

American Society of Addiction Medicine. Like diabetes, cancer and heart disease, addiction is influenced by behavioral, environmental and biological factors. Genetic risk factors account for about half of the likelihood that an individual will develop an addiction.

This is the reality of addiction and the reason that people with substance use disorders need to be treated with kindness and compassion rather than judgment, especially by the people closest to them. People struggling with addiction are suffering from a disease. Addiction is not a choice or a moral failing. It's not a lack of willpower. These beliefs cause addiction to continue, and so we have to change the way we think about addiction. We have to draw on compassion instead of contempt. When we are compassionate, we promote inclusiveness and safety, which are essential for successful recovery. Judgment or moralizing to people with a SUD is

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generally not an effective method to bring about change. Instead, understanding addiction and finding empathy for the person holds greater value.

Why do some people become addicted while others do not? It's a combination of the following: traumatic experiences, lack of healthy social support systems, mental health disorders, genetic predisposition and the environment – all of which contribute to the development of addiction.

The ongoing coronavirus pandemic is increasing the risk that people who previously turned to behaviors such as

smoking, drug or alcohol use or emotional eating may resume these behaviors. Chances are the people who pick up these behaviors again will be disappointed in themselves, along with their families and friends, who have seen them make so much progress.

While we can't control someone else's behaviors, let's be aware of what we can control. That includes whether we judge someone, how we treat each other and choosing to have empathy and compassion for each other. We can choose kindness and being open-minded and helpful when it comes to people with drug and alcohol use disorders. The best

way to treat someone with a substance use disorder, especially if you are a close friend or family member, is to support them without enabling them. Try to offer kindness and compassion at all times, especially when someone reaches out for help.

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ABOUT JAMIE BECKER

Jamie Becker is the Laborers' Health and Safety Fund's Director of Health Promotion. ☺

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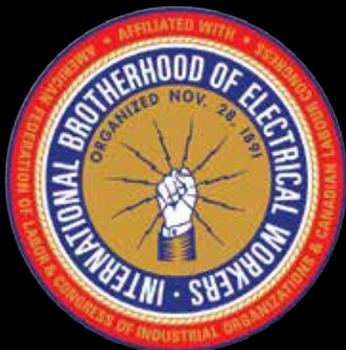


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THE NEED FOR A FLEET SAFETY PROGRAM

By Susan G. Fahmy, CSP

Do you have a fleet of vehicles? You may not think so, but in reality, you probably do. Depending on your line of work, you might have full-size vans, pickup trucks, sedans and SUVs or semi-trailers. You might have all-terrain utility vehicles, ride-on lawnmowers or self-propelled snow blowers. Your fleet might be larger than you realize.

A safer fleet means a safer workforce. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, transportation incidents are the No. 1 cause of death in today's workplaces. In recent years, an average of 2,000 workers were killed in transportation incidents. That represented 40 percent of all fatal workplace injuries. Roadway incidents and pedestrian vehicular incidents accounted for most transportation-related fatalities.

What can organizations do to prevent these types of incidents and injuries? As it does with other worker safety issues,

the development of an effective safety program can aid in reducing employee injuries as well as vehicle damage.

STEP 1: IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM

By identifying and analyzing factors that lead to crashes, we can develop targeted plans to reduce the risk. Factors to consider include a driver's record of traffic violations, weather conditions, road conditions, vehicle type, posted speed limits and drivers' hours on duty.

It is important for different departments to coordinate records regarding vehicle incidents. Maintenance, human resources, insurance, etc., all have information that can be useful to determine exactly what, or who, the potential risks are.

STEP 2: FLEET POLICY AND PROCEDURES

A formal, written fleet safety policy statement eliminates room for confusion and conveys a clear message to all

employees about the importance of safe driving. Policies should be clear about seat belt use, impaired driving, distracted driving and the use of hands-free devices while driving. The policy must also define how to report a collision, what to do in the event of a breakdown, the need for scheduled maintenance and the use of the vehicle on personal time. Again, different departments should be working together to create these policies.

STEP 3: MANAGEMENT COMMITMENT AND SUPPORT

Leadership commitment is essential to support all aspects of worker safety, including fleet management. The management team must be made aware of the direct and indirect benefits of maintaining an effective fleet safety program.

STEP 4: INCIDENT INVESTIGATION

An investigation is critical to determine



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the causal factors of any vehicle incident. Different people are looking for different things during an investigation. Law enforcement is looking at who gets the ticket. The insurance person or risk-management person wants to know what they have to pay. The overall picture however, needs to be: Did this have to happen and how do I avoid this in the future?

STEP 5: DRIVER QUALIFICATIONS

Driving standards should be clear, concise and allow for organizations to monitor, evaluate and correct (if necessary) an employee’s driving performance. Your drivers should know exactly what is expected of them and how you will be monitoring them. The driver should be aware of how you view their performance and should receive immediate corrective actions as needed.

STEP 6: SELECTION/MAINTENANCE/INSPECTION

Safety should be kept in mind when selecting fleet equipment. The vehicles should be selected not only based on maintenance and performance records, but also on potential employee injury while working with the vehicle. Handrails on steps; the height of loading and unloading materials; ergonomic seating; lift gate operation and any other relevant issue should be considered prior to purchasing vehicles. All users should be involved in the selection process. This includes employees, maintenance, purchasing and safety.

STEP 7: DRIVER TRAINING

Hiring the ideal candidate is important for an organization’s success. So, too, is training employees to learn new skills and improve their existing skills. Driver training should include:

- New hire training: For all incoming employees.
- Refresher training: Less formal training that can be presented in alternative formats such as safety posters, dash cards

and brief safety talks to reinforce best practices.

- Remedial training: For drivers who have had an infraction or were involved in an incident.
- Ongoing or annual training: For all drivers, typically combining classroom instruction and behind-the-wheel instruction to discuss new equipment, changes in procedures, updates pertaining to regulatory compliance, etc.

An effective fleet management process can help reduce vehicle insurance costs, workers’ compensation costs, injuries, vehicle damage, maintenance and downtime while at the same time improving employee morale.

ABOUT SUSAN FAHMY

Susan Grier Fahmy, CSP, is vice president and director of safety and health services at Lovell Safety Management Co., LLC. ☺

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SAFETY: A LEADERSHIP BELIEF AT EVERY LEVEL

By Mark Breslin

Many of you have been around long enough to remember when safety was not a big deal in the industry. It was not valued. It was considered weak. It was an obstacle to production and profit. It simply was not valued a part of our industry ethos.

So what happened? How did safety go from being a zero to becoming the defining metric (alongside profit) and value system of organizational success?

In part, it was forced on the industry

— by owners, end-users and insurance interests. But no one stakeholder can force an entire industry to change that profoundly. No, it took leadership at every level.

I can't remember the last time I spoke at a company anywhere in the United States or Canada when the meeting did not start with a safety moment. This conscious effort to drive values from the very top with great discipline is the key to safety as a belief system. And this should be the goal of leaders in our industry.

What does safety as a belief system look like in a healthy organization? Here are some of my top indicators:

1. The driving message from top leadership is care, not compliance.
2. There is a clear understanding that cost should not be a barrier to safety.
3. Ownership of safety is taken at every level as a "want to", not a "have to."
4. Foremen have the leadership skills to build and sustain the belief system.

Many contractors sometimes overlook this last point. Foremen

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***Contractors who want to be best in class on safety should do what my clients do.
(One of whom just finished five million hours without a lost-time incident.)***

do not automatically possess the communication, motivation, evaluation and feedback skills to drive home safety as a belief system. Nuances in coaching skills may make all the difference, but the contractor often incorrectly assumes field leadership is already good to go. And finally, holding people accountable, especially co-workers who may be friends, can be very challenging to enact in the field.

Contractors who want to be best in class on safety should do what my clients do. (One of whom just finished five million hours without a lost-time incident.) Don't teach workers safety. Don't just give them metrics to meet. Give them the leadership tools they need to execute. Look past the content they must communicate. Look beyond the policies they must enforce. Go down another level to the foundational elements of their leadership. Communication. Motivation. Accountability. Empowerment. Providing skill training, group discussions, resource materials and effective tactical advice will help them meet the expectations of your company – even if the actual subject of safety is not at the core of the assistance to them.

One significant challenge of sustaining a powerful belief system is constant reinforcement. Imagine how hard it is for a field leader to bring the energy and enthusiasm to the message year after year and communicate in a way that continues to shape behaviors, rather than fade into a repetitive drone that workers hear as “blah, blah, blah” after the hundredth time. Safety meetings, huddles, job walks and coaching cannot be check-the-box activities — they

have to matter personally for that belief system to pay dividends.

As you look at your safety priorities, don't forget that building and sustaining a belief system require commitment at every level. Your field leaders are on the front lines and deserve the tools and support to excel at this critical role.

ABOUT MARK BRESLIN

Mark Breslin is a strategist and author of several books, including most recently, *The Five Minute Foreman: Mastering the People Side of Construction*. Visit his website at www.breslin.biz or contact him at (925) 705-7662. ☺



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WHAT'S THE RIGHT ROLE FOR THE BUSINESS OWNER?

Put your personal priority plan into action

By George Hedley

As construction companies grow from \$1 million to \$5 million to \$25 million to \$50 million or higher in annual sales, the owner's or president's role grows right along with the increasing number of employees, projects, bids, contracts, customers, fires and issues to handle. As a contractor business coach, company owners typically call me for help when they have grown past their ability to effectively manage all the challenges themselves as the leader of their expanding business. The overloaded

owner is at a point where he/she has too many responsibilities, tasks, roles and accountabilities to keep all the balls in the air and his/her company working like a well-oiled machine. In fact, these owners often get out of control trying to do too much themselves and trying to supervise and schedule too many projects, process, systems, crews, estimates and commitments.

To make matters worse at this stage of business growth, most employees think the owner is their boss. Most customers, subcontractors and suppliers want to

have direct access and will talk only to the owner about important matters, contracts, pricing or other issues, small and large. The owner is still pricing most of the estimates, scheduling crews and making sure jobs stay on budget. I often see where a company has grown 50 percent but the overhead, management team and number of field supervisors has remained at the same level. This is causing even more stress on the owner as everything can't get done as it should.

When companies grow faster than their staff, structure, systems and ability, the next



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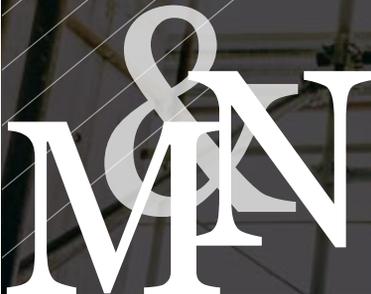
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thing that happens is finances can spiral out of control. The owner doesn't know the job costs or have a clue if they're making any money. They run in circles faster and faster and work twice as hard for less and less money, going nowhere. The challenges of business ownership continue to mount.

Being busy is a bad sign. There are so many details and so much to handle being a growing contractor. The more you do, the further behind you are. You get bogged down, stuck, inefficient and ineffective. Things take longer to finish. Ever-increasing paperwork and demands get in the way of doing things right. And you only have enough time to fix field problems and put out fires that are always flaring up. You have to make all the decisions for everyone and try to do all the important tasks yourself. And you still won't delegate important responsibilities to your team. To make matters worse, you don't have time to hire help and don't want to pay top dollar to find professional managers who can run your field, manage your projects, price your bids or implement an integrated job cost and accounting system.

When you're busy, you don't have time to find higher-margin work, make good decisions, improve customer relationships or offer more than your competitors.

So you continue to run faster on the treadmill doing what you always done — selling low prices to compete while knowing you'll suffer the consequences later. Everyone likes you when you're operating at overload capacity. You buy materials from the same suppliers without getting additional quotes, hire the same subcontractors over and over instead of getting more bids and you keep field employees working overtime instead of hiring more workers. You're totally stressed, frustrated and you don't know what to do to fix it. Your life is out of balance, your business is out of control, your company consumes your every waking moment and you aren't making enough money to make it worthwhile. Even your spouse or family keeps telling you to do something different.

What should the owner's role be to get to the next level? When your company was smaller, it was easy to act as the ringleader, schedule crews, supervise workers, order materials, meet with inspectors and work with customers to keep them happy. But now it isn't happening and customers demand more meetings, faster service, better prices, more paperwork and more of your time.

What should you do to take charge of your company and get it to become

efficient, effective and profitable as it grows?

People tend to do what they're most comfortable doing. People know what they should do to achieve the results they want, but they tend to do what they like to do rather than what they should do. The bottom-line results your business achieves are the No. 1 indicator of your effectiveness and how you spend your time and your ability to build a profitable company. Your priorities determine the importance you actually give to on-time schedules, safety, quality workmanship, finances, operational systems, motivating employees, sales, taking customers to lunch and your leadership. If you're not getting the results you want, there's something wrong. And chances are, it's not your people, subcontractors, suppliers, competition, customers or the economy. It's you!

Decide what the owner's role should be.

- What owner's job description, position or role will bring the highest return?
 - What is the owner best at? What does the owner want to do going forward?
 - What does the owner want to stop doing and doesn't enjoy?
 - What does the owner never want to do again?
 - What roles, accountabilities, responsibilities and tasks should the owner focus on as their priority?
- Most construction business owners/presidents are best at the following:
- Managing the overall company leadership and management team to ensure they are accountable for meeting company and project goals.
 - Meeting with customers and convincing them to hire their company versus supervising, running and doing the work.
 - Taking the "get and win work" role and being accountable for business development, customer relationships, marketing and sales.
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- Making the managers accountable and responsible for achieving results.
- Being involved with the hiring and people process.

Based on the company size, the owner can also manage the “price work” role by supervising the estimator and reviewing cost estimates, but not being the full-time estimator doing bids.

Most construction business owners/

presidents should not do the following:

- Manage or run construction operations or projects from start to finish.
- Project manage any jobs including scheduling, ordering, coordinating, negotiating subcontracts, approving project invoices, dealing with project issues, dealing with customer issues or getting involved with subcontractors or supplier.
- Supervise field and crews including scheduling, ordering materials, managing

equipment, logistics, firing, pay raises or dealing with personnel issues.

The answer is up to you. After exploring all the factors outlined above, remember that the bottom-line results are the No. 1 indicator of your abilities as the leader of your company, and that includes your ability to delegate and let go. As your company grows, you will reach your personal limits and realize you can't handle much more work than you already have going. Your calendar is full, your day is packed, you're working 12 or more hours seven days a week, and it gets more stressful every day. You're unable to keep up with all the tasks, orders, contracts, inspections, meetings, demands, employee questions, paperwork and problems you have to take care of. Your to-do list is too big, and you have reached the level of what you control can and do yourself.

Most companies stop growing when business owners reach their maximum level of what they can do themselves. Another bad thing happens at the “stuck” level: all you have time for is work, and you don't have time to go out and get enough work to keep your company growing. This downward cycle eventually destroys a potentially great company. Obviously, you can't do more work yourself. You have to free yourself from day-to-day supervisory activities that bog you down and hold your company back.

Put your personal priority plan into action. Now is the time to make some decisions to solve your personal priority problem. Decide what roles and responsibilities you should focus on exclusively. Decide what activities and assignments you need to let go of and stop doing. Decide what new positions you need to create to allow your company to grow, profit and reach your goals. And decide what people you can hire or promote now to move your company to the next level.

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SETTING EXPECTATIONS ON THE JOB

By Norb Slowikowski

How are you supposed to perform if you don't know what's expected of you? I'm of the firm belief that you cannot get on someone's case for lack of performance if you don't give them proper guidance in the first place. Furthermore, most companies are running leaner operations, so the biggest challenge to profitability is in setting the right expectations. Each foreman must have a clear understanding of what is expected if the goal is to maximize profitability on the job site.

HAVE A PRODUCTIVITY FOCUS

A foreman has to understand the labor budget and either meet or beat that budget. Since 50 to 60 percent of the

money on the job is in that budget, there is a lot of money to be made there.

Put simply, a foreman needs to know his crew and communicate what he expects of them. He needs to make sure his crew understands how much work they need to get done each day. The foreman should tell his crew, "Here is the task I need you to accomplish by the end of the day. Can you do it?" Some people think crews resent that kind of direction, but I have found the opposite to be true. With this method, people feel like they are connected to something bigger than themselves, and that is motivating.

The foreman is responsible for meeting the general contractor's schedule, which is always very tight. If there is a problem,

foremen should work as a team with their project manager and superintendent.

Another expectation of being productivity driven is achieving quality results. The contractor wants the work done right the first time. I believe in prevention, not inspection. The foreman has to walk the job site on a daily basis. When he sees somebody doing something wrong, he has to intervene right away and make corrections — but in a positive manner that teaches the person how to do it correctly. Communicating expectations without follow-up may result in deadlines not being met or work being shoddy.

CONDUCT EFFECTIVE PLANNING

A foreman needs to anticipate and forecast his needs at least a week in advance. Say to the GC, "This is what I'll be doing next week. Are you OK with that?" Once the GC signs off on that schedule, make sure you get the proper tools, equipment, material and manpower lined up. If you do it a week in advance, your warehouse or tool shop can get you the things you need. You also need to coordinate with the other trades. Planning is key to visualizing the big picture.

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GET ORGANIZED

Once you get the tools and materials you need to the job site, put them exactly where your crew will need them. When other materials are needed from the shop, make sure they know exactly what needs to go where on the site.

Have a daily five-minute huddle with your crew to talk about what needs to get done. Ask them if they see any obstacles or if they have any ideas as to how to be more efficient or productive. Get your crew enlisted in the goals of the day at the beginning of each work day. Make sure you document work that isn't within the scope.

If the GC wants you to do extra work, tell him you'll need him to sign off on an extra work order. Be very specific on the work order, including how long it's going to take, what materials you need and

your labor costs. If the GC doesn't want to sign it, then tell him he needs to talk to your project manager because you can't proceed without written authorization.

Make sure you know how much authority you have on the job to make decisions. Everyone has boundaries. Enlist your project manager and ask how much latitude you have, how much money you can spend on the job, and how far you can go if there is a problem with the superintendent.

DISPLAY LEADERSHIP

A good foreman manages the job and leads the people. You don't have to manage people because people will manage themselves if they are given the right conditions.

Let people own their jobs. You can do that by explaining what you expect of

them. Next, give them everything they need to do their jobs. Last, give lots of positive feedback and get rid of criticism because criticism is not a motivator. When people are in trouble, they need to be coached, not criticized.

Finally, it's important to hold people accountable. If they aren't performing up to your expectations after continued coaching, set some consequences. If negative behavior continues, let them know they will probably lose their jobs.

In summary, if you do not communicate and clarify what you expect of your team, they will do what they think is important, which may not align with your expectations. Remember: You get what you expect.

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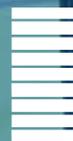
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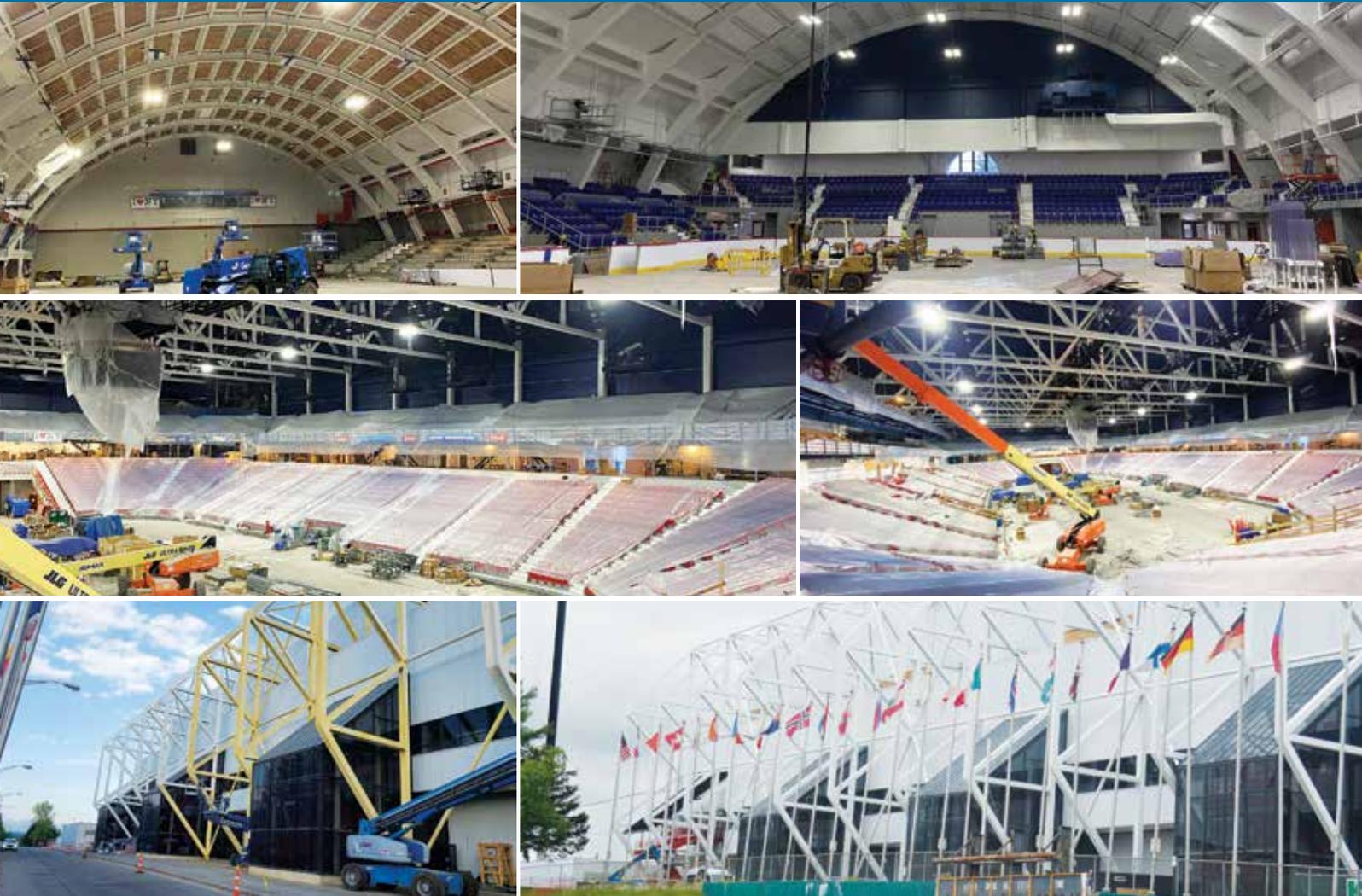
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