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Publication of the Associated General Contractors of Alaska
Summer 2005

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  - SKW Eskimos Inc.

- **St. Paul NWS Family Housing**
  - $4,843,480
  - Bering Sea Ecotech

- **Kwethluk Bulk Fuel Upgrade**
  - $3,645,300
  - Hankal Construction Inc.

- **Kaktovik Replacement Fire Station**
  - $3,495,000
  - SKW Eskimos Inc.

- **Unalaska Pool Renovation**
  - $2,970,000
  - UIC Construction Inc.

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  - Kaktovik Constructors

- **Moses Point Remediation**
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  - Chemtrack

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- **ANCH ASD Muldoon Middle School**
  - $28,420,000
  - Roger Hickel Contracting

- **ANCH ASD Service HS R Renewal PHS 2B**
  - $10,836,000
  - Roger Hickel Contracting

- **ANCH AIA Taxiway K Reconstruction Taxiway J to Y**
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  - Wilder Construction Co. Inc.

- **ANCH Cell 7 Construction**
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  - Wilder Construction Co. Inc.

- **ANCH Tudor Rd. Resurfacing**
  - $8,389,969
  - QAP

- **Homer Public Library Renovation**
  - $6,146,887
  - Jay Brant

- **Mat-Su 2005 PAVEMENT PROGRAMS**
  - $4,536,873
  - Alaska Roadbuilders

- **Elmendorf ASD Schools Boiler Installation**
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  - Udelhoven Oilfield Service

- **ANCH ASD East High School Renovation PHS 4A**
  - $3,799,000
  - Wolverine Supply Inc.

- **Kodiak Pac Bldg Midlife Renovation**
  - $2,598,900
  - Northern Management Services

- **Valdez UAA PWSCC Renovation Museum Addition**
  - $2,593,151
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  - DPI-American Joint Venture

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  - Great Northwest-SKW Joint Venture

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  - Wilder Construction Co. Inc.

- **FBKS Richardson Hwy MP 357-362 Repaving**
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  - Exclusive Paving

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Trucano Construction

PETERSBURG MITKOF HWY COASTAL PATH/FERRY TERM RESURFACE
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Secon Inc.

JUNEAU NEW HS SITE WORK/UTILITIES
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Glacier State Contractors

IKETCHIKAN WHIPPLE CREEK BRIDGE/MP 15 RESURFACING
$3,919,265
Secon Inc.

SITKA SCHOOLS ROOF REPLACEMENT
$2,988,000
Coogan Construction

KETCHIKAN UAS PAUL ZIEGLER BLDG RENO
$2,581,000
Wolverine Supply Inc

SITKA SEWARD AVE/TONGASS DRI IMPROVEMENTS
$2,375,709
Southeast Earth Movers Inc.

PETERSBURG MIDDLE HARBOR RENOVATION
$2,218,250
Western Dock & Bridge

CANADA

SHAKWAK HWY KM 1707 TO KM 1717.4
$18,761,966
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Making the decision to drug test

If there is one subject that is sure to generate a heated discussion among members of the construction industry, it is the subject of whether or not to implement a drug-testing program. I have to admit that for most of these discussions I have been firmly on the side of not drug testing. My reasoning was that most of my work force is made up of long-term older employees, so pre-employment testing wasn’t really a necessity and I disliked the idea of broad-based random testing, but perhaps the most compelling reason was that I simply did not want the headache of monitoring such a costly program. Then my company started to grow, the workers’ comp mod rate started to inch up, and slowly but surely, my core of long-term employees were contemplating retirement. Even more compellingly, my insurance company’s risk management team was becoming more insistent that I re-examine the idea of implementing a drug program. The final impetus that pushed me towards the precipice was the realization that many of the projects I was trying to go after had strict drug/alcohol use policies in their contractual language.

Since becoming involved in AGC so extensively, I became aware of their efforts to start the Alaska Construction Industry Substance Abuse Program (AKCISAP). Not being prone to jump on the nearest bandwagon, I finally did some of my own research into the subject. An interesting paper was published in the Journal of Construction Engineering and Management (November/December 2001) by Jonathan Gerber and Georg Yacoubian. I won’t go into all of their conclusions, but I’ll highlight those statements that were extremely interesting. For instance, they stated that the “U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reports that the construction industry has a higher percentage of current illicit alcohol and other drug users than any other occupation category.” The authors also go on to show that the construction industry ranks near the bottom in mandatory drug testing. This report showed that small workplaces (fewer than 25 employees) are least likely to have a drug-testing program, while only about 57 percent of the medium-size companies (25–499 employees) have some sort of program in place. This is significant because most of the firms in the state of Alaska are considered to be small to medium sized. Those companies that have a program report that the positive impact on their overall safety record, quality of job applicants, reduction of absenteeism, increased job performance and reduction of worker’s compensation costs more than compensated for the cost of the program.

To address some of the concerns that the Alaska construction industry has, mainly the cost and difficulty of monitoring a drug-testing program, the AGC’s AKCISAP was designed. This program will create a “Clean Card” drug and alcohol testing program that will be administered by a third party, who is neutral and liable, and would allow contractors to be in compliance with owners and workers’ compensation insurance requirements for a drug-testing program. With such a program, costs of testing would be less due to the program’s volume discount.

I encourage all firms who are part of the construction industry to find out more about this program by contacting the Anchorage AGC office. This is exactly the program that addresses all my concerns about drug testing and this is one bandwagon I’m jumping on.
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The legislative session in review

Evaluating the recent legislation session requires reflection on what was achieved and contemplation of what might have been. What went right, what went wrong, what was accomplished, what was left unfinished? Everyone will judge the accomplishments differently depending on the outcome of their favorite bills, and as is the norm in the first year of the two-year session, some important legislation was passed while other bills were carried over to next year.

Of particular concern to AGC were bills that deal with the costs of workers’ compensation to Alaskan businesses, Garvee Bonds and taxation of construction contracts by Alaskan municipalities. While AGC followed many bills, these three consumed the most time.

Workers’ Compensation
The saga of the workers’ compensation bill was probably the most interesting, but potentially disturbing tale of the session. For a quarter of a century, workers’ compensation legislation was crafted by an ad hoc committee of businessmen and labor leaders under the theory that the law is basically a compact between injured workers and their employers. The ad hoc approach largely eliminated politics from the process and provided a safe harbor for legislators and administrators. During its existence, the ad hoc committee enacted legislation that reduced the costs to employers without impinging upon the benefits to injured workers.

Recently, however, costs have started to skyrocket. Part of the reason was a reduction in the number of insurance carriers willing to write workers’ compensation in the state. Another major contributor to the cost escalation was the inflation experienced in medical costs.

Against this backdrop, the administration proposed legislation in 2003 that would address the cost escalation. For a variety of reasons, their effort was unsuccessful but it effectively destroyed the ad hoc process because it pitted management against labor and brought workers’ compensation back into the political arena.

Out of the ashes of this fiasco, a cadre of individuals inside the administration and from labor and management came together to resurrect the ad hoc committee. The ad hoc committee met regularly from October through January. The administration attended all these meetings and shared in problem identification and resolution. When a bill was forwarded to the governor in February it was widely acknowledged that given the complexity of problems a second, more encompassing bill would be introduced in 2006. Unfortunately, the ad hoc committee was informed their proposal didn’t go far enough and the administration would introduce its own bill, which would resolve all the system problems. Once again workers’ compensation became a political football. The problem with this approach is that the systemic changes that are needed are difficult to achieve in a political arena.

The bill that was finally passed does not address the major cost drivers of the workers’ compensation system. Medical cost escalation, vocational rehabilitation and return to work were dealt with perfunctory if at all. The hope is that the task force the bill created will be motivated to deal with the systemic changes necessary to bring workers’ compensation costs under control. Meanwhile anxious employers can adopt the Chicago Cubs refrain, “wait until next year!”

Garvee Bonds
For some reason, AGC naively assumed that the Garvee Bonds passed in 2002 would be an anomaly. Imagine our surprise when the concept not only reappeared but it was supported by many of our friends. In a matter of hours, a Garvee Bond Bill grew from $120 million to $183 million, and after AGC testimony against the Garvee Bill another $10 million was added. Unlike 2002, the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities also opposed the bonds this year. Some sanity appeared when the bill was on the House floor and the projects forwarded to the Senate called for slightly less than $100 million in bonds. The Senate however, after receiving many comments from contractors, decided against utilizing Garvee Bonds this year.

Sales Tax on Construction Contracts
In a veiled attempt to capture capital project dollars to support operating costs, several Alaskan communities passed ordinances allowing sales taxes on construction subcontracts. Fearing that this practice might spread and seeking to remedy problems caused when contractors were caught unaware of the requirement, the National Electric Contractors Association (NECA) contacted Senator Huggins about the problem. AGC soon joined the effort and as a result a bill was passed to prohibit the practice. Thyes Shaub, AGC’s lobbyist deserves a special mention for her hard work on the bill. Without her attention and knowledge, the bill would most likely have been carried over to next year.
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Most sell diuretics with names like Eliminator Carbo Shake, Naturally Clean Herbal Tea and Randomizer.

Some sell external devices like the $49.95 Whizzinator, “designed to be comfortably worn as an undergarment for extended periods of time.” That’s the device that grabbed national attention recently when an NFL player was detained at an airport after authorities found the prosthetic in his luggage, along with a packet of dehydrated urine.

All try to convince folks that their product will allow a drug user to pass a drug test, and at least one sells its products through retail outlets in Soldotna and Wasilla.

Now they face a skeptical Congress. The House Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations subpoenaed the records of the nation’s five largest anti-drug testing companies, requiring them to turn over any medical proof of the effectiveness of the products they sell and any complaints or lawsuits associated with their products.

It’s about time that someone cracked down on these flimflam artists and controlled what appears to be a multi-million dollar growth industry that puts innocent people at risk. Drug testing adulteration and substitution will not stop until Congress decides to take some strong action to truly punish federally regulated employees and applicants who choose to attempt to cheat.

As Kenneth Edgell, the former director of the Office of Drug and Alcohol Policy and Compliance, noted: “tampering with drug tests is a bad thing and a serious safety concern. When people do so, it is probably because they want to continue using drugs while also continuing to perform safety-sensitive duties. Continuing to do both these things is precisely what the DOT drug-testing program, in the interest of safety, is designed to prevent.”

There are three ways to beat a drug test: drinking huge quantities of fluids combined with diuretics to produce specimens that are too diluted to accurately test, substituting “clean” urine, and adding some ingredient to “fool” the screening test such as bleach, oven cleaner or Visine.

Third-party administrators like WorkSafe carefully train their staff to deter specimen tampering through rigidly controlled collection protocols. Our laboratory uses sophisticated countermeasures to detect specimen tampering and often uncovers community wide patterns. But we, like our counterparts around the country, are concerned by the lengths some drug users go to try to beat a drug test. They are resourceful, creative and have little fear that their misconduct will truly have a consequence.

The human cost of an adulterated or substituted drug specimen can be extremely fatal, as it was in the case of a school bus driver with a load of kids who crashed into a bridge because he was high on cocaine. Three days earlier, he had tested negative by substituting a clean specimen for his own.

The Chair of the House Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations plans to propose federal regulation by year’s end. WorkSafe and our trade organization, the Substance Abuse Program Administrators Association, will closely monitor the situation because it’s in everyone’s best interest to beat the drug-testing cheats.
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A faxed layoff notice one Friday morning in late April 1997 provided the impetus for James Cazort and Pat Lovell to form Pinnacle Construction Inc. The men were moved to Alaska by Omega Environmental in the winter of 1994-1995 to open a branch office for the company, which built convenience stores and put in fueling systems for Chevron and Tesoro. Two years later the Omega CEO decided to divest the company of its construction division, in spite of the fact that Omega had $7 million of work in Alaska lined up for the season.

“People got to know us personally more than they got to know the company,” Cazort said. “They were still expecting us to do the work.”

Some of the work ended up with the bonding company, but the contacts and the reputation for doing good work remained with Cazort and Lovell, who immediately started setting up Pinnacle Construction.

“When Omega pulled the plug, they still had contracts,” Lovell said. “The clients said, ‘but you guys did the work,’ and that’s where Pinnacle comes from.”

Lovell said the relationship with Chevron was spawned in the summer of 1994 when he came up with two guys from Seattle and one guy from Portland to help a local contractor with their Chevron projects.

Lovell has been building gas stations for 30 years; his forte is fuel systems. Cazort has a double degree in business administration and construction management, with experience as an estimator, project manager and operations manager for the construction division of a Seattle developer that did a lot of strip malls, convenience stores and gas stations.

Pinnacle Construction has always done commercial construction; in the beginning they did a lot of retail facilities for oil companies and have now diversified to general commercial buildings.

This summer Pinnacle Construction is building a mini-mall at Fort Richardson, remodeling a Chevron station in Palmer and a Burger King at Fort Richardson, and subbing for Neeser at Fort Wainwright. Recent work includes the Rabbit Creek fire station addition for the Municipality of Anchorage, a dormitory for AVTEC in Seward, a telephone switching center in Glennallen, and several fast food and convenience store remodels. The company continues to do the fuel systems work. They also perform service and maintenance for these facilities.

Pinnacle Construction has an in-house electrical division and works as an electrical subcontractor for other generals.

Cazort says the faxed layoff was “a blessing in disguise. The previous employer paid to move us up here and now we live in God’s country, and it’s beautiful! We managed to get a couple years of a track record under our belts to get established, so people knew who we were.”

Cazort and Lovell joined the AGC of Alaska in 1997, the same year they founded Pinnacle Construction. Like many members, the company participates in the health insurance program, but that’s not the only reason for membership. Lovell says they get involved a lot with safety classes such as first aid, CPR, Hazmat re-certification and training on excavation safety. Cazort says they have also attended the annual convention and participate in contractor forums, seminars and training.

“Advantages? Absolutely, it’s a package deal; you wouldn’t join AGC if you were just going to take their insurance. There’s not one particular item—there’s such a variety. They’re big lobbyists for federal funding, it’s such a big item in Alaska construction, and we’ve been doing a lot more public than private work the last few years.”

Pinnacle Construction is a traditional contractor with jobs that are a mix of negotiated work, standing contracts and open competitive bids. Cazort and Lovell have built the company on a pretty straightforward philosophy.

“We try to run a clean ship and be honest and ethical and make a little bit of money on every job and not
gouge anyone ever,” Cazort said. “Hopefully, they’ll all be repeat clients. The formula seems to be working quite well.”

Their purpose is clear.

“Our goal is to be a responsible, reputable contractor,” Lovell said. “We are a contractor that doesn’t take short cuts, that doesn’t cut corners. When people spend money with us they get what they pay for. Our name means a lot.”

Pinnacle Construction has evolved over the years in the scope and volume of the work they do.

“We made some major steps from underground fuel,” Lovell said. “We broadened our horizons. We’re getting into more general contracting, more work like the Fort Richardson mini-mall. Once we’re real comfortable doing that type work then we make the decision to take it up another step.”

One step the company is taking is design-build work.

“We’re just getting our feet a little wet,” Lovell said. “There are pluses and minuses—it takes a little adjustment. Once you get relationships built it benefits both owners and contractors. There is a whole lot less chance of things being left out or not spelled out clearly, it takes out the gray areas for the contractors.”

Cazort says design build projects can be a very rewarding experience because owners can get the jobs going faster and contractors can have a say in the design process, which cuts down on change orders and results in a win-win relationship. “It decreases what I call hindsight costs to the owners,” Cazort said.

When all the projects are going, Pinnacle Construction has about 20 employees from May through November, and the core group of four has grown to 10 who work year-round.

“The electrical work takes some of the peaks and valleys out, and the service work keeps us busy throughout the year,” Cazort said. “As we’ve grown and gotten larger projects, some of those projects last into the winter months, and employment swells in the summer—nearly doubles.”

And that can present a challenge with the looming workforce shortage.

“Right now there’s a lot of work and if you’re not paying top-notch wages, it’s hard to get and keep good employees,” Lovell said. “This is an indication that there is already a shortage.”

There is no shortage of contractors, though.

“In general it’s a very competitive environment, and you have to be the low cost provider,” Cazort said. “You’re not going to get work unless your cost basis is lower than the competition, which is more of a function of your overhead than it is your bid costs for the job. That’s a challenge, keeping overhead low with all the costs rising—utilities, rent, wages, insurance. The key for us is to mix the bigger projects that have lower margins with the smaller projects that have higher margins.”

Some overhead costs are worse than others.

“Insurance is one of the highest expense we have as business owners, and workers’ compensation is a large portion of it,” Lovell said.

While there are still no answers to the workers’ comp dilemma, Cazort has seen the company’s experience modifier rate go down since instituting a random drug-testing program. Other rising costs are seen in steel and concrete, but Cazort sees that as more of an issue for owners.

“As a contractor all you can do is bid your cost, and if the owner can afford your price the project goes, if not, their decision is out of your control. It’s simply a direct cost. We haven’t seen fewer jobs because of it.”

The company is actually seeing more work these days.

“We’re booked months in advance and would have to turn down a big project if it came in too late in the season,” Cazort said. “If I had a call today from someone that wanted a large project done, I’d have to turn it down. That’s a real dilemma—take on that one extra job then have all your jobs turn out sour. The fall is a challenge; however, the impact of winter is being diminished. Owners are paying more to have work done in the winter, plus the last couple of winters have been milder and frost hasn’t been as deep. Anchorage is becoming more of a year-round construction environment. I know when I first moved here you only saw two or three jobs in the winter at the most—that would be a really slow year now.”

Cazort attributes their success to the way they do business.

“We’re more results oriented than how you get there. We have a conservative approach—controlled, managed, steady growth. As we continue to build our equity, our bonding capacity continues to grow too. All the equipment we have is owned outright, there’s no long-term debt. The key with equipment is to know when is it appropriate to own and when to lease. We look at it every year. Just like, when is it better to self-perform the work and when to subcontract.”

Cazort also has a winning management style.

“I did a little informal survey with all the employees, and asked what do you like most about working for Pinnacle Construction. They like the people they work with—we’re just a big family, a team. And that was really rewarding, that’s an intangible thing, there’s no way to compensate for it. We have a good corporate culture. I don’t micromanage and I give people room to do their jobs. That’s one of the things I know people appreciate—the autonomy they have to do their job and know they aren’t being micromanaged—because we all have different ways of doing our jobs. There’s certain people who do things better than I do, with different areas of expertise, so I allow people to do what they do best. I have to accept the fact that they know more than I do in some areas.”

That attitude has led to Pinnacle Construction’s success, and Cazort says they intend to remain a player in the Alaska construction industry.

“We just want to continue to have regulated growth and participate in commercial building construction with a mix of private and public work, while we try and maintain the relationships with the clients we have—to take care of their needs.”
Safety meetings

Now that the busy summer construction season is here, crews are busy at work trying to accomplish projects during the good weather. It is this time of the year that your safety efforts really pay off!

Most contractors complete required safety training during the fall, winter or early spring, but do need to maintain safety awareness through the summer. Safety meetings are an excellent way to accomplish this awareness for your workers.

When we talk with clients, safety meetings seem to be one of the most dreaded tasks in the workplace. Here are a few suggestions for conducting effective safety meetings and creating more enthusiasm and buy-in from your crews.

Tailgate Meetings

Also known as “toolbox” safety meetings, these brief sessions provide an opportunity to start out the morning or a specific task with a safety emphasis. Some companies go around the group, with each worker talking about their tasks for the day and what safety controls they will use to avoid incidents. Others use this process to meet and discuss hazards before doing any non-routine work, or particularly hazardous tasks. These usually last no more than ten minutes and are easy to prepare for.

Participative

This style of safety meeting creates buy-in from your workers, is easy to prepare for, and can produce some really great results! Your job is to pick a topic that your crew can address by responding to a question you pose to the group. For example: “How can we get a higher rate of using fall protection on the job-site?” You simply post this question on a flipchart or whiteboard, then let the group brainstorm all the ideas they can think of. Brainstorming rules apply here – total participation, no evaluation, encourage all ideas – write everything down. The next step is to go through the list, combine duplicates, and prioritize the list of actions. Assign individuals to complete the tasks and be sure to include a completion date.

Use the Five Ps

When getting ready to present a safety meeting, remember these simple steps:

- Prepare – you should take about four times longer to prepare a meeting, than to present it. It takes some time to develop key points, create an effective lesson plan and think of ways to get participation.
- Pinpoint – keep the focus tight. In twenty minutes you can only cover 3-4 main points, don’t have the group drinking from a fire hose!
- Personalize – make the topic relevant to your crew. Use examples from the worksite; tell them “what’s in it for me” (WIFM).
- Picturize – most adults are visual. Use graphics, handouts, pictures, etc. The retention level of a twenty minute lecture is close to zero.
- Prescribe – you want your folks to change their behavior or adopt a new safety process. Ask people to do something specific with the information you have shared, ask for a commitment.

Other Ideas

You can also use some of these ideas to make safety meetings better:

- Rotate responsibility between individuals; have a different crew member lead the tailgate meeting each day, or prepare a safety meeting.
- Use case studies from actual incidents either from within your company or within the trade.
- Ask, don’t lecture – adults usually know the answers, let them participate.
- Keep it short – longer is not better!
- Use guests and/or peers to present a safety meeting (supervisors or safety coordinators from other companies, trade associations, vendors or whoever!) to keep up the interest level.

Finally, if you only have two minutes to prepare for a safety meeting, use this tip: Grab bag round robin. Fill a bag with items of personal protective equipment, tools or pages from your MSDS book. Have each participant reach into the bag and deliver a 2-minute talk about how to use the item, or what the safety features are.

Safety meetings don’t have to be boring! Try some of these ideas, and let us know if you have other favorite techniques.

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What can you tell us about your company’s history?

I started in the fence business in 1957 in Arizona, came to Alaska in 1969, and worked for Mt. McKinley Fence, first in Anchorage, then as Manager in Fairbanks. In 1984 I started Denali Fenceworks. I’ve been in the fence business for going on 50 years.

We primarily do chain link fence, though in past years we have done significant quantities of highway guardrails and highway traffic signs. We supply chain link product all over the state, and we do a lot of material sales to residential customers who want to build their own fences.

We have a 10,000 square foot building, which is unusual in the fence business. When winter hits we are able to keep all our equipment and a significant amount of material inside the building, which helps us keep our production level up. We’ve done quite a few major projects – highways, airports, prisons – and we do a lot of military work. In March 2002 we were a featured contractor in World Fence News, a monthly publication of the fence industry. We were on the cover and the featured article for a 30,000-foot project we did at Ft. Wainwright; which, prior to the recent boundary fence projects on the military bases, was the largest fence project in 20 years in the state of Alaska.

We average eight people in the field, one in the shop, and counting myself, four in the office. My two daughters work in the office, one nephew works with me, and my wife is still involved in managerial capacity. I guess I could say most of my nephews and all my children have worked here, so it is very much a family business. I believe in taking good care of my employees; I’ve had field personnel with me as long as 15 years, and I’ve instituted health care and retirement accounts for my employees. That’s part of all being a team. I worked in the field 15 years so I have a lot of empathy with the guys who perform the physical work. My philosophy with them is to treat them how I would have wanted to be treated, which didn’t always happen. I consider myself very fair and always encourage my people to ask questions, and I listen. If there is a problem, I can’t help fix it if I don’t know anything about it. I like to keep everything out in the open where we can be one happy family and support each other.

We’re not year-round; our normal season is May 1, depending on frost, until about the first week in November when we pretty much shut down, except for special work. Once the snow is gone in most places, we test the ground; it has to thaw down to 30 inches before we can start. The earliest we ever started was April 27, and one year it was June 1. May 1 is our target date, but we’re usually not full bore until May 15; though people will call as early as February and say they need a fence, or want us to come out and give them an estimate.

What is your philosophy and mission statement for your company?

Our reputation is that number one we do quality work, we have good people and we’re an on time, on schedule company—and our customers like that. I always tell my workmen that I give them my best and I expect the same in return – I take care of them and they take care of me.

We emphasize teamwork and everybody is important. The main theme is we’re very dependable. If we say we’re going to be somewhere we’re there, and when we say we’re going to be done we are. We haven’t had many complaints – and we always meet the contractors’ schedules. We have a lot of contractors and repeat customers who call us to do work because we are reliable. Even if I’ve been doing business with that contractor 30 years, I always give a price first, because we keep everything straight up and try to avoid surprises. We’re well known with contractors for our excellent paperwork; our people in the office do great work – we get a lot of positive feedback from contractors.

We haven’t had any major problems with performance of our work, but we have had some problems with getting paid timely – that’s part of the business, especially on large, long-term or some of the more recent and complex military jobs. Some contractors we trust and rely on more than others,
there’s a great variety out there, but most of them we’ve worked with are really good. When you are straightforward with them then everything gets set up and it’s appreciated both ways.

Where is the company presently in Alaska’s construction industry in terms of scope, volume, and location of work?

I like working in Fairbanks, I like the people and I love the summers. For the last 16 years I have spent most of the winter in Arizona. It’s a great way to revitalize me and gets me ready for the next season. The season is a push, we work 60 hours a week, and as an owner I put in more hours than that, though I have learned to delegate. I was working up to 80-100 hours a week at times; that’s what prompted me to bring Scott Colledge in. He’s a very important part of the company. He handles all the residential sales and a lot of the commercial work, supervises the fleet and oversees the company safety program. He’s been in the fence business 20-some years and I really depend on him a lot. I manage things overall, but these days I pretty much limit my bid work to large contracts and part of the other commercial and industrial work.

I’ve worked at one time all over the state, but now I concentrate mostly on the Interior, for a couple of reasons. One, it is easier to manage the work, and two, there’s enough fence work here to keep us busy. Most of the guys in the business all know each other and have worked together at one time or another. I am very happy with what we do. We control the major portion of chain link fencing in our market area.

What kinds of things are unique to doing business in Fairbanks?

The shortness of the season is a challenge. Basically we have six months to make a year’s living. The hardest thing is just maintaining a schedule because we’re usually involved in a lot of projects at one time. We will have several ongoing during a season, and the fence contractor is the last one to come in on a job. There is a big rush at the beginning, in May, to get things going; then at the end things can get very complicated. Severe weather conditions start earlier in the Interior so there is a rush at the end of the season to get all the posts set before the ground freezes. We are often stretching fence in the snow.

I’ve noticed it’s a lot harder these days to find responsible, dependable, productive workers. It seems most of the kids growing up these days aren’t focused into labor-type work; so it’s hard to find young employees with the right work ethic. Fence building is hard, physical labor, and a person has to be really strong and have good endurance to meet the demands of our work season. We train all our new workers, but some people have it and some just don’t. The turnover rate is higher now than it was 10 years ago, so it’s difficult to maintain a seasoned workforce.

The work is always interesting, always challenging, we are always looking for new and different ways of doing things. We keep up with what is going on in the industry and are constantly looking for new products to offer our customers. Like most people in the fence business we are pretty innovative; you have to be flexible in the way you approach projects because of the challenging landscapes and conditions we deal with.

How do you think the base realignment and closure will affect Fairbanks and your business?

If it even comes through it will affect the amount of work we do at Eielson, although it may provide some extra work as they shut down the unused portions. The National Guard will continue to stay there and expand their operations, and the six months it’s used for training will stay the same. It’s not going to close down – it’s just going to change the way it works. The biggest impact will be an economic impact on North Pole from losing 2,500 people – that’s pretty significant in a borough this size. It should have only a small impact on us as a company. Right now the Department of Homeland Security is providing lots of work for all the contractors. Most contractors can’t find enough people to handle the work that’s available. I feel Fort Wainwright is very secure, and the missile site at Fort Greely is still providing a lot of work. We have the University here, and Northern Region DOT. Fairbanks services the North Slope oil fields – there is still plenty to do.

What is your connection with the AGC of Alaska?

I’ve been a member of AGC ever since I started the business. I’ve found them to be very important and very helpful; the people in the AGC office up here have been very good. They are invaluable to me as far as keeping up with what’s going on in construction. During the winter I have the AGC Bulletin sent to me in Arizona. When I see a project I’m interested in I have my office staff send me the drawings and information I need to prepare a quote. I’m not much of a joiner, although we do support the golf and bowling tournaments. We also belong to the American Fence Association Inc. and the National Federation of Independent Businesses.

Are you active in your community?

We support the Alaska Dog Mushers Association, we contribute to the Salvation Army, the Food Bank and I do a lot of donations to the churches. With the hours I work I tend not to get involved in social activities. We always support Monroe Catholic School and the Fairbanks Symphony Association in their annual fundraising auctions, and I’ve sponsored a few athletes and athletic teams, including dog mushers such as Rick Swenson and Ramey Brooks.

What challenges do you see facing the construction industry in Alaska?

The biggest challenge facing the construction industry in Alaska is actually the aging workforce – the experienced, professional construction workers. It’s getting harder and harder to replace seasoned workers who move or retire with workers of equal quality. I’m really lucky with my company. Ever since we started, we have worked a full season and have had 60 hours a week for our men. I feel we’re in a good niche.

What is the secret of your success?

Hard work, honesty and a desire to succeed – I enjoy the challenges, the competition, and the feeling of accomplishment I have at the completion of a project.
Court expands protection of species

While lands and waters subject to federal control are governed by a federal Endangered Species Act, land subject to state control is subject to Alaska’s own Endangered Species Act, first enacted in 1971. A 2004 decision of the Alaska Supreme Court interpreting the state act significantly expanded the ability of environmental protection groups to effectively oppose projects proposed for land or waters controlled by the state. The language of the Alaska Endangered Species Act prohibits any “species or subspecies” from being harvested, captured or propagated except by special permit issued by the Commissioner of Fish & Game. But in undertaking environment reviews of proposed projects, the state takes into account the effect on any endangered “species and subspecies.” To the extent that the term “species or subspecies” is interpreted broadly, that is, to cover more animals than if it were interpreted narrowly, a development project is unlikely to affect a large, geographically widespread population. But to the extent that “species” is interpreted to mean a group of animals inhabiting a single area, it is much easier to show that a proposed project will affect the “species” and thus be stopped.

The case involved the Cook Inlet beluga population, which appeared to be declining. In May 2000, the National Marine Fisheries Service designated the Cook Inlet belugas as a depleted stock, but refused to classify them as endangered or threatened. Instead, the federal agency issued regulations limiting the harvest by Alaska Natives subsistence hunters, and concluded that limiting the harvest would solve the population decline.

The Alaska Center for the Environmental and similar groups then petitioned Alaska’s Commissioner of Fish & Game to designate the belugas as endangered. The commissioner determined that the Cook Inlet belugas were not threatened with extinction, and therefore did not warrant being placed on Alaska’s Endangered Species Act list. The commissioner also alternatively ruled that the Cook Inlet belugas were not a separate “species or subspecies” within the meaning of the law. The determination was appealed to first the Superior Court and then to the Alaska Supreme Court. The Supreme Court affirmed the commissioner’s decision that the Cook Inlet beluga whales were not in danger of extinction, specifically approving the commissioner’s process and method of reaching the ultimate decision.

Once the court affirmed the commissioner’s decision, nothing further remained for adjudication. But the court took the unusual step in proceeding to address the commissioner’s alternate ruling on whether the Cook Inlet belugas constituted a separate “species or subspecies.” The problem was that the commissioner had interpreted the terms “species and subspecies” “in their strict ‘technical sense’—that is, as formal taxonomic classifications accepted in the published scientific literature.” The court held that the legislature never intended to limit “these words [to] such a static and constricted ‘technical meaning’ when it adopted the act.” The court reasoned that it was “unlikely” that the legislature would have wanted to avoid threats to fish and wildlife only after they had gained formal recognition by an isolated scientific discipline.” The problem with taxonomy, according to the court, was that the scientific discipline for classifying animals and plants only viewed life in “historical perspective” and that taxonomists could not be expected to “attach much urgency to the recognition and acceptance of new and emerging classifications.”

Rather the court thought that a better interpretation of the phrase “species and subspecies” was its “common meaning,” such as that found in the Academic Press Dictionary of Science. The court concluded that a much better definition for “subspecies” was a group identified by common “core features,” including “geographical isolation; distinctive characteristics, often genetically determined; and a retained ability to interbreed with other members of the same general species.” The term “subspecies” should not be limited to a classification “in the rigid ‘technical sense’ of general agreement or acceptance as reflected by scientific literature.” Instead, the court’s definition should be used because it was “broader and more flexible.” As a result, the commissioner was admonished to not rely exclusively on “generally accepted views of a single branch of science [taxonomy].” The commissioner must take into account the “views of informed scientists from all relevant disciplines.”

The court’s concern was that the commissioner had relied on standard conventional taxonomic classifications, when the environmental groups had brought forth “abundant scientific data suggesting the Cook Inlet belugas are both genetically distinctive and uniquely isolated from other beluga populations,” which the commissioner had not considered. The court’s point was that the commissioner should have at least considered this other information. The court then invited the groups to repetition the commissioner in light of the court’s direction to the commissioner to take this “abundant scientific data” into account.

Unless the legislature specifies more precisely its intentions for the phrase “species and subspecies,” the commissioner will be using this “broad and flexible” definition of species in forming environmental assessments of future development projects. 

Robert J. (Bob) Dickson is a partner of the Anchorage law firm Atkinson, Conway & Gagnon, Inc.
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Once considered the last frontier, Alaska has always presented unique challenges for those who live and do business here. For many years, a fast, competitive and reliable way to bring vital goods to Alaska simply didn’t exist.

In September of 1975, during the height of construction of the trans-Alaska oil pipeline, Totem Ocean Trailer Express, or TOTE as they are commonly known, was founded with the idea that moving goods to Alaska could be done more efficiently and with greater speed. Today, three decades later, TOTE not only continues to expedite cargo to Alaska, including important project cargo, they continue to renew their commitment to delivering vital goods for Alaska’s future.

Headquartered in Federal Way, Washington, TOTE has offices and cargo terminals in Tacoma, Anchorage and Fairbanks. In addition, there are offices in Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Portland. It’s from these strategic locations that TOTE efficiently routes Alaska bound cargo.

The unwavering commitment to serve Alaska is at the heart of TOTE’s decision to invest in new ships, terminals, equipment and technology. In 2003 TOTE built two new 840-foot vessels to meet the growing needs of its customers. The ships, the first two members of the Orca class, are 50 feet longer and 26 feet wider than TOTE’s original vessels, furthering the Company’s commitment to serve Alaska’s contractors for decades to come.

TOTE gives you the flexibility of having your cargo picked up anywhere in North America and delivered to your job site in Alaska. When you call on TOTE’s team of transportation specialists you know you will be aboard the most advanced state-of-the-art ship with an experienced team assembled for the challenges of the Alaska trade.

If a customer’s cargo can move on an interstate highway or dirt road, if it has wheels or tracks, these vessels can take it. If a customer needs to ship a backhoe from Kalamazoo to Kaltag, structural steel and milling machinery for a gold mine the size of Fort Knox, a turbine to a new power plant, TOTE can
move the cargo. A key to TOTE’s speed and efficiency is their Roll On/Roll Off (RO/RO) method of loading. Instead of loading containers one at a time with a crane almost anything can simply be driven, or rolled, onto the ships.

Curt Stoner, Alaska Sales Manager, is excited about TOTE’s new capabilities.

“Through most of the 1990s TOTE’s vessel capacity was insufficient to accommodate the needs of the construction and oil and gas industry. With the investment in our new vessels, terminals, and equipment fleet TOTE changed that dramatically. Over the past five years TOTE has had real success moving materials for some of the largest projects in Alaska.”

TOTE’s new vessels meet the needs of project cargo shippers and alleviate most cargo size constraints. The new ships were built with 85 percent of the deck space covered, including an overhead clearance of 19 feet on the main deck to accommodate over-height and over-dimensional freight and TOTE’s ships are specially designed for the rigors of the tough Alaskan voyage. A unusually high freeboard and a unique protective cover on the bow combine to keep cargo dry while trailers, machinery, vehicle and other cargo is stowed on the lower decks.

The Midnight Sun and North Star sail from Tacoma each week, early Thursday and Saturday mornings, arriving in Anchorage to begin early morning unloading operations on Sundays and Tuesdays.

TOTE’s crews load and unload a ship at the same time, which means that in less than twelve hours the vessel is completely ready for the return voyage. That’s significantly less time than it takes a barge or container ship to do the same job. TOTE uses its own line-haul trucking and trailer-on-a-flatcar service, for next day delivery to Fairbanks and the Kenai Peninsula. The delivery of cargo and equipment in a matter of days provides construction companies the ability to take advantage of short windows of opportunity.

TOTE works around the clock to ensure that goods arrive safely and efficiently and to keep things organized and moving quickly utilizing the most modern, computerized cargo management system to control the movement of cargo every step of the way. Because of the system’s reliability, TOTE is ISO 9001-2000 certified; a testimony to their commitment to quality service and safety.

TOTE’s investment in state-of-the-art, environmentally friendly vessels like the Midnight Sun and the North Star also reaffirms the company’s commitment to a healthy and prosperous Alaska. The ships feature clean, fuel efficient engines and fresh water ballast to help keep the pristine waters of Alaska pure.

Along with TOTE’s innovative equipment and customer service the company is involved in helping Alaskan communities grow and prosper in other ways as well. They offer free shipping of recyclable materials back to the Lower 48 through the Alaskans for Litter Prevention & Recycling program. They hire workers in Alaska through the Alaskans for Alaskan Jobs program and they serve Alaskan communities through charitable giving and in-kind donations for non-profits, education and medical research.

Totem Ocean Trailer Express is a company that is very proud to play a part in helping the 49th state grow and prosper, and proud to offer its customers a unique advantage when transporting to Alaska. It is a company that is committed to being a reliable, competitive and responsive transportation partner to its customers and the people of Alaska—now and for years to come.

In essence, TOTE is a floating expressway, bridging the gap between Alaska and the Lower 48. Tonight, somewhere at sea, a ship from Totem Ocean Trailer Express will be bringing the world to Alaska.
Breaking trail in education

In a prior article I mentioned the possibility of an AGC Construction Career Academy. Well, it's here!

In April our AGC chapter applied for a “matching-fund” grant from AGC of America to start an academy. AGC received a grant from US Department of Labor (US DOL) for start-ups of seven career academies.

We put our grant package together partnering with the Mat-Su Borough School District and held our breath. About 15 chapters applied so the competition was keen. Our proposal was selected as one of the seven!

Our plan originally was to open the academy in the fall of '07 in the school district's new career building. Construction was one of the career pathways earmarked to move to the new center.

The AGC of America Workforce Development Committee is the force behind the AGC career academy model. The first AGC of America academy opened three years ago in Chattanooga, Tennessee at East Ridge High School. The chair of the committee is Ron Tanner, a contractor and member of the AGC East Tennessee chapter. The chapter Executive Director, Roger Tudor, and Ron Tanner have built an impressive industry team and together lead the charge to make the academy a success—and it is!

The Principal of East Ridge embraced the concept of the AGC model. The craft instructors and academic teachers are a marvelous cohesive team. Each instructor brought into the career academy concept and worked closely with the industry team on all issues including academic curriculum. I've attended the Workforce Development Committee meetings for three years and have watched the model develop. The East Ridge Principal, Cheri Dedmon; English teacher, Denise Hearn; math teacher, Mary Jenkins; carpenter instructor, Carter Adams; masonry instructor, Steve Price have attended a couple of Workforce Development committee meetings asking the contractor members to assist in how the academic curriculum can be translated to construction. The teachers work as a team and they all know what's going on with each student in every class.

I think it's important for industry team members and all our contractors to understand that not every teacher is willing or comfortable asking industry for ideas on how to convert their academic curriculum to accommodate industry and the academy. It takes teachers who believe in the career academy concept and are willing to let industry work shoulder to shoulder with them revising curriculum to address construction. It takes very special and dedicated people willing to set aside their ownership of the curriculum.

That's the backbone of the AGC model—industry and teachers converting academic curriculum to construction, which will complement the craft classes. It's a delicate balance because the curriculum must meet the standards of the school district and yet be converted to satisfy construction in order to be the most effective for the students.

Last October I attended the East Ridge annual Open House. Thanks to the Construction Industry Progress Fund (CIPF) Board I was able to take Kris Forrester of Mat-Su Borough School District with me. The Tennessee industry team, the AGC chapter, and the dedicated teachers together have created “magic” in the East Ridge High School!

At our chapter's last convention I held a workshop on the AGC model of career academies. I shared about East Ridge and how it could work here in our state.

The next critical step was to identify the industry team leader who has the passion for the concept and who could commit the amount of time required to create our own magic.

Well, I'm pleased to share with you that “ideal” person stepped forward and not only did he commit to the role, but he secured the support of his company! I'm proud and pleased to introduce you to our AGC Industry Team Leader, Mr. Glen “Knick” Knickerbocker of the Unit Company.

In his career Knick has taught carpentry in an apprenticeship program and he developed curriculum and taught at the King Career Center. So, he can speak “education-ese” with the best of them!

I approached Mat-Su Borough School District a year ago asking if they'd be interested in partnering with AGC to create a Construction Career Academy using the AGC of America model. They said, “Yes!” So, we began putting the pieces together with the goal in mind that when their new career center opens fall of '07 we'd launch the AGC career academy. Kris, Knick, and I met with the
school district’s superintendent and learned that he is onboard with the model, too!

Meanwhile I considered funding. I learned the cost for the first year at East Ridge and that AGC of America would likely receive a grant from US DOL for start-up academies.

So, when the grant application was announced our team was ready to start! We drafted, we reviewed, we discussed and I gave myself an added duty of worrying and fussing! (I take my role seriously! Just shipping the proposal books to Washington, D.C., by the deadline was drama that required much worrying.) But, our application was successful!

However, in order to take full advantage of the US DOL funds we’re launching our academy fall of ’06. We can do this on a somewhat modified scale and then fall of ’07 move into the new facility and expand the academic curriculum!

We have lots of work ahead of us, but for our contractors this could be a fast and productive return on investment dollars.

We have the support of the AGC Education Committee! The Committee unanimously agreed that the career academy is a priority this year. The Committee is part of the team and is following the progress with interest and stands ready to support in any way asked of them. Their support and interest is valuable.

I’ve been promoting this for over a year and I must say it’s very rewarding to see the team members working, planning, and understanding the model—it’s not just me anymore!

So, when the academy opens fall of ’06 it will be the first one in Alaska! Our industry is “taking the lead,” again. We’re “breaking trail.”

Stay tuned you’ll want to be part of this!
Protect your business from fraud, protect your clients

Make your business offender-hostile

It doesn’t matter who you are or what kind of business you run, you have to be on the lookout for fraud. And surprisingly, going online to manage your finances is one of the best ways to do that.

Despite growing concerns about online fraud, a recent survey from the Better Business Bureau showed that only 11.6 percent of all known identity fraud was computer-based in 2004. The remainder was paper-based. This means you and your employees form the first line of defense against identity fraud.

Keeping up to date on the latest information and training on fraud prevention is important for employers and employees alike. It’s easier and more cost-effective to prevent your business from becoming a victim than to deal with the consequences of being one. Here are a few things you can do to help prevent different kinds of identity fraud:

**Check fraud**

Sophisticated desktop software and printers make check duplication and creation easier for the bad guys. But the best prevention tools are still the basic ones.

- Check ID closely. Look at the signature and photo to verify they match the check presenter.
- Take your time to look at the checks your customers give you. Fraudsters count on a busy person to overlook a bad check.
- Trust your instincts. If you have a strange feeling about someone, take time to scrutinize the transaction.

**Credit card fraud**

- Compare the signature on the credit card to the one on the credit slip.
- If the card has a photo, be sure it’s of the person presenting the card.
- Check ID when the card is used.
- Watch for suspicious activity, and go with your instincts.

It’s also a good idea to use online banking tools or cash-management software for your business. Managing your finances electronically allows you to detect and resolve fraud quickly, ideally without sustaining major financial losses.

The Better Business Bureau study also shows that those who detected fraud using paper statements only lost eight times as much money as those who detected identity fraud by monitoring their accounts online and electronically.

Give your business an “offender-hostile” reputation. If you discover a customer trying to defraud you, call the police and press charges. The bad guys have a network of their own and they let each other know which businesses should be avoided.

Weeding out these “bad” customers is the best service you can give to your “good” ones. Cutting fraud losses allows you to keep more of the money you earn and avoid passing on the expense in higher prices. And every consumer can appreciate that kind of service, no matter what kind of business you operate.

**Don Krohn** is Security Officer at First National Bank Alaska and presents fraud prevention seminars to civic groups and businesses statewide. He can be reached at (907) 777-3471.

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New industry-wide program seeks drug-free workforce

By SUSAN HARRINGTON

There’s a new trust fund for the Alaska construction industry that aims to assure a drug-free working environment. Created by the Associated General Contractors of Alaska, Alaska State District Council of Laborers Local 341, Operating Engineers Local 302, and Teamsters Local 959, the plan provides third party administration of an industry-wide drug and alcohol testing program that offers reduced costs, increased efficiency and widespread screening to create a pool of drug-free workers, according to AGC of Alaska spokesperson Barbara Rowland.

The “Clean Card” program is modeled after a plan in Washington State that was to initially cover about 10,000 construction workers in Central and Western Washington when it began in January 2005. Kib Servine of Spokane, Washington, who is with the Laborers Northwest Cooperation Fund, has donated time, expertise and advice over the last year to the AGC of Alaska’s Alcohol and Drug Task Force to put together the Alaska Construction Industry Substance Abuse Program (AKCISAP), which has a targeted August 1, 2005 start date.

AGC is now in the process of forming a trust to fund the program. The employer ID number has been obtained, which provides legal status; and the group is in the process of applying for non-profit status with the IRS. The third party administrators have been selected, which will help move the pro-

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gram quickly forward. Welfare and Pension Administration Service, Inc. (WPAS) of Seattle, Wash., has been chosen to provide Trust administration services, and CleanWorkForce, Inc. (CWF), a division of WPAS, has been selected to administer the substance abuse program. Rowland says it is all new to AGC and the project is on the fast track, although the task force has been working on it for over a year. “Contractors talking led to a task force being formed, then AGC brought Labor to the table, and all worked together for something we can all be proud of,” Rowland said.

Construction management and organized labor are equally represented with three trustees each in the Alaska Construction Industry Substance Abuse Program:

- Bardie Scarbrough - Wilder Construction Company
- Sandy Bartorillo - Cornerstone Construction, Inc.
- Mike Brady - Ken Brady Construction Co., Inc.
- Mike Gallagher - Alaska State District Council of Laborers, Local 341
- Bob Morigeau - Operating Engineers Local 302
- Scott Bridges - Teamsters Local 959

Funding initially will come from participating employers with a flat fee paid per month for each participating employee, and then soon after through a flat cents per hour contribution to the employee benefits packaged, to be collected through the union welfare and pension administrators and deposited into the trust fund. There are provisions for collecting additional funds for the non-bargaining unit employees of those participating companies as well.

Why an industry-based program? The plan will be a win-win for employers and employees. “The Clean Card program puts all employees in one of three random pools,” Rowland said. “The third party administrator takes responsibility to select individuals to drug test and pool the information so that when an employer calls the union hall for dispatch they can request a Clean Card applicant who is ‘program compliant.’ It’ll be an efficiency for both employers and employees—it’ll save everyone money—it’ll save everyone time and effort.”

Many contractors often hire temporary employees who may work only one day or one week. If company policy mandates drug testing for each new hire, contractors end up spending one day to a week of down time waiting for test results, in addition to the money spent for each drug test. From an employee perspective, they may
have multiple employers and a constant issue they have to deal with—they are subjected to multiple drug tests each year and they can't work until they pass each drug test.

The program provides for three separate random pools of employees:

- Bargaining unit employees
- DOT employees—Employers will benefit from the administration, record retention and background checks done by the third party administrator.
- Non-bargaining unit employees, e.g. office staff and supervisors

Ironworkers will not be participating—they are ahead of the curve, having already instituted a random program of their own. Others are committed, and some are sitting on the fence, waiting for AGC to start the program and to see how it works. We expect it to catch on very quickly after we implement it, and we anticipate very strong participation in 2006 for the entire year.”

The program calls for the five-panel urine analysis test required by U.S. DOT, with breath alcohol testing if there is a reason. Testing conducted will be for:

- Pre-employment
- Random
- Reasonable suspicion
- Post accident

There is an Employee Assistance Program component whereby when there is a positive test result the Medical Review Officer will investigate and provide an initial confidential assessment of individuals to recommend appropriate education, counseling or rehabilitation.

Construction’s safety culture and drug testing culture is evolving and is coming from the top. “When construction company owners and union management create that culture, it will become an extremely positive and respectable thing for our industry,” Rowland said. “Some companies and unions are slightly skeptical about the program, but once we roll out the product and they see how it works and see it’s endorsed by insurance companies and project owners that make drug testing a requirement, their minds may change.”

Clean employees who currently work alongside non-tested employees are often nervous about their own safety. As more and more contractors, subcontractors and unions join into the program, the confidence factor in the workforce among peers will increase substantially.

Companies that don’t test will continue to attract employees who use drugs, but over time those contractors will win fewer jobs as more owners and insurance companies require drug testing programs. Employers who currently test pay more to compete now, but more and more it will be a competitive advantage to be drug-free.” In addition, standards are expected to tighten up to require subcontractors to have random drug testing programs in place. Rowland says there are loopholes now, but as time goes on those will be closing.

“The best benefit will be a clean workforce,” Rowland said, “with fewer workers’ compensation cases and less down time. The cleaner the workforce, the safer the work place.”

Contact Dick Cattanach at dick@agcak.org or Barbara Rowland at barbara@agcak.org for more information.
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International Union of Operating Engineers Local #302 and the AGC of Alaska sponsor a training facility in Palmer.

George Tugstuk is a direct indenture to the Operating Engineers Apprenticeship program from Job Corps.

Bill Mairs (left) teaches apprentice Keegan Busse heavy equipment mechanics.

Ann Lindsey operates a roller at the new sprint race track in Palmer.

Tom Brewer trains another operator.
the New Workforce

Alaska Vocational Technical Center in Seward is a division of the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development. [http://avtec.labor.state.ak.us/](http://avtec.labor.state.ak.us/)

Industrial Electronics

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Job Corps

Job Corps and the Operating Engineers work together to train construction workers.

Heavy equipment welder

Gavin Ashing

HVAC training

Alaska Maritime Training Center

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF AVTEC
The Southern Alaska Carpenters Training Center in Anchorage teaches apprentices the crafts of carpenter, millwright and lather. Pictured are apprentices training at the facility and on the job.

Second-year carpenter apprentice Dean Crouch working for Neeser on the Bristol Bay Native Corporation office building in Anchorage.

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Kevin Hanson, plumber apprentice, on job site of the new Valley Hospital.

Andre Booker
Thadeus Adee
Phillip Punturo
Donovon Bruso

Plumbers and Steamfitters apprentices working for Superior Plumbing & Heating are gaining experience at the new Valley Hospital job site near Palmer and Wasilla.
Roofers & Water Proofers Local 190
JATC apprentices working for
Industrial Roofing atop the Calista
building in Anchorage.

Roofers

James Russo
Duane Dreezen

Aric Frye

PHOTOS: SUSAN HARRINGTON

PHOTO: HOLLY JUSCAK

Heat & Frost Insulators apprentices
working for Alaska Insulation Supply
fabricating chemical pads
and insulation bands for
ConocoPhillips under
the supervision of journeyman
Larry Cantergiani, right.

Heat & Frost Insulators

Ron Brevogel

Richard Herl

Apprentice John Paul Paquette
trained on the job at the new
Valley Hospital near Wasilla
and Palmer, working
for Excel Construction.

PHOTO: HOLLY JUSCAK

Painters

International Union of Painters and
Allied Trades Local 1140 JATC trains
apprentices at their facility in Anchorage.

Painters

Jason Paugh

Joseph Lawrence

Richard Herd

Mario Dix

Learning the painting trade.

Aric Frye

PHOTOS: SUSAN HARRINGTON
Yuut Elitnaurbiat
(People’s Learning Center)
Bethel, Alaska

Carpentry class building trusses using a jig they built.

Joseph Minock of Pilot Station with instructor Dennis Dishion installing truss. Paul Tinker of Marshall is on the ground supervision.

Adrian Beans of Mountain Village cutting wood for the shed.

Joseph Minock of Pilot Station installing a truss.

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Sheet Metal Workers

Pre-Apprentice Brandon Gettman works on the Bristol Bay Native Corporation office building in Anchorage for General Mechanical.

Apprentice Tony Hillis works on the Cook Inlet Tribal Council Non-Profit Service Center building in Anchorage for Alaska Sheetmetal.

Apprentices Joe Morris, Ken Michael, Kenneth Addison and Will Hoecher learning the trade at the training facility.

Prentice Pete Lyford works on the new Valley Hospital near Palmer and Wasilla for Alaska Sheetmetal.

Apprentice Pete Lyford works on the new Valley Hospital near Palmer and Wasilla for Alaska Sheetmetal.

Joe Morris

Kenneth Addison

Will Hoecher

Apprentice Pete Lyford works on the new Valley Hospital near Palmer and Wasilla for Alaska Sheetmetal.

Drivers

CEE trains the general public in truck driving and heavy equipment operation.

Teamsters Union Local 959 Training Trust trains apprentice construction drivers in Alaska.

Photo: Susan Harrington

Photo: Holly Juica
Despite the failure of hard-core environmentalist organizations to diminish George W. Bush’s convincing reelection victory, their renewed attacks on the president are clear: to obstruct his second-term environmental agenda.

Yet, with skyrocketing oil prices likely driving gasoline pump prices to new highs, many Americans begin to question the credibility of the extreme green agenda.

Consider the current attack on the Bush administration by the Natural Resources Defense Council, which is using the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR), a 19.6-million-acre federal reserve, for its latest membership and fundraising drive.

Even before the United States Senate’s recent vote to support the Bush administration’s proposal to allow oil and natural gas production on a small portion of the refuge’s northernmost region, Hollywood icon and council board member Robert Redford signed on to lead the attack.

In a mailing, Mr. Redford asserts, “President Bush is now claiming a mandate ... to destroy” the Arctic refuge. The actor accuses the president and congressional leaders of turning “America’s greatest sanctuary for arctic wildlife into a vast polluted oil field” for the sake of “oil company profits.”

The mailer claims species such as caribou, arctic wolf, polar bear and others “now stand on the brink of oblivion” from Mr. Bush’s “destructive energy plan,” which amounts to “stealing from our children and grandchildren.” Mr. Redford urges recipients to sign and return the Save ANWR cards, join the organization and, of course, send money.

Most people now recognize Mr. Bush urges oil and gas drilling in Alaska in order to reduce the massive United States’ oil dependency on unfriendly, unstable, and erratic foreign governments. The Interior Department estimates Alaska’s 1.5 million-acre Coastal Plain has from 10 billion to 16 billion barrels of recoverable oil.

Drilling engineers believe recent technological advances would require as few as 2,000 surface acres to recover the underlying oil and natural gas – meaning just one acre for every 10,000 acres in the refuge area.

Alaska Senator Ted Stevens and other proponents debunk the doomsday predictions, noting how the Central Arctic caribou herd occupying the Prudhoe Bay oil field on Alaska’s North Slope increased tenfold – from 3,000 to 32,000 animals – since oil production began there in 1977.

In fact, there are no scientific studies demonstrating any arctic species has been reduced in number as a result of North Slope oil production activity. And, with upward of a half million new jobs expected if drilling is approved, polls show 75 percent of Alaskans favor drilling, including the local Inupiat Eskimos.

Living in their rarified environment, the activist green community regards these confrontations as “no-lose” opportunities. If their “little truth/big-scare” tactics don’t thwart Mr. Bush’s more balanced and people-friendly environmental agenda, they lose nothing. Attacking Mr. Bush raises their membership and millions of dollars in contributions.

With the Senate’s support of drilling in Alaska, we can only expect the shrill rhetoric to increase. But, in fact, it is Mr. Bush’s common-sense approach and balancing of environmental concerns with real human needs that subject him to the wrath of extreme greens.

Even though many Americans are beginning to understand this, dedicated activists are not easily discouraged. Where the public relations campaign seems to have failed to stop Congress and the president, it would be foolish to assume that the war has been won.

Many observers of activist environmentalism, Pacific Legal Foundation among them, expect some form of legal or regulatory action to blunt development of this crucial natural resource. Should this occur, you can rest assured that Pacific Legal Foundation will not shrink from the battle.
Construction in rural Alaska is all about logistics. Building anything in communities off the rail and road system means working under diverse conditions, which can be extreme and expensive. Much of the funding for construction in rural Alaska is funneled through the Denali Commission, a federal-state partnership created in 1998 by an act of Congress (see sidebar). The federal and state partnership focuses on replacing bulk fuel storage facilities and developing sustainable rural infrastructure.

According to Federal Chairman Jeffrey Staser, in 2005 the Denali Commission will administer a $133 million federal budget for rural Alaska projects. All but about $7 million earmarked for project-related training goes directly into construction of public infrastructure. That is just the federal portion, though. Generally speaking, the Commission matches its federal budget dollar about one-for-one with a dollar from the State of Alaska, a non-profit organization like Rasmuson Foundation, local cost sharing and other sources.

Staser says cost sharing varies greatly by program and project because the Commission is very flexible and more actively engaged than other federal agencies in actually seeking—not just requiring—cost sharing matches from organizations such as Alaska Mental Health Trust Fund, Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, the Alaska Energy Authority and others. The Denali Commission’s ability to collaborate is unprecedented, as evidenced by a kaleidoscope of partnerships in the hundreds of projects funded over the last six years.

According to the Commission, the projects should be cost effective and sustainable. In November 2004 NANA Pacific completed a cost containment report for the Denali Commission on teacher housing, health clinic and washeteria projects. Subcontractors Mark Foster of Mark A. Foster and Associates and Jim Fergusson of Jim Fergusson and Associates did the majority of the work. An expert panel assisted in review; those members included Jay Farmwald, DOWL Engineers; John Crittenden, Architects Alaska; Jay Lavoie, Estimations Inc.; and Dave Cramer, Summit Consulting Services.

NANA Pacific’s expert panel found ways to cut costs at all levels of program delivery. A partial list follows:

**Denali Commission**
- Monitor and standardize project accounting for cost control
- Implement project cost benchmarks
- Encourage clearer design elements
- Develop a realistic time frame for the construction phase

**Partner Level**
- Regionalize project management services
- Develop accurate sets of program/budget parameters
- Emphasize project scheduling
- Allow the consultant to develop and plan the project on a realistic time frame

**Applicant/Sub-Recipient**
- Assume risk when there is scope creep
- Less choice in options
- Realistic understanding about what they can operate and afford versus what they might like
- Planning and ownership in the process, realistic expectations, recognition of funding constraints (sustainability requirements)
The Denali Commission

The Denali Commission Act of 1998 defines the specific purposes as follows: To deliver the services of the Federal Government in the most cost-effective manner practicable by reducing administrative and overhead costs. To provide job training and other economic development services in economic communities particularly distressed communities (many of which have a rate of unemployment that exceeds 50 percent). To promote rural development, provide power generation and transmission facilities, modern communication systems, water and sewer systems and other infrastructure needs.

Source: Denali Commission

Ribbon cutting ceremony at Golovin Clinic grand opening in 2004.

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- Retain builders based on experience and qualifications.
- Building methods coincide with community and workers abilities

Owner
- Constraints on scope creep and owner requested changes during construction
- Consider long-term feasibility and sustainability for projects
- Limit scope creep
- Consistent approach to project development

Developer (if applicable)
- Submit formal pro-forma with project application
- Retain developer based upon experience and qualifications

Operator
- Designate a single point of contact for program issues during planning, design and construction phases
- Fully fund a maintenance program

Community
- Early involvement and buy-in by the community
- Designating a single point of contact for program issues during planning, design and construction phases

Lessons learned from the NANA Pacific evaluation, analysis and review can be used to improve cost containment and effective delivery of rural
The Commission’s $133 million federal budget in 2005 included numerous energy and infrastructure projects at varying phases of planning, design and development, which are listed below.

- Middle Kuskokwim Energy Project
- Interties at Juneau/Greens Creek/Hoonah and Swan Lake/Tyee Lake
- Bristol Bay generator replacement
- Chenega Bay utilities to harbor dock
- Bulk fuel projects in Kwatchuk, Unalakleet, Nunapitchuk/Kasigluk, Nightmute, Huslia, and Kipnuk
- Toksook Bay/Nightmute tie-lines
- Tok/Chistochina line extension
- Fire Island transmission line and wind
- Petersburg diesel power generation
- Valdez electric project
- Rural Public Service Utilities (RPSU) projects in Allakaket, Diomede and Pilot Point
- RPSU and wind design in Port Heiden and Kipnuk
- Solid waste projects to be determined by RFP
- Primary care facilities in more than 20 rural communities
- Indian Health Service hospitals in Barrow and Nome
- Psychiatric facilities in Bethel and Juneau
- Elder housing facilities for Kasaan, Klawock, Bethel, Sitka, Nome, Anaktuvuk Pass, Kaktovik, Nuiqsut, Point Hope, Wainwright and Valdez
- Domestic violence facilities in communities to be determined
- Teacher housing in Ambler, Kiana, St. Paul, Tyonek with more to be determined
- Multi-use facilities in communities to be selected by RFP
- Washeteria facilities in communities meeting specific criteria and identified through the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium and Village Safe Water
- Public broadcasting

Source: Denali Commission
The Commission completed a Five Year Strategic Plan (2005-2009) and Fiscal Year 2006 Work Plan, which is available on its Web site. More than $13 billion in known basic infrastructure needs for rural Alaskan communities were identified, which the Commission found “staggering.” Road construction accounted for $8.6 billion; followed by housing construction and development, $1.8 billion; airport facilities, $1.3 billion; drinking water and wastewater facilities, $650 million; other health facilities $514 million ($322 million – new hospitals, $130 million – expansion of existing hospitals, $462 million – expansion of behavioral health facilities); primary health care facilities, $481 million; bulk fuel storage, $362.5 million; power utilities, $300.8 million; and port facilities, $300 million.

The last six years the Commission received an increase in federal appropriations each year, from $20 million in 1999 to $133 million in 2005, which is more than any other year. Federal funding may be as little as $6.5 million in 2006, according to the Five Year Strategic Plan (2005-2009) and Fiscal Year 2006 Work Plan. There have been ongoing attempts by some members of Congress to deny funding altogether for the Denali Commission and two other similar regional commissions. Yet each year, funding is appropriated.

“I’m very pleased that President Bush continues to request federal funds for the Denali Commission in his budget submission to Congress,” Staser said. “The president actually requested more for the Commission than he did last year, an indication of his continued commitment to Alaska. However, everyone needs to understand that the first priority of federal government is National Security. As the head of a federal agency, I fully support the president’s budget priorities and I thank Governor Murkowski for his leadership in bringing state and federal agencies closer together with joint planning and budgeting here at the Denali Commission.”

For more information, or to see the reports, go to the Denali Commission Web site at www.denali.gov.
Legislative Accomplishments 2005

Annually the AGC Legislative Committee sets forth the legislative priorities for the chapter and the construction industry. Since the 24th Legislature will carry over its work to next year, it’s appropriate to determine how successful we were in accomplishing our priorities and develop strategies for improving the chance for success of those priorities that were not addressed successfully this past session.

Long-Term Fiscal Plan – The rhetoric on this subject rose to a new level last year, but the silence on the topic this year was deafening. It’s amazing how the focus changes when a projected deficit morphs into a substantial surplus. Fiscal hawks became fiscal doves and the largest capital budget in years was overwhelmingly passed. It’s hard to argue against needed capital projects, so it is perhaps appropriate that the Legislature devoted much of the surplus toward capital projects rather than increasing governmental operations. However, the current euphoria should not cause Alaskans to lose sight of the long-term fiscal needs of the state.

State of Alaska Transportation System – The State of Alaska has done a commendable job of identifying projects that need to be built if Alaska is to grow and prosper. Lacking from that planning is the source of the funds to pay for the new road initiatives. Utilizing Alaska’s allocation from the federal highway formula takes money from current needs and represents a “beggar thy neighbor” approach. AGC believes that a better solution is a combination of general obligation bonds and revenue bonds paid by an increase in the state’s motor fuel taxes. Consistent with that approach, the governor introduced a proposal to bond for new road projects by utilizing the earnings from the Amerada Hess fund to pay the bond costs. The Legislature was not enthralled with the concept of allocating the earning stream of the fund for 20 years for projects this year, and instead allocated the earnings for the next two years to capital projects. Unfortunately, they also flirted with the concept of Garvee Bonds, but finally passed on that option.

Privatization of work done by state – This issue is difficult to correct through legislation. In fact, AGC’s strategy has been to use legislation as a final resort when all attempts to deal directly with the governmental agencies have failed. The Department of Transportation is very aware of the issue and has made a concerted effort to minimize the areas of competition with the private sector. This session a Joint Senate and House Transportation Committee held a meeting on the subject and has another planned this summer.

Funding for vocational/technical education – Vocational/technical education is the ugly stepchild of the education system. Unfortunately, construction crafts rely primarily on students displaying interests in vocational rather than academic education. Many legislators support more financing for this area, but the budgetary problems of the schools throughout the state precludes any additional funding. AGC continues to stress the need for increased funding, but the likelihood of anything happening in the foreseeable future is minimal.

Workers’ Compensation – After numerous false starts and examples of power politics, the Legislature passed a workers’ compensation bill in the special session. The bill did not address the major cost drivers in the workers’ compensation system, but did establish a task force to examine those issues and recommend changes next year. Hopefully, this year’s effort represents the first phase of a two-phase process to substantially modify the current system.

In the final analysis, AGC experienced no major victories nor suffered major defeats. All our issues are long-term problems that require continued commitment and focus. Some are closer to reality than are others, but all merit our attention.
The Associated General Contractors of Alaska All Stars Program is designed to promote member participation in recruiting, involving and retaining members. The All Stars strengthen and build both our association and the entire industry.

There are three levels to the AGC All Stars Program: a member with five credits is awarded a bronze star, a member with 15 credits is awarded a silver star, and a member with 25 credits is awarded a gold star and becomes a lifetime member to the AGC All Stars.

Credits accumulate as follows: Sponsors signing on a new membership receive one full credit; for the first renewal, the sponsor receives one full credit; and for each renewal in years 3-5, sponsors receive one-half credit. Credits toward the lifetime gold star accumulate from January 1, 2002.

Phil Anderson of Fairbanks is the first recipient of a gold star, which he earned this year. Glen Knickerbocker is very close to earning a gold star. So far in 2005 four other stars have been awarded; a silver star went to Jim Fergusson, and bronze stars went to Ben Northey, David Nevin and Hal Ingalls.

Last year a Friday afternoon fun time was held as a thank you event for those who reached All Star status. This year there will be a dinner recognition event for All Star achievers and their spouses during the annual conference.

The next time you see a member wearing their star, thank them for their support of your organization.

AGC OF ALASKA ALL STARS

GOLD
Phil Anderson

SILVER
Glen Knickerbocker
Pete Stone
Jim Fergusson
### SPONSOR NEW RECRUITS in 2005

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<td>Pat Reilly</td>
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<td>Terry Fike</td>
<td>Integrity Associates, Peak Oilfield Service Company</td>
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<td>David Nevin</td>
<td>Alaska Employee Benefits</td>
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<td>Hal Ingalls</td>
<td>Kodiak Mapping, Inc.</td>
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<td>Earl Frawner</td>
<td>Frawner Corporation</td>
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<td>Steve Boyd</td>
<td>Redi Electric, Inc.</td>
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### SPONSOR RE-JOINED in 2005

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Improved metal prices, especially for gold, continue to stimulate the mineral industry in Alaska. Increases in the price of gold, silver, lead, copper, platinum, nickel, uranium and some improvement in the price for zinc are being felt. Mines already in operation, as well as projects nearing development and grassroots exploration are all benefiting while increases in the cost of fuel and steel are having a negative impact.

The large projects are most visible. The Pogo underground gold mine located about 40 miles northeast of Delta Junction is now in construction with numerous contractors and more than 300 employees on site. Construction completed at Pogo so far includes a 3000-foot airstrip, a 42-mile access road and the water treatment plant. The building for the mill is complete and mill equipment is being installed. The new permanent camp is on site and being set-up and other facilities are under construction. Underground development work began in January and work is in progress driving two declines into the ore body. Construction will continue into 2006. Once the mine goes into operation it will employ 250 full-time workers for at least 10 years.

Three other projects are moving toward construction. The Nixon Fork underground gold mine near McGrath is awaiting permits and will be refurbished and should resume operation by late 2005. The Kensington Gold project owned by Coeur Alaska will be an underground gold mine 30 miles north of Juneau. The final Corps of Engineers and EPA permits should be issued in June 2005. Construction will begin as soon as all permits are in hand. Underground mining equipment has been ordered and should be arriving by the fall. The Rock Creek project, owned by NovaGold, will be an open pit gold mine near Nome. A bankable feasibility study is now being developed for the project and it should be complete by mid-2005. In-fill drilling, baseline data collection and permit preparation are in process.

At the Donlin Creek project, work includes in-fill drilling, baseline data collection, preliminary design and planning for this large open pit gold mine. Placer Dome is the operator and they have several years of permitting and detailed design before construction can begin. The single greatest challenge is the 60-80 MW electrical power supply that will be required. A port on the Kuskokwim River and a road connecting the port to the mine site will also be needed.

Another project with the potential to become a large mine is the Pebble Gold/Copper project in Southwest Alaska. Pebble is now employing more than a dozen consulting firms during the summer and has four drills at work to better define the ore body and the geotechnical conditions. Northern Dynasty Minerals, owner of Pebble, is spending more than $30 million on the project this year.

Mineral exploration increased in 2004 for the third year in a row and continues to increase in 2005 with exploration and drilling occurring all around the state. Some of the work is by companies that have been working in the state for many years, but other projects are owned by companies that are entirely new to Alaska. Due to the extremely restrictive rules of the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, most of the investments in minerals come from Canada, even though the ult-
mate ownership of the companies is often by U.S. shareholders.

Alaska’s large mines – Greens Creek near Juneau, Red Dog north of Kotzebue, Fort Knox near Fairbanks, and Usibelli Coal Mine at Healy continue to operate. Numerous small family placer gold mines are also operating and several more are likely to resume operation in 2005 with the gold price continuing above the $400 per ounce level.

Mines producing sand, gravel and stone are dependent primarily on federal spending and local construction and are extremely busy. In addition to work in and around military bases, major cities and villages, several new resource roads are being proposed and these should result in growth for this sector. Demand for sand, gravel, stone and coal continues to grow in Hawaii and along the west coast. However, challenging economics and the Jones Act keep Alaska companies from participating, in part because Jones Act vessels for bulk cargos do not exist.

The year 2004 was very busy for all segments of the industry and with metal prices at current levels 2005 is shaping up to be even better.

Steven C. Borell is Executive Director of the Alaska Miners Association, an industry support organization with approximately 1000 members. The AMA represents all aspects of the mineral industry before state and federal agencies, the State Legislature and U.S. Congress. He has more than 30 years experience involving exploration and operations in coal, placer and hardrock metal mining in various western and midwestern states, Canada and South America. He is a registered professional engineer in Alaska, Colorado and North Dakota.
Construction Career Academy aims to increase Alaska workforce

By Susan Harrington

As most industry insiders already know, the construction industry in Alaska continues to suffer from a shortage of trained workers. A healthy economy and steady growth exacerbate the problem. In response to the needs of its membership, and the industry, AGC of Alaska has taken positive actions to ensure an adequately trained workforce for tomorrow’s projects.

Build Up! and On Site! introduce construction careers to elementary and middle school students. A long-term relationship with the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District resulted in the delivery of a model construction career pathway for high school students. The University of Alaska Anchorage is now accepting students into a new construction management program at the associate of science degree level that begins this fall. The AGC’s involvement with these programs is aimed at increasing the Alaska construction workforce.

AGC’s association with union apprenticeship programs is well-known, but there aren’t enough indentureships available in Alaska to supply the workforce with the more than 1,000 new workers the construction industry needs each year. Alaska contractors are already getting waivers to the state’s 90 percent resident hire program, importing workers and having to pay higher wages to meet current labor needs with skilled workers who can get the jobs done right. The Mat-Su and UAA construction programs will help ease Alaska’s workforce woes.

The Mat-Su program currently has district-wide, two-year programs in construction trades and welding. After high school, students have options of going right to work, entering an apprenticeship program, attending trade school or pursuing a higher degree of education and training at the college or university level. The math is at a high enough level that students can pursue architecture, engineering, apprenticeships or be useful on a construction job site. Classroom instruction and hands-on construction experience give students choices—the decision is up to them as to which path to take upon completion.

The construction career pathway program is now being transformed into a construction career academy that will be housed with four other pathways in the new $18.6 million vocational career center the Borough is planning to build in Wasilla. AGC is helping provide the academy model.

In May 2005, the AGC of Alaska and the Mat-Su Borough
School District received $36,000 through the AGC of America as part of a $235,000 U.S. Department of Labor grant. The money is to be used to establish seven new Construction Career Academies across the United States to prepare students for careers in the construction industry.

Mat-Su Borough School District Career & Technical Education Director Kris Forrester said, “AGC stepped up to the plate for the academy—we’ll have the first one in the state and we’ll share whatever we learn with the rest of the state.”

Forrester already shares the pathways program with schools across Alaska. She has a stable of industry partners that includes the AGC, contractors, labor and other organizations that have all helped develop the career

Students in the Mat-Su construction trades program learn technical skills through classroom instruction and hands-on experience while planning, building and selling a house.

Technical skills include:

- Health & Safety
- Tool Safety
- Technical Math
- Site Selection
- Blueprint Reading
- Foundations
- Framing
- Plumbing
- Heating
- Electrical Systems
- Interior Finishing
- Exterior Finishing
- Marketing & Real Estate

Mat-Su welding program students have the opportunity to prepare for certifications from the American Welding Society and to gain entry-level marketable skills, college credit and preparation for post-secondary education.

Both programs offer articulation agreements with the University of Alaska Anchorage and the Mat-Su College allowing students to earn concurrent college credits for some high school classes.
pathways program and the academy model. They work industry standards into the curriculum and certify instructors so that students can be industry certified.

“AGC trains the trainers,” Forrester said. “So far, instructors for 42 sites in Alaska have been trained through the Summer Construction Trades Program, which certifies instructors to deliver the National Center for Construction and Education and Research (NCCER) curriculum.”

The latest grant continues AGC’s partnership with the Mat-Su School District. The money will be used to teach instructors the academy model. The academy will be established as a wall-to-wall school within a school, and features team-teaching. “It’s not common to team-teach,” Forrester said. “It makes it more realistic integrated into the construction pathway. We call it R & R for rigorous and relevant.”

English, math, science and social studies will be built into the construction studies to make a real world connection, which will be delivered through team teaching in the new vocational career center. Students will stay in the same area, and the teachers will come and go. The facility is designed to accommodate roughly 100 students in each of the five pathways and is expandable to add more.

The design is flexible and adaptable in order to respond to the changing needs of the Alaska economy. McCool Carlson Green presented the concept design to the Borough in late June. Construction is to begin in April 2006, with completion slated for July 2007, according to Michael Carlson, project architect. Carlson said he’s done a fair amount of career and technical work. Something he found unique about this facility is the integrated programs.

“One thing that came out very strong is the partnerships with industry and business in Anchorage and the Valley,” Carlson said. “They collaborate and support integration of the program with business partnerships.”
Above: Concept site plan of the new Mat-Su Career Center.

Below: Concept floor plan of the new Mat-Su Career Center, with the Construction Career Academy shown in fuchsia.

Matanuska-Susitna Borough concept plans provided courtesy of McCool Carlson Green.
Dr. George Copa, Oregon State University College of Education professor who serves as the director of the New Designs for Learning there, noticed the alliance with construction. Copa is a nationally and internationally acclaimed education reform and revitalization expert who was involved in the facility design process over the last few months.

“One of the things that’s very evident with the Borough is they already have very strong partnerships with business and industry, including construction—they were active in design and planning,” Copa said. “The Borough has listened to and involved the construction industry and other businesses in the planning of the facility.”

Copa praised the entire career pathways program as well. “They also have a very good reputation already in terms of quality of program,” he said. “It’s not a program that needs fixed, it’s already won awards for occupational skills developed and they just want to keep going in terms of that. The new career and technical center will be a real jewel of a program.”

The Mat-Su construction career pathway curriculum is designed to create successful and competent students through integrated teaching in the following areas:

- Specific Occupational Skills Standards
- Alaska Reading, Writing, Math & Science Competency Standards
- Alaska Content Standards
- Alaska Employability Standards
- Alaska Cultural Standards
- All Aspects of Industry Assessments
- High School Qualifying Exam
- NCCER Certifications
- Other Construction Industry Certifications
Forrester is using the AGC construction career academy model in the new facility because “more students graduate and go on to accomplish their goals. Students have a lower rate of absenteeism and a higher rate of success.”

Through positive, proactive leadership, and a strong commitment to the welfare of its members, AGC is doing whatever is necessary to ensure a viable workforce trained to build Alaska’s future.

UAA’s Construction Management program will be explored in the next issue of the Alaska Contractor.

For Career Pathways information go to the Web site at www.malsuk12.us and click on Departments link, then click on Career and Technical Education.
CALL FOR ENTRIES

Excellence In Construction & Safety Achievement

It’s that time of year again! The Ribelin Lowell Alaska USA Excellence In Construction Awards and the Marsh USA Excellence In Safety Awards deadlines are September 16, 2005*. Some of AGC’s best known names have entered and previously won. So can YOU! Now is the time to call the AGC office and request the full award rules, category information and entry form.

Here’s what our members and previous winners say …

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Jon Eng, Cornerstone Construction

The single biggest motivator of future excellent performance involves honest recognition of how important team members are to past project excellent performance. People working in construction are competitive in nature, and look forward to having their results compared to others. Recognition of excellent performance can help make individuals, individual firms and the construction industry become better at what they do.

Roxanna Horschel, Acme Fence

Safety in the construction industry has become a must and a priority with most owners. Customers want to do business with firms that demonstrate good safety practices. We display our AGC Safety Award proudly and I have been pleased at the positive response from the many that have noticed it.

Matt Hogge, Anchorage Sand and Gravel

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Terry Fike, Alcan General Construction

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SAFETY

How To Enter

A few changes were made this year to improve and simplify the entry process. All entrants need to check for new categories and entry instructions. We want our AGC of Alaska members to enter and the Awards Committee has made that easier for you.

*The deadline to enter is 5 p.m. September 16, 2005, at the AGC office in Anchorage.

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