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Low Bids for 2007

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Low Bids for 2006

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Today we look back and celebrate 30 years of accomplishment. And, with a renewed sense of optimism, look forward to a future that is just as bright.
Getting along with the Corps of Engineers

Within the membership of our organization there is considerable discussion concerning the Corps of Engineers, unfortunately much of it is negative. There are members who swear they will never do work for the Corps. Others say they have tried engaging in Corps work and will never do so again. Then there exists a small minority who are ardent fans of the Corps and the projects they manage for various government entities. However, they all seem to agree on one point, that COE projects cost more than similar projects for other owner/manager entities.

One cannot help but wonder why there is such a large amount of negativity toward an entity that controls such a large annual construction funding budget, this year in excess of $570 million.

A review of recent COE managed projects in the Fairbanks area shows that of 25 projects, 22 involved claims. In many of these claims the contractors were ordered to proceed with work they considered as outside the contract scope without benefit of resolution regarding cost and time. Some members complain that Corps requirements regarding Quality Control are both excessive and inconsistently applied to the point that they don’t know what to expect and therefore are forced to expect and plan for the worst.

Some members also complain that the so-called Design/Build delivery method developed by the COE is in reality no more than “Design/Assist” and is only a means to make the contractor responsible for more of the risk. These are but a few of the complaints heard recently, but each in and of itself would certainly make a contractor think twice before pursuing COE-managed projects.

Of course, this is just one side of the story. There are undoubtedly as many sides as there are participants and there can be no clear understanding or resolution until all sides are heard and the actual facts collected and analyzed.

Toward this end and at the invitation of the COE, our Executive Director, Dick Cattanach, and I recently met with Colonel Kevin Wilson, Commander of the Alaska District, Corps of Engineers, and his executive staff.

Many of the aforementioned issues were touched upon and Colonel Wilson expressed his desire to do whatever was in his power to build a better relationship with the Alaska construction community. Both Dick and I believe he was sincere in his desires and his commitment.

During the discussion, it was suggested that the basis of any relationship is a clear understanding of each participant’s role and that a better understanding of the requirements dictated to the COE by both their superiors and their clients. A better understanding of the constraints facing the COE might allow our members to help the COE meet these requirements. It was also suggested that participation in the quality control classes might be expanded to include not only all members of the contractors on-site supervisory/management staff but also the on-site COE inspection team. To address the concerns regarding the inconsistent application of quality control procedures, it was agreed that AGC and the Corps should meet to openly discuss issues regarding quality control and work together to find ways to streamline the process, making it more efficient and more clearly understood by all parties.

As an organization, it is AGC’s responsibility, for the good of our members, to work with Colonel Wilson and his staff to help find a way forward that will encourage more of our members to participate in COE managed projects. This large portion of the annual Alaska construction budget should get the full benefit of “fair and open competition” that our organization espouses.

Over the next several weeks many of you will be called upon to participate in this endeavor. If you have pursued COE work in the past, are now engaged in COE work, or have contemplated entering this section of the market at some future date, your participation in the endeavor is essential.
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On a recent trip to Washington, D.C., the AGC leadership had the opportunity to meet with each member of the Alaska delegation. While the meetings were separate, the message in all cases was the same, “Alaska can expect less money from the federal government for the foreseeable future.”

U.S. Sens. Ted Stevens and Lisa Murkowski and Rep. Don Young are committed to working on behalf of Alaska and Alaskans, but they all indicated that recent changes nationally have adversely impacted their effectiveness. The war in Iraq, the democratic control of Congress, and scrutiny given to earmarks have each greatly impacted their ability to provide the level of support Alaskans have grown to expect. The changes appear to be long-term and the message to all Alaskans appears to be that we will either have to do without some goods or services, or we will have to find a way to provide them using local or state funds.

While this new world seems clear to our Washington delegation, they all seemed frustrated because Alaskans, both elected officials and the general population, did not appreciate or accept this new paradigm. When informed that they were unable to gain support to have a particular program inserted in the federal budget, most requesters thanked our delegation and indicated that they would try again next year. Our delegation was frustrated because the answer will not change, not next year, and most likely not anytime in the foreseeable future.

The challenge for Alaska’s Roads

A reduction in federal support will impact all segments of the Alaska economy, but contractors will be directly impacted by a potential reduction in federal support to the Alaska highway program. For years Alaska has enjoyed the honor of receiving the highest percentage return on its contributions to the federal highway trust fund. The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities recently reported that Alaska received more than $6 from the highway trust fund for every $1 contributed. By way of comparison, Hawaii was second and received just over three times its contribution, while states like Florida, Ohio, California and Texas all received less money from the trust fund than they contributed. The concept of donor vs. donee states has always been contentious and has become even more so in light of the controversy surrounding the so-called bridges to nowhere.

At the same time, Alaskans currently pay taxes of $.264 on each gallon of gasoline to the federal or state government. Since the federal tax of $.184 per gallon is the same for all states, states like New York, California and Hawaii, which have a tax in excess of $.60, are taxing their highway users more than $.40 per gallon to maintain and develop their roads while the Alaskans are paying just eight cents. Not only can Alaskans brag that we have the highest return from the highway trust fund of any state; we can also brag that our residents pay the lowest state gasoline tax in the nation.

And, while Alaskans are bragging, they can also brag that Alaska is perhaps the only state that does not have a state highway program that is independently operated and funded from the federal government. Perhaps we can also brag that at the current funding levels, it would take Alaska more than 25 years to address the identified highway backlog and this time frame does not recognize the need for recurring maintenance projects. Finally, maybe we can brag that construction inflation does not exist in our world, because if forced to recognize inflation some projects on the backlog could never be considered.

It’s easy to understand the public’s lack of interest in paying a higher tax to support a state highway program, but it’s difficult to give elected state officials a pass. Unless Alaskans take action and provide a state-supported revenue stream for our highway system, it would seem that a number of events are relatively certain. Most notably, the money Alaska receives from the highway trust fund will be reduced. If the funds to Alaska were reduced to the same ratio as Hawaii, our highway program would be devastated. A reduction in federal funding would mean that maintenance would be postponed thereby negatively impacting public safety. Likewise it follows that a reduction in funding of maintenance would inevitably result in more reconstruction because of the rapid deterioration of the roads that result from the lack of maintenance. And a reduction in funding would mean fewer projects, but each would be more expensive.

Of course, this is just one scenario. Another would have the existing system not only continuing, but improving. Under that scenario, transportation leprechauns would regularly visit Alaska and leave a pot of gold whenever our needs exceeded the federal government’s ability to meet them. That scenario would certainly give us a lot to brag about.
OUR IMPROVED COMBI FLEET OFFERS SOMETHING BOTH YOUR CARGO AND YOUR AUNT BERNICE CAN APPRECIATE.
MORE SPACE.

MORE OF WHAT MATTERS —
This February we were proud to become the first airline to convert 737-400 passenger planes into combi aircraft. Designed to each accommodate 1,700 cubic feet of cargo divided into four pallets in front, and 72 very comfortable passengers in back, the improved combis will allow you to welcome more of your precious cargo — whether that's relatives or refrigerators — all on one flight.

MORE RELIABLE — The combis, which are younger, less expensive to maintain and 20% more fuel-efficient than the 737-200s they're replacing, also feature state-of-the-art navigation flight guidance technology, including a Heads-up Guidance System, allowing the flight crew to more successfully navigate challenging airports and foggy conditions. All good for maintaining flight schedules and happy customers.

MORE ROOM — Due to its permanent fixed configuration, each combi will be able to guarantee more passengers and more cargo than traditional versions. Equipped with pallets that are 20% larger, the combis will house 50% more cargo than their predecessors. Passengers will benefit from more room too, with full-sized overhead bins, comfy leather seats and increased leg room.

MORE ON THE HORIZON — Transporting cargo is critical to the state of Alaska, more so than any other place we serve. That's why more combis will be introduced to the fleet over the next six months, expanding our total cargo capacity by 20% (or a half-ton of mail, five ultrasound machines and nine dozen king crabs a day, to put it in perspective). Servicing points throughout Alaska, our combis are just one example of our ongoing commitment to the people, the businesses and the Aunt Bernices all around this great state.
Mark Kelsey, managing editor of the Mat-Su Valley Frontiersman newspaper, still carries the impression left by a visit from an AGC of Alaska contingent two years ago. He said he left the meeting changed by what he and his reporters learned.

“There’s evidence of [the construction industry] all around us, yet that same commonness lends itself to complacency, in terms of the perception of the industry’s importance,” said Kelsey, who wrote a positive editorial afterward using information the AGC group offered.

Face-to-face visits like the one in which Kelsey participated are powerful tools for better educating the public about opportunities the construction industry offers, and are one of several reasons why judges at the Associated General Contractors of America’s annual conference named its Alaska chapter the 2006 “Small Chapter of the Year.” The conference took place in San Antonio, Texas, in March.

“We’re proud of the work that AGC of Alaska has accomplished,” said AGC CEO Stephen E. Sandherr. “The quality and quantity of member services and Alaska’s campaign to promote the construction industry - whether it is in the form of a substance abuse program, legislative relations and action, or through their education and workforce development programs - represents the best of the construction industry.”

AGC of Alaska is seen as a leader in the community and throughout the state because of the working relationships it has with all areas of the state government and Legislature and because of the quality services it supplies to members, said Michelle Bernard, a spokeswoman for AGC of America.

“AGC of Alaska’s Chapter Executive, staff and members have been active in AGC of America activities throughout the years and their successes have been tremendous,” Bernard wrote in an e-mail.

Just a few of the highlights from its successful year, Bernard said, include securing funding from the Legislature by working
with the Department of Labor and many other Alaska entities to create a construction academy in Anchorage.

“This program provides students with the vocational training previously eliminated in secondary schools and provides them with the knowledge necessary for them to enter the construction trades,” Bernard said. “The chapter also successfully created and managed the Alaska Construction Industry Substance Abuse Program whose purpose is to provide an industry wide awareness of the benefits of a drug-free and safe workplace.”

Bernard also lauded AGC of Alaska’s award-winning public relations campaign, which she said would improve the image of the construction industry and encourage more young Alaskans to consider careers in construction.

AGC of America created two categories for the Chapter of the Year awards in order to create a level playing field for small and larger chapters. The Alaska chapter competed for and won the Small Chapter of the Year Award, which recognizes chapters that operate with a budget of less than $750,000.

The Alaska chapter has approximately 650 members in commercial construction.

AGC of Alaska Executive Director Richard Cattanach said the chapter won not for what it did in a moment in time, but that years of work led up to the victory.

The chapter’s construction academies in Mat-Su and Anchorage and the AK Clean Card program it created for the industry are unique, Cattanach said, and the chapter’s award-winning image-improvement campaign is also top-notch.

“That was definitely part of it and had a lot to do with why we submitted [an application for the award] this year, but it’s just the tip of the iceberg for what the chapter does,” Cattanach said.

Years of work in improving member services and promoting the state’s construction industry made it possible for the Alaska chapter to snare AGC of America’s top honor, according to the 36-page award application prepared by Glen Knickerbocker, current AGC of Alaska president, and Robby Capps, immediate past president of the chapter.

Knickerbocker and Capps wrote, “All this was accomplished without inflating the chapter budget or diminishing the services offered to members. Members take pride in the fact that Alaska’s AGC chapter is recognized by Alaska leaders, business and political, as the voice of the commercial construction industry.”

AGC is the nation’s largest and oldest construction trade association, established in 1918 after a request by President Woodrow Wilson. Wilson recognized the construction industry’s national importance and desired a partner with which the government could discuss and plan for the advancement of the nation. AGC has been fulfilling that mission for the last 89 years. AGC of Alaska last year won the national AGC public relations award, the Public Relations Society of America Silver Anvil Award of Excellence and the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce Gold Pan Award for related programs. AGC Alaska previously won “Chapter of the Year” in 1995 and 1981.

Tracy Kalytiak is a freelance writer based in the Palmer area.
The Alaska CONTRACTOR

Summer 2007

Dick and Jennie Weldin, WELDIN CONSTRUCTION, INC.

Our company is not as “high profile” as many Alaska contractors because most of our work occurs on military installations, both in Alaska and the Pacific Rim. Submitting projects for awards packages lets our peers know what we’re up to. It is also a tremendous morale boost for our employees to know they were part of an award-winning project.

Yes, it’s that time of year again. The Alaska USA Insurance Brokers Excellence in Construction Awards and the Marsh USA Excellence in Safety Awards deadlines are September 7, 2007. So start now to get your projects and programs submitted. Contact Kimberley at the AGC office and request the full award rules, category information, and entry forms. Your organization deserves the credit for its hard work and although not everyone will win an award, everyone receives the satisfaction of knowing their work was examined by a panel of their colleagues. Some of AGC’s best known names have entered and won, and now so can you.

Here is what our members and previous winners are saying…

CONSTRUCTION

Brad West, WEST CONSTRUCTION

The Excellence In Construction Award is the end result of the dedication, hard work and perseverance of all our employees. West Construction takes pride in receiving this annual award, working toward receiving one year after year. To us, there is no greater achievement than being recognized by our peers in the industry.

Dick and Jennie Weldin, WELDIN CONSTRUCTION, INC.

Our company is not as “high profile” as many Alaska contractors because most of our work occurs on military installations, both in Alaska and the Pacific Rim. Submitting projects for awards packages lets our peers know what we’re up to. It is also a tremendous morale boost for our employees to know they were part of an award-winning project.
SAFETY

Kevin P. Welker, Kiewit Building Group.

Safety is job one at Kiewit, and acknowledgement of our safety program assures our clients that every employee will go home safely at the end of every work day. Our employees take personal pride in our excellent safety record and appreciate the recognition of our peers at AGC. The three aspects of attitude, family responsibility and good work plans is the road map we use to this safety success.

Richard Podobnik, Interior Alaska Roofing Inc.

Regardless of a company’s size, employee, job site and customer safety should always be the number one priority in our industry. Creating and implementing a quality safety program takes a lot of time, effort, and money which is returned many times over. Winning the Marsh 2006 Excellence Award for Contractors Safety Program and being recognized by our industry was a great honor.

Brad West, West Construction

Receiving the AGC Safety Award was no accident. Pun on words aside, receiving this award was actually the result of each and every West Construction employee diligently making safety in our workplace priority number one on a daily basis. There is no award taken in such high regard by us than one that rewards the safety of our employees.

Thomas Ulrich, Vice President, American Marine Corporation

When competing in a competitive bid process and work is awarded to the lowest bidder, many times safety is one of the areas that is compromised in order to win projects. It’s gratifying to be recognized by the AGC and my peers for safety achievements – It shows my clients and competitors that we can get the job done on time, within budget and while still maintaining the highest safety standards.

HOW TO ENTER

So what are you waiting for? The time to enter is now.

Award rules and categories are available on the AGC Web site http://www.agcak.org under Hot Topics, mailed to all member companies in early July.

The DEADLINE to enter is 5:00 p.m. September 7, 2007, at the AGC of Alaska Anchorage office on 8005 Schoon Street.

Call Kimberley at 561-5354 or email Kimberley@agcak.org for more information.
2007 Legislative Session in Review

By DICK CATTANACH, Executive Director

The first year of a two-year session is always interesting because of the interactions between legislators and between the legislative bodies. Bills are passed or held at times for reasons that have little to do with merits and everything to do with politics.

As the first year of the two-year session, 2007 was interesting for a variety of reasons. First of all, the legislators had to deal with the priorities of a new governor and deal with new commissioners and administrative staff. Secondly, 2007 will be remembered as the year legislators would have to deal with the allegations of corruption, pass meaningful ethics reform and pass legislation enabling the development of a natural gas pipeline. Lastly, 2007 may well be remembered as the last year of substantial capital budgets as oil production continues to decline.

For the construction industry, the most significant bills that passed during the first session of the Twenty-Fifth Alaska State Legislature would seem to include the following items.

**Alaska Gasline Inducement Act**

The popularity of the Governor was sufficient for her vision of a structure for the development of a natural gas line to be adopted with little change by the Legislature. AGIA calls for Requests for Proposals to be issued by July 1, 2007, with completed proposals due back by Sept. 30. The Commissioners of Revenue and Natural Resources are charged with reviewing the proposals and selecting the firm or firms that the state will work with to develop the project. Under the best scenario, gas will not flow through the pipeline prior to 2015.

With issues as complex as this, it is difficult to separate the wheat from the chaff and truly understand all the intricacies involved. While AGC would prefer a process involving more dialog and communications, AGIA may well represent a high stakes poker game that pits the state against the producers. Given the importance of this project to all Alaskans, we hope that AGIA can lead to the gas line that most Alaskans want.

**Construction Academies**

Last year AGC worked with interested partners to secure money for the Anchorage Construction Academy. As designed, the program worked with high school students and out of school young adults 18 - 25 to provide them with basic construction education and training. The goal of the program is to train students for existing construction jobs.

Due to the success of the program during its first year of operation, the support of the Governor, and the continuing support of the Legislature, the program was not only funded for the second year but was expanded to Fairbanks, Mat-Su, Kenai, Juneau, Ketchikan, and possibly Sitka. AGC will work with partners in each of these communities to make the promise of the program a reality.

**Use of Raffle Proceeds**

One of the greatest concerns of most firms is that a piece of legislation significantly impacting them will pass unnoticed. So it was with Senate Bill 59, a bill introduced to allow broadcasting stations to promote certain raffles and lotteries. The bill passed the Senate by a vote of 17 - 3 and was referred to the House for consideration. Then things got interesting. The House changed the title of the bill, and without public notice, the House Finance Committee added an amendment that would disallow the use of raffle proceeds for political purposes.

Due to the manner the amendment was handled, AGC did not learn of the change until the bill was in the second reading of the House. With one stroke of the pen, the Legislature proposed putting the AGC Political Action Committee out of business since the AGC PAC uses a raffle to raise all its funds.

The fact that the Senate failed to concur with the proposed changes to the bill and sent it back to the House for reconsideration is reassuring, but at this point the future of the AGC PAC is in doubt. In the final hours of the session, the House did not have time to take up the Senate request so the issue is in limbo until the Legislature reconvenes in January 2008.

Behind all the machinations is the philosophical question of whether the use of raffle proceeds should
be restricted solely to qualified charities. The topic itself merits a healthy public discussion. It should not be pushed through in the final hours of a legislative session with no notice to those affected. The Legislature has the authority to set public policy, but it should be done in the light of day and with ample notice to those impacted.

The politics of retribution is demeaning to the instigator and the institution. Those who practice it should be taken behind the woodshed the construction academy students will build and given a stern lecture. The fact that AGC was not the target of the proposed change is a small conciliation. The fact that the AGC PAC is collateral damage offers no reassurance; dead is dead. The process that allows serious issues such as this to be treated so callously should be changed. Alaskans deserve better.

Sad Realities

Too often Alaskans hold elected officials in low esteem. The recent indictments of current and former legislators tend to reinforce that attitude and unfairly taint all elected officials. The disdain for legislators was exemplified by the initiative reducing the legislative session from 120 days to 90 days and the ethics legislation that suggests that a legislator can be influenced by a $15 lunch. We can only question why anyone would want to subject themselves and their families to the public ridicule and scorn that attaches to elected officials. We should applaud those officials that seek public office and recognize the sacrifices they make. Those with whom we disagree are not corrupt and those who we agree with are not saints. They are men and women who make huge personal and financial sacrifices in the belief that they can help make Alaska better for all residents. The vast majority of elected officials work hard; 60 hour work weeks are the norm not the exception.

The issues facing Alaska are complex and far reaching. Alaska needs representatives who care about the long-term interests of the state. Instead of pillaring them, we should applaud them for their public service. The indiscretions of a few should not stain those who give so selflessly of their time and place their reputations at risk to be damaged by the actions of others.

Perhaps this is one of the reasons why so many qualified Alaskans refuse to place themselves and their families under the microscope that accompanies public service. Sadly, it is a problem only an enlightened public and media can solve. All too frequently neither seem to be enlightened, or worse, concerned.
When the GHEMM Company of Fairbanks was founded 55 years ago, the name of this civil engineering firm was simply a practical solution, formed from using the first letter of each of the last names of the five founding partners: Clyde Geraghty, Carl Heflinger, Carl Erickson, Bob Mitchell and Harvey Marlin.

Although there may have been a moment when all five partners realized the coincidence of the company name GHEMM being pronounced “gem,” they had more important things to focus on than finding clever ways to market their business. Fairbanks was growing, the military presence was increasing and the talk on the street was about the many plans to modernize and rebuild the city.

“There was a future here and they saw there was a future here,” current GHEMM President Bert Bell says. So the original group of five, bringing collective experience in trucking and mining, decided to form a construction company that would focus on the earthwork side of construction, moving houses and building roads and bridges. Although the core team had a limited level of expertise, they suspected from market indicators that – at the very least – they could bank on making enough for three squares a day and to keep the lights on.

In 1959, Carl Heflinger, one of the original five, left the company for opportunities in the gold mining field and his slot was filled by Conrad Frank, an established civil engineer. At the time, Frank was the building inspector for the City of Fairbanks and owner of a concrete block business. It was the first step toward GHEMM evolving into a general contracting firm. It was a critical turning point for GHEMM, Bell says, because Frank had bidding expertise that launched the company into more professional jobs requiring more sophisticated work, opening the doors for more construction and military jobs.

By the late 1950s, Alaska was also on its way to realizing statehood, ushering in a wave of state work that would carry the company for the next 20 years and into the early 1980s. GHEMM’s work included contracts on some of Alaska’s most memorable milestone projects and bridges in the Interior and Far North regions, including the Yukon River Bridge, a $30 million crossing at milepost 353 of the Alaska Pipeline, where it typically crossed 1,900 feet of the river. In 1968, the Prudhoe Bay oil lease sale brought pipeline construction and other oil-related activities online, swelling the population of the Fairbanks North Star Borough to 74,000 people.
At the same time, GHEMM established a reputation in design/build work for private Fairbanks clients such as the Nerland furniture store chair and Usibelli coal dynasty. Like most engineering firms then, GHEMM capitalized on the boom, along the way building its expertise and portfolio of significant projects.

By 1976, when Bell first joined GHEMM, the original five founders had become part of the historical archives, resulting from retirement and the death of some partners. Two years later, a recession triggered by the oil crash followed and unemployment in Fairbanks was at an all-time high of 20 percent. Like everyone, Bell says, GHEMM “got really hungry” and the firm took whatever work it could find to stay afloat. As Alaska came out of its slump in the late 1980s, it was boom time again and oil revenues poured into the state coffers as Alaska legislators made billion-dollar decisions impacting the construction and engineering industry. On top of that, Molly Hootch legislation resulted in $132 million worth of construction for 105 secondary schools across rural Alaska to provide Alaska Native children the option to attend high school in their home communities, making it the largest settlement in the history of American education litigation.

Since the early 1990s, Bell says, the business development focus has been on the Fairbanks area, where the increasing amount of private work continues to keep the firm busy. Fairbanks Memorial Hospital has the firm’s stamp on several recent additions, along with the Alyeska Pipeline Service Company office building, Doyon Corp. headquarters, Alaska USA Federal Credit Union, car dealerships, banks, churches and the University of Alaska Fairbanks. GHEMM also built the Fort Wainwright Bassett Army Hospital, the biggest job to come to the company in recent history. Completed in December, the building included 20,000 yards of concrete and 10 million tons of steel, and was valued at $188 million.

“It’s a pretty fancy building,” Bell says proudly. Currently, he says, GHEMM is starting a home for the Boys & Girls Club, which will comprise five buildings that will house clients, a school and administrative offices. GHEMM also built the Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center and the new headquarters for Mt. McKinley bank in the center of Fairbanks.

Just as Fairbanks jobs will be a part of the firm’s legacy, Bell says, so will its involvement with Associated General Contractors of Alaska. Since its first involvement more than 30 years ago, GHEMM has benefited and contributed to the organization on many different levels. There have been two past presidents, including former partner Frank, and Bell, who was also on the board of directors and has been a lifetime board member since the ‘90s. Meg Nordale, the minority partner in GHEMM, is also on the board. Both Bell and Nordale are on the Fairbanks task force. Bell also serves on the Carpenters Trust, and Nordale on the Carpenters Apprentice Trust.

“Getting to know the people in the industry is one of the biggest rewards of being involved with AGC,” Bell says. “And when there’s a problem facing the industry, AGC gives us a medium to pull together and have a focused energy,” he says, adding that the education and safety components are especially valuable because they contribute to the ongoing growth and success of the construction industry.

Heidi Bohi is a freelance writer and marketing professional who lives in Anchorage.
Show me the money!
How to save a bundle in workers’ compensation

One of the most frequent inquiries from clients is: “How can we save money on workers’ compensation? These losses are killing us!”

And it’s no wonder. While injury rates have reduced slightly over the past several years, workers’ compensation costs continue to climb – at an average increase of 7 percent per year. Over the past 10 years, Alaska employers have paid out more than $1.63 billion in benefits.

The best approach toward reducing losses is to take a holistic approach toward worker safety and wellness. We’ve coached many companies through a process that has realized tremendous results. Every organization that adopts these elements can see a gradual decline in claim cost, and an increase in morale and productivity, which translates into a healthier bottom line.

To effect the required changes, many organizations adopt a management philosophy that “declares war on work injuries.” This mindset is required to engage the entire organization and set the tone for improvements.

The 15-step process

1. Management Commitment – The starting point for the process is a written Management Safety Policy Statement, endorsed by the top officials of the company. Dedicated resources of budget and staff are required to implement the process. Senior management should visit with employees, attend a regularly scheduled inspection, and review incidents. In addition to providing visible and sincere safety leadership, the management team must also “walk the talk.”

2. Engineering Review – Conduct regular review of jobs, tasks, processes, equipment, supplies, workstations, etc. Use workers within the department to help ask and answer work process questions, as they have more knowledge about the job than anyone else.

3. Job Descriptions – Having the right written job description is one of the keys in developing an effective loss control system. Be sure to include essential physical functions/tasks and a statement that timely reporting of injuries is mandatory. The document should also include any findings or procedures developed from your JSA/JHA process along with the required PPE for each task.

4. Hiring Practices – Since there is every possibility that employers could be making a hiring decision that will result in a long-term relationship, it is critical to be sure that this person is a good match for the job. Begin by asking: “Is this the person I want to hire for life?” Use evaluation criteria such as suitability for task, medical assessment (based on job requirements) and drug and alcohol screening.

5. Post-Hire Health Questionnaire – The timing of this document is essential. Employers can only request this information after a tentative offer of employment is made, and the offer should be conditional upon getting through the rest of the pre-placement process (which should also include drug testing, functional capacity evaluation, etc).

6. Post-Hire, Pre-Placement Physical Assessment – Each task/function needs to be evaluated. Once all the measurements are in hand, develop assessment criteria that effectively replicate the tasks required. One of the best benefits of this process is the opportunity for education, feedback, coaching and delivering the message. Therefore, it is worthwhile to spend some time designing the process to gain maximum advantage of potential employees’ undivided attention.

7. Back School – Good results are achieved with a holistic approach that will provide employees with information about “how to take care of your body for the rest of your life.” Task specific tips are included, but the focus is on prevention and self-care.

8. Workstation/Task Evaluations – Workstations and tasks should be evaluated by a professional (physical therapist, ergonomist or other person with training). In addition to nipping problems in the bud, this offers another message to the workforce that their safety and health are paramount in helping to build a safety culture. Some employees have pretty challenging workstations, but they usually have the solutions already envisioned.

9. Administrative Rules – Work rules define roles, responsibilities and procedures. A job safety analysis should be performed on all high-risk tasks and those that have resulted in injury. The employee safety handbook should
also define such rules as limits on the amount of weight individuals are allowed to lift; mandating mechanical lifting aids; defining the use of the buddy system; and providing for penalties/discipline for infractions of the rules.

10. Early Reporting – A critical key to reducing losses is getting injuries reported quickly. The company team has lots of options to deal with pain and discomfort – far fewer options when the injury has become quite serious and involved. The organization must take away all the incentives for hiding injuries (awards based on recordable injuries, draconian investigation practices, peer pressure, etc). Employees must feel that employers will embrace their concerns, take action and harbor no ill will toward the employee in pain.

11. Prompt Medical Care – It goes without saying that you can reduce claim cost by utilizing appropriate medical care, but it is quite astounding to review the type of care injured employees receive. Examples abound of employees receiving long-term inappropriate care for their work-related injuries. The key is to provide a clear understanding that the employer has the employee’s best interests in mind – namely a good medical result, minimized pain and suffering, minimized loss of income and productivity.

12. Claims Management Team – The team can help to design the process, act as a policy review board, review open claims and losses, assist with complex cases and provide a focal point for overall case management. Team members should include all stakeholders in the process. Regular claims meetings will help to avoid surprises and provide a constant focus that will bring quicker closure to claims.

13. Modified Return to Work – The benefits are well documented for a light-duty placement process. It can dramatically reduce claim cost, discourage malingering, keep a “work” focus and assist in the physical rehabilitation process.

14. Post Injury Assessment – A good practice is to first obtain the physician’s return to work advice, then schedule the employee to a post-injury return-to-work assessment. This is a very similar step to the post-offer, pre-placement assessment, but will probably require a bit more time and communication between scheduler, physical therapist and employee.

15. Sharpen the Saw – The final part of the process is the evaluation phase. Like any continuous improvement or quality system, we have to carefully assess how we are doing. That starts with making certain the measurements are right – all of these steps are good, measurable criteria to see if your loss control system is working at peak efficiency.

But what really works?

A National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health study found four key areas that influenced superior safety performance.

- Top management commitment
- Humanistic approach to workers
- One-on-one contact
- Use of positive reinforcement

All of the 15 steps are consistent with these findings, and will help convey to your employees that you really have their best interests at heart. So the bottom line is this: Even with the best systems and processes in place, you must still listen to your employees and address their concerns while treating them with respect.

Chris Ross is the general manager of NANA Training Systems (NTS) in Anchorage, Alaska. NTS offers clients training and consulting solutions in leadership, hiring and selection, safety and health compliance, risk management and strategic planning. Learn more about NTS at www.nana-nts.com or e-mail the author at chris.ross@nana.com.
SimplexGrinnell is on a mission to keep Alaskans safe.

“Our goal is to be the premier provider of life-safety systems throughout the state,” said Bobby Alston, General Sales Manager for the Anchorage district. “To my knowledge, we’re the only one-stop shop for fire alarm, fire suppression, security and communications in the state.”

SimplexGrinnell is a subsidiary of Tyco Fire and Security. Its presence in Alaska began in 2001 when Grinnell purchased Audio-Video Inc. Tyco purchased Simplex and merged it with Grinnell to create SimplexGrinnell. Before the merger, Simplex only installed fire alarms and Grinnell only installed sprinklers, Alston said. Today the company has grown to be the leading provider of fire and integrated security protection systems and services in North America.

Six years since coming to Alaska, SimplexGrinnell has approximately 100 employees, with branches in Anchorage, Fairbanks and Juneau that dispatch workers statewide as needed.

“The fire alarm is designed to get people out and the sprinkler system is designed to save the building,” he said. “Those two in combination provide an excellent life-safety system.”

According to the Society of Fire Prevention Engineers, about 3,000 people still die annually from fire-related incidents.

Alston said it’s mostly large public buildings and multi-family dwellings that currently use fire suppression systems alongside the smoke and Co2 detectors that the Municipality of Anchorage requires.

Cities in some states also require fire suppression systems in single-family dwellings to help prevent loss of life and property.

Investing in a fire suppression system also means lower insurance rates, Alston said.

“We could prevent a lot of loss of life and property with more fire suppression systems,” he said.

SimplexGrinnell specializes in fire and life-safety systems and services including mass notification systems; alarm systems and devices; emergency lighting; fire extinguishers and fire pumps; sprinkler systems; and clean agent, restaurant suppression and special hazards systems.

Along with fire and safety systems they also offer

MEMBER PROFILE

Jim Hogan of SimplexGrinnell puts the finishing touches on the sound system in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District’s new Technical High School.

PHOTO: BOB BECHTOLD/MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH
communications equipment used by hospitals, universities, businesses and various institutions, Alston said.

Alaska District Manager Shane Herrington said buildings protected by SimplexGrinnell’s systems enjoy the benefits of its local people and problem solving expertise, plus that of its 150 offices nationwide.

“In the vast majority of situations we have the ability locally,” he said. “But we can pull in experts nationwide to do the work if we need to. Our resources aren’t limited to just local ones.”

Facilities from the North Slope to Kodiak and down to Juneau rely on SimplexGrinnell, Alston said.

“We do lots of sound systems for churches and school auditoriums,” he said.

Two recent projects are the installation of the sound systems in Anchorage high school auditoriums at East and Bartlett. SimplexGrinnell LP is currently working on the fire, sound and audio-video systems at the Mat-Su Career and Technical High School in Wasilla.

Walk into any school in Alaska with an intercom and fire system and there is a good chance it was provided by SimplexGrinnell, Alston said.

One of the things that distinguishes SimplexGrinnell from other Alaska companies that do similar work is its ability to provide integrated systems, he said. Even if the systems are by different manufacturers, Alston said SimplexGrinnell can integrate them.

For customers, Herrington said that means they only need to hire one contractor to install systems as diverse as fire, audio, security, communications and closed circuit television.

“When you’re looking for a one-stop shop we’re the only ones who can deliver this level of service over this many product lines,” he said.

As an international company with ties across the country, Herrington said that SimplexGrinnell has a responsibility to participate in local organizations like AGC of Alaska.

“Through AGC, we are able to keep our finger on the pulse of things and to better respond to what our customers need,” he said.

Alston said AGC membership also is a great way to stay informed about upcoming projects and to meet other contractors.

“It is nice to know who you are doing business with and who is reputable,” he said.

Which fits perfectly with SimplexGrinnell’s corporate mission “to be the recognized leader and preferred provider for our valued customers; by delivering unequalled products and services through a highly qualified staff of professionals, with total commitment to integrity and excellence.”

Senior Editor Heather A. Resz is the sole proprietor of the contract writing business, Infinite Designs.
Managing driver compliance

With so many Department of Transportation regulations for drivers, it is very difficult for companies to stay in compliance. Often, it takes a massive investment from companies to keep the staff and records to maintain that compliance. Although the American Trucking Association says the majority of truckers are “safe, well-trained and properly licensed,” there are a few who don’t possess these qualifications. Using a system to check the qualifications of your drivers helps ensure that those truckers are not a danger to other drivers and pedestrians.

In March, 33-year-old Jose Portillo Villalto died outside of Washington, D.C., after he was struck by a tractor-trailer driven by Roger Scofield. Officials say Scofield should not have been behind the wheel since he had a suspended license and 56 traffic citations from seven different states. The citations included convictions for speeding and reckless driving.

Keeping drivers like Scofield off the road is one of the benefits of the Driver Qualification File Management system from Commercial Solutions.

Federal regulations now require companies that fall under DOT regulation to maintain current and complete driver files. These records are designed to keep drivers like Scofield from ever driving a commercial vehicle, and to reduce the national big truck accident rate that, according to the Federal Highway Administration, claimed nearly 5,000 lives and injured 114,000 people in 2005.

While the regulations may improve safety, maintaining the files is a time-consuming, often expensive task, especially for the trucking industry, which has an average turnover rate of 87 percent.

The file management system developed by Commercial Solutions provides auditing and electronic retention of driver qualification files, including prior employment verification, substance abuse history, driving records and more. It can be customized to handle other employee records and was developed by industry professionals with decades of experience in dealing with DOT regulation.

The Commercial Solutions system is Web-based, which means it is accessible 24 hours a day, from anywhere in the world. Commercial Solutions is a division of WorkSafe, Alaska’s most experienced occupational health and safety company.

While the system takes the hassle out of federal compliance, it also provides protection from civil and regulatory liability. Inaccurate or incomplete information can lead to hiring high-risk, unqualified, disqualified or non-compliant drivers. Establishing and maintaining a program that protects you is crucial for survival in today’s competitive environment.

Federal regulations require drivers to be penalized for being convicted of “certain criminal and other offenses and serious traffic violations, or subject to any suspension, revocations, or cancellations of certain driving privileges.”

For instance, if a driver refuses to take an alcohol test in two separate incidents, he or she is disqualified from driving a commercial vehicle for life. The offenses for lifetime disqualification are numerous and rigid. License suspensions are even more numerous and sentences range from 60 days to five years.

Although states are required to report violations to federal officials, who are tasked with collecting and sharing the data, some criticize the agencies for not reporting violations quickly or fully, which is another reason Commercial Solutions developed its system.

Plus, keeping track of all the regulations imposed by federal officials on commercial vehicle drivers and their records can be a daunting task. The industry’s high turnover rate means that each company is forced to keep track of thousands of drivers. By using a file system, companies can focus on running their businesses instead of collecting employee records.

Matthew Fagnani is president of WorkSafe Inc., a full-spectrum workplace drug and alcohol program that offers instant-results testing. For more information, visit the office at the corner of 36th and C streets in Anchorage, or call (907) 563-8378.
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Senco Alaska marks 39 years building Alaska

It’s no secret that the Senco Alaska building on the corner of Dowling Road and Old Seward Highway in Anchorage is home to a booming family business that has helped build Alaska for nearly 40 years.

Less well known is its extensive collection of antique tools that the family has collected and displays at its south Anchorage headquarters.

“It’s our parents’ collection,” said Senco Alaska vice president Teri Gunter, nodding toward a shelf of antique staplers encircling her office.

That historic collection and a similar display of saws and hammers that line the hallway leading to the office were compiled over her father’s lifetime, a testament to his love for hands-on work, she said.

“Our dad [Jack Butt] founded the company in 1968 and ran it until he passed away four years ago,” Gunter said. “My sister and I run the company together and we really pride ourselves in providing service to our customers. It’s really bred into us.”

Since her father’s passing, Gunter and her sister, Jackie Glatt, have dedicated themselves fully to the company and take pride in continuing their late father’s work.

Senco Products is based in Cincinnati, but Senco Alaska is the exclusive Senco product distributor in the state.

Senco offers a variety of fastening tools including framing nails, staples, compressors and collated screws, just to name a few. Senco products are used in home construction, remodeling, woodworking, cabinet and furniture assembly, manufacturing housing and industrial packaging. Increasingly, Senco Alaska is doing business with commercial contractors. The company also provides products by Max Re-Bar tying systems, Handi-foam products specializing in one- to two-component polyurethane foam and miscellaneous hardware items to meet contractor needs. It services pneumatic tools as well.

PHOTOS: GINGER COOLEY
“We service what we sell and we deliver quality,” Gunter said, repeating the company’s slogan. Senco Alaska is in its beginning phases of expanding its inventory to include some of the most innovative construction products. With the chemical and technological advances in manufacturing, new products geared toward the harsh Alaska climate are now available.

But the company has not always been a Senco product supplier.

Originally founder Jack Butt owned the Butt Construction Company of Alaska, which was a consumer of Senco products. When the Senco distributor died, Butt negotiated an agreement with Dave Wilson, the West Coast manager of Senco. Afterward, the business and inventory were sold to Butt and it soon became his career focus.

He worked fervently to establish business in Senco Alaska’s original location, a 24-by-60-foot flat-topped building, which the family referred to as “the chicken coop,” on Tudor Road. Growing up, Butt’s two daughters, now vice president and office manager of Senco Alaska, did what they could to help.

Gunter and Glatt have kept Senco Alaska going, thanks to the personal relationships their father built with customers and clients.

Robby Capps, president of F & W Construction and a Senco Alaska client said, “I worked [at Senco] all through high school, from 1976 to 1979. To me, Jack Butt walks on water – he’s the greatest guy I ever worked for.”

As the business grew, the family built the current Alaska headquarters, a 1,600-square-foot office and an 8,000-square-foot warehouse on Dowling Road. The business now employs seven individuals who are either related to Jack Butt or thought of as family. Senco has two locations, Anchorage and Wasilla, and seven dealers in Fairbanks, Kodiak, Seward, Soldotna, Nome, Bethel and Delta Junction.

In the last year alone, there has been a 6 percent increase in new client accounts.

When Butt first became a Senco supplier in Alaska, he catered to the residential needs of the community. However, Senco Alaska has recently turned its attention to the changes in contracting trends.

“A few years ago, we were mostly serving residential needs. We diversified the company to go into commercial [business] because we’re servicing all the contractors who’ve gone commercial as well,” Gunter said. “We worked hard over the years to earn the contractor’s trust and be their mainstream industrial supplier. Senco has followed its contracting customers to help with changes in the Anchorage economy.”

Two huge local projects that have depended on quality Senco products are the military housing project and the continuing expansion of the Providence Hospital campus and its facilities.

“Our products were used in both of these undertakings,” Gunter said.

Alaska Regional Council of Carpenters President David Robinson said he uses the heavy duty commercial-quality construction equipment Senco sells and services. “I use their nail guns all the time and if something breaks they fix it ASAP,” he said.

Some of Senco’s customers include F & W Construction, Builders Choice Inc. and FM Construction. One of their primary sources of customers is the Associated General Contractors of Alaska organization.

“Many members affiliated with the Associated General Contractors of Alaska are clients of ours,” Gunter said. “We’ve been connected with [Associated General Contractors] for years.”

Thirty-two years to be exact, and many more to come, she said.

“One of the biggest things I can think of is that you are networking and marketing your company through Alaska General Contractors,” Gunter said. “This type of connection is essential to the survival of our business.”

And the clients who have worked with Senco are satisfied.

“What [Senco] does there – they are experts. They aren’t a Home Depot or Lowes, I go in there to buy pneumatic tools and they are the experts at it,” said client Robby Capps. “Senco is a company that is specialized in what they do, and no one does it better.”

Ginger Cooley is studying journalism and photography at the University of Alaska Anchorage.
Judicial favoritism toward the public interest litigants reduced

Alaska is the only state in the union that follows the so-called “English” rule under which the prevailing party in every case is awarded a portion of its costs and attorney’s fees incurred in the lawsuit. The idea is for a prevailing party, either plaintiff or defendant, to recover a portion, but not all, of the actual reasonable attorney’s fees incurred. This principle is set out in “Rule 82,” which is a rule of civil procedure adopted by the Alaska Supreme Court. Rule 82 applies equally to all parties, regardless of party or claim.

Beginning in the early 1970s, the Alaska Supreme Court adopted an exception to Rule 82 for some litigants, referred to as the public interest litigant doctrine. This doctrine eventually provided that a party that was determined to be a public interest litigant was entitled to recover full attorney’s fees if it prevailed; but conversely, if the party lost, did not have to pay any attorney’s fees to the prevailing party. The court’s announced purpose was to encourage parties to bring to the court issues of public importance. The actual result was that groups whose political aims were to prevent or slow the development of projects with economic value were given a large financial advantage. In addition, in defining which parties were and were not entitled to this special treatment, the courts necessarily made political value choices. For instance, those people opposing a transmission line on the grounds that it allegedly threatened their subsistence lifestyle were accorded public interest litigant status. However, miners testing the validity of mining regulations were not. A neighbor protesting an upscale multi-unit development on aesthetic grounds was considered a public interest litigant, but a group of homeowners opposing a rezoning that would have permitted a low-income housing development was not a public interest litigant.

As a result, after several years of attempts, in 2003, the Alaska Legislature enacted a law that specifically repealed the so-called public interest litigant doctrine as it had been crafted by the Alaska Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court opined that the legislation did not change Rule 82, but only eliminated a substantive area of law that the court had created, which the Legislature was fully empowered to do. The decision should not, however, be regarded as completely eliminating the public interest litigation doctrine for two reasons.

First, the act itself now expressly provides that in actions “concerning the establishment, protection or enforcement” of either federal or state constitutional rights, the prevailing party is entitled to full reasonable attorney’s fees if it wins, but if it loses, it is insulated from any award of attorney’s fees against it. This is still the public interest litigant doctrine, but limited to so-called “constitutional” questions. It will take little imagination to wrap environmental preservationist claims and lawsuits in the trappings of “constitutional” rights.

Second, because Rule 82 was not changed, a court can still increase or decrease an award of attorney’s fees under existing Rule 82 provisions. Rule 82 has 11 factors that a court can use to vary an attorney’s fee award above or below what it otherwise would have been. The last factor is “other equitable factors deemed relevant.” This provision remains. The Supreme Court, however, held that it should not be used by the lower courts as an indirect means of accomplishing what the act now disallows. Yet, under another of the 11 factors of Rule 82, the courts can vary an attorney’s fee award to “the extent to which a given fee award may be so onerous to the non-prevailing party that it would deter similarly situated litigants from the voluntary use of the courts.”

The Alaska Supreme Court ended its opinion in the case stating, “Litigants advancing public interest claims may still, on a case-by-case basis, be shielded from awards of attorney’s fees under Rule 82(b)(3)(f) for much the same reason that we accepted when we first adopted [the doctrine].”

Thus the Supreme Court will still approve, on a case-by-case basis, a lower court’s denial of an award of attorney’s fees against a losing public interest litigant. A financial risk-free incentive still exists in favor of public interest litigants.

Robert J. (Bob) Dickson is a partner of the Anchorage law firm Atkinson, Conway & Gagnon Inc.
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Jobs are Alaska’s Future
He wasn’t welding anything specific. Just practicing his technique. He seemed oblivious to the blue sky, bright sun or pretty blonde classmate who’d just driven up to do a little work on her pickup truck.

“This kind of job is in high demand, but it isn’t easy,” he said. “You have to practice and you really have to concentrate on what you are doing.”

Euliano, a 17-year-old junior who just completed his second year at Hutchison, said when he first arrived he thought he wanted to be a radiologist. But as he began taking courses in how to read blueprints, drafting and welding, he began to realize the opportunities before him might not be limited to such a specialized area.

“This is one of those trades you’ll always have.”

He lowered his visor and resumed the vertical weld. He still had 20 minutes before the bell rang for the end of class.

Euliano is not unique in his pragmatism. Most of the students at Hutchison seem intent on taking full advantage of the special opportunities the school offers. After all, it isn’t every day a high school student can pick up a cutting torch, a reciprocating saw, take apart a desktop computer’s circuit board, or wrap a sprained ankle for a fellow student on the soccer team, all while getting a diploma and college credit to boot.

Hutchison High School is not the typical vocational-technical school model crafted during the 1970s, where students attended in the afternoons or evenings and scheduling conflicts often lead to fragmented programs and a disorganized student body, said school principal Bill McLeod.

Hutchison Institute of Technology breaks away from the traditional vocational school model

By Jedediah R. Smith

The sun poured through the open garage doors of the Hutchison High School metal shop classroom one warm spring day as Neil Euliano lifted the shade from his red, white and blue welding helmet and closely inspected a vertical weld on two pieces of scrap metal.

Hutchison Institute of Technology breaks away from the traditional vocational school model

By Jedediah R. Smith
Neil Euliano, 17, said he specifically chose to attend Hutchison because of the welding program, and said he sees his skills paying off later down the road in Alaska. “It’s one of those trades you’ll always have.”

“It’s one of those trades you’ll always have.”

McLeod roams the halls during passing period, smiling at students, calling them all by their first names. Since the school opened just three years ago, a full class of freshmen has yet to go through the entire four-year program. Though the principal said he’s optimistic the model will prove effective.

At Hutchison, students attend the full day and are encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities. The school has wrestling, basketball, soccer, cross-country and track teams, as well as athletic training courses, and produces a weekly television newscast broadcast in the classrooms. The school also is partners with the University of Alaska’s Tanana Valley Campus, and Hutchison students can graduate from high school with as many as 18 college credits.

It is safe to say the school is about as advanced, technology wise, as a school can be these days; something many vo-tech schools can’t say. But Hutchison High School does share something in common with other vocational high schools in the state in that it offers students a nationally recognized certification for completion of certain construction trade courses.
The Association of General Contractors of Alaska has helped with the Hutchison mission by bringing together community partners and by pushing the NCCER curriculum, which will ultimately prepare students to fill many high-demand jobs after they leave high school or give them a leg up in continuing their education.

NCCER, or the National Center for Construction, Education and Research, is a national standardized program that gives employers a chance to see what types of basic skills or training prospective employees have.

Hutchison has two teachers certified to instruct under the NCCER curriculum. They are welding instructor Steve Ratzlaff and carpentry teacher Randy Nelson.

Senior Andrea Merchant recently became the first Hutchison student to receive her structural welding certificate.

Ratzlaff said there are women in all of the classes he teaches.

“Girls are actually sometimes better welders because they are naturally more attentive to details and welding is all about the details,” he said.

Jennifer Towler, who coordinates the Fairbanks AGC office, said the NCCER certificates tells employers that a person has a certain level of training.

“So when they are handed a wrench, the kid doesn’t go, ‘Oh, my gosh. Where does that go?’” she said.

AGC of Alaska, along with some grant funding from the Denali Commission, has sponsored the NCCER curriculum for the last six years in just about every high school in the state that offers a construction class, according to AGC executive director Dick Cattanach.

“It is the industry standard,” he said. “I think it is very effective. Large employers use it around the country and these students can go anywhere and employers know what they are getting.”

Cattanach acknowledges the NCCER certification is more widely adopted in the Lower 48 than in Alaska. But he said if employers would adopt the standard’s requirements, Alaska could have a much better qualified workforce.

Still, Cattanach said the cost of the program isn't as important as the benefits of the NCCER curriculum. “The purpose of the whole program is to educate.”

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the average annual salary for a carpenter is $38,730. Construction managers easily earn more than twice that. And in Alaska, construction workers trail only those in the oil and gas sector in annual earnings, with wages beating those in information, government, and health and education. But having and maintaining a qualified workforce is crucial to capturing those wages.

Fairbanks AGC coordinator Towler spends a lot of her time coordinating information between contractors and educational opportunities for prospective workers. She considers AGC a sounding board for teachers, as well as a conduit to provide materials and experience.

Her 17-year-old son also attends Hutchison.

For the first two years, Towler said the school and the construction community struggled to find an efficient way to communicate needs and resources with Hutchison faculty and administration. But that process has gotten better. Now, she envisions small projects around the community that the students can work on that don’t necessarily compete with local contractors.

Jeff Poyser, 17, pointed out his contributions to one of those projects, a cold storage shed his Carpentry II class helped construct for the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District.

Poyser built much of the floor and framed in about half of the 12-by-12
foot shed. It wasn’t the first such project he’d worked on. He helped his sister frame in and Sheetrock a bed and breakfast that she operates.

But the classes he’s taken at Hutchison have given him a more rounded and concrete education. Now he knows how to read blueprints and weld.

Though he had his eye on the future, two weeks before he was set to graduate, Poyser said he hoped the rest of the days went slowly, so he could savor the last of his English and economics courses.

“I’ve tried to do a little bit of everything,” a polite Poyser said. “I turn 18 in August and would like to enter an apprenticeship program with the pipefitters union.”

AGC’s Towler said students like Poyser, with a broad base of educational experiences, are exactly the kind of students construction contractors in Alaska need.

“Our goal here is to get these kids thinking about unions, about banking. No matter what it is, it is going to be a part of construction. This isn’t just the ditch diggers.”

Sophomore Blaine Vogel is anything but a ditch digger. The moppy haired 16-year-old runs track, took Algebra II last spring, and is interested in astrophysics. He recently competed in the carpentry component of Skills USA in Wasilla, a high school competition of sorts for vocational students who are tested not just on their manual skills, but their leadership abilities and interview performance.

Vogel moved deftly about the dry storage shed, cutting the excess length from a rafter beam under the supervision of his teacher Randy Nelson. Before he made the cut, Nelson told Vogel to measure the length.

“It’s about 88 inches,” Vogel said, holding the tape measure.

“How about?” Nelson asked briskly.

Vogel measures again, this time eyeing the tape more closely. “Eighty-seven-and-seven-sixteenths,” Vogel confirms.

Nelson nods with satisfaction. “When these guys are doing a rip cut on a crosscut saw, that isn’t easy. You can’t ever cover enough on safety.”

Jed Smith is an Alaska writer and photographer who is completing his master’s degree in Northern Studies at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.
Anchorage School District Superintendent Carol Comeau honored the Anchorage Construction Academy with the Superintendent’s Award as part of the 2007 Anchorage School Business Partnership program. She said the Anchorage Construction Academy was selected for the award because of its tremendous service to the district.

“ACA reinforces collaboration with various groups and creates meaningful workforce development activities,” she said. Comeau said workforce development has made a big difference, not only at King Career Center, but it also has expanded to other comprehensive high schools. For example, East High students built storage sheds as part of a construction outreach project.

The superintendent said she hopes these classes and partnerships will lead to apprenticeship programs.

Anchorage School Business Partnerships began in 1991 as a joint venture between the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce and the Anchorage School District. From 28 original partnerships, the program has grown to involve 540 businesses throughout the city. Partners provide schools with guest speakers, classroom volunteers, on-the-job work experience for students, material and monetary resources and other special activities.

Anchorage Construction Academy WINS Superintendent’s Award

The Anchorage Construction Academy pilot program was developed by the Associated General Contractors of Alaska in partnership with the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, the Anchorage School District and a cadre of industry groups, and it promises to tackle the growing need for new workplace talent.

For the initial phase, 100 Anchorage high school juniors and seniors and 100 unemployed and underemployed young people ages 18 through 24 were recruited to participate in the program, said Comeau. The adult participants trained at King Career Center in Anchorage while younger students will take core classes at Service, East and West high schools and hopefully Chugiak, she said.

Besides the AGC, key players include the state labor department, with its network of job centers to help place novice employees, and the Alaska Works Partnership, an industry coalition with experience in rural environments training workers in job safety, general construction skills, building maintenance and repair jobs for union and non-union apprenticeship programs.

Also on board are the Anchorage Home Builders Association and Alaska State Home Building Association, trade groups representing the homebuilding and remodeling industry.
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General contractor Roger Hickel Contracting Inc. has completed the $35.7 million school under budget and ahead of schedule.

Information in the spring 2007 issue of the Alaska Contractor magazine mistakenly credited another contractor for the Muldoon middle school project.

Roger Hickel commented that a lot of people don’t realize the amount of effort and cooperation it takes to produce a quality facility like the Begich Middle School.

“It takes the combined effort of the owner, designers and contractors all working together to have a successful project,” Hickel said. “We had a fantastic team which worked together for 18 months without any unresolved issues, conflicts or disputes. The Anchorage School District’s Project Managers, the Municipality of Anchorage’s Building Inspectors, Kumin Associates Architects and their engineering sub-consultants were all great to work with. RHC employed over 30 subcontractors. The entire team of highly skilled managers and craftsmen really enjoyed working together to produce..."
this highly needed school. We are all very pleased with the finished project and feel that it will enhance the education of our youth for many years.”

A walk-through with the architect shed more light on the project, and although Kumin Associates Inc. has designed several other projects for the Anchorage School District – including the new Bartlett Theater, Denali Elementary School and Goldenview Elementary School – the Begich Middle School is a completely new design.

It’s no accident that the school’s multi-purpose room features floor to ceiling views of the Chugach Mountains, that every core classroom has south facing windows, or that all of the classrooms, except one, have windows.

“That is very tough to do,” said Angela Barr, AIA, with Kumin Associates, of designing all of the building’s classroom spaces with windows. “It’s an absolutely unique design.”
Community input was one of the biggest elements of the design, Barr said. The architectural firm began meeting with the community in 2003 to plan the new facility.

“Our first meeting was with the students,” she said.

What grew out of this collaborative process is a positive space that is pleasing to occupy.

“We had a great experience doing this,” Barr said. “We were all focused on the same goal.”

The design’s two guiding design principles were access to southern light and mountain views, she said.

Big windows – in some cases floor to ceiling – in the library, multi-purpose room and gym add more natural light.

Barr said if the windows on two levels in the gym are a problem during games, the school plans to add blinds.

“But 90 percent of the time you’d rather have the light,” she said.
The building is divided into eight smaller learning communities. Each “house” includes a teacher planning room, four core classrooms and a special education classroom, Barr said.

The core classrooms – math, history, language arts and science – are all south facing.

The new school also includes green features such as motion sensitive lighting, very little carpeting and durable finishes designed to withstand the wear and tear of its young users.

A palette of eight different colors accent the building’s walls and repeat the natural hues found in the slate tile used on the building’s exterior and interior.

Black streetlights move from outside the building to its interior where the streetlight style fixtures illuminate the building’s hallways and make the main hall feel more like a Main Street.

During a May walk-through, Barr told Anchorage School District on-site representative Chris Lynch, “It’s just a picture in an architectural digest until you guys move in.”
Mat-Su voters approved bonds for the new high school in 2003. In May, there was still space available for 35 full-time students and 250 part-time students at the new facility located off Seldon Road near Teeland Elementary School. With the opening of the facility, 16 new courses will be added to the district’s already acclaimed career and technical education program.

Although scaffolding still clings to the $22 million Mat-Su Career and Technical High School, 215 full-time students already are enrolled in the new school, which opens in August.

Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District Career and Technical Education Director Ray DePriest said everyone is excited about the new career opportunities the new school will offer to Mat-Su students.

“It’s something people have been dreaming about for a long time,” he said.

Instructional building

The 76,000-square-foot building itself is designed to teach students how a building works, DePriest said. Throughout the building, the buckling restraint braces and the HVAC ductwork are exposed, he said. Cable trays will be left exposed overhead in the halls as they guide the computer network cable throughout the building, allowing students to see how a building works.
**CAREER PATHWAYS**

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- Culinary Arts/Hospitality/Tourism
- Welding Technology at Colony High
- Outdoor Power Equipment at Colony High
- Automotive Services Technology at Wasilla High
- Agriculture and Natural Resources at Palmer High

**AGC support**

The high school will offer the AGC-sponsored architecture/construction/pre-engineering (ACE) academy curriculum as well as other career clusters or pathways. The construction academy was actually launched in August 2006, with a $21,000 three-year grant AGC of Alaska received from the U.S. Department of Labor via the AGC of America.

The money funds the ACE academy courses the construction academy offers, while the state covers the cost of the basic education courses required of all students. The Construction Industry Progress Fund also gave the academy $16,000 in start-up money, and has promised to give up to $10,000 a year, if necessary.
In college, she sometimes worked alongside her boyfriend doing miscellaneous jobs for his father, a general contractor.

On the job site, she'd question the contractor about details such as materials that weren't on-hand when needed and delayed work.

After graduating with her degree in biology and unable to find work in that field, Taylor took that experience with her to a job doing secretarial work.

But her employer saw potential and began training her to be an assistant contract administrator, she said.

Ever curious, Taylor insisted on working as a laborer on a job so she could better understand what goes on in the field, she said.

“They thought I was nuts.”

Next she went to work in the job site office doing ordering and purchasing.

She compared the skills project managers use to those many women use day-to-day to meet the challenge of preparing a meal so everything is ready to go on the table at once; while simultaneously juggling the laundry, cleaning, child care, settling disputes, the children’s extracurricular activities, a career and a husband.

“That just brings you right into the basics of project management,” Taylor said. “Initiating, planning, executing, controlling and closing.”

Nationwide, women make up about 12 percent of the construction industry, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Between 2004 and 2005, the number of women working in construction increased by 41,000, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

National leader

Today Taylor is the General Manager of Tatitlek Contractors Inc. Before joining the company in April, she was the vice president of construction for NANA Pacific for two years.

“I learned all my construction just by wanting to know,” Taylor said. “I’m not a carpenter and I’ll never tell you that I am. But I know the basics to get the job done.”

Her career in the construction industry includes more than 20 years of experience in construction, 15 in government contracting and 12 in project management.

Since graduation, Taylor said she’s worked a total of about a year using her biology degree. “I choose to stay in the construction industry.”

Whether talking to students about opportunities in the trades, or giving a speech to a national audience Taylor’s
Summer 2007

The Alaska CONTRACTOR

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Women in the construction industry

Between 2004 and 2005, the number of women working in construction nationwide increased by 41,000. About 12 percent of the total construction workforce in the U.S. is female.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of work</th>
<th>Number of women workers</th>
<th>Percent of the total workforce</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sales and Office</td>
<td>581,000</td>
<td>78.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional &amp; Management</td>
<td>248,000</td>
<td>14.7 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Resources, Construction &amp; Maintenance</td>
<td>54,464</td>
<td>2.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Occupations</td>
<td>22,000</td>
<td>28.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation &amp; Material Moving</td>
<td>12,896</td>
<td>2.4 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


message is the same: The construction industry needs men and women – skilled and professional – to pursue construction careers.

“This is something you can get into and do for the rest of your life,” she said.

Over the years, Taylor has often spoken about the opportunities and challenges facing the industry in her various roles with the National Association of Women in Construction and the organization’s Alaska Chapter No. 197.

She will be installed as the national president of NAWIC in September at its national convention in Orlando, Fla.

NAWIC is a volunteer organization to enhance the success of women in the construction industry with more than 5,000 members nationwide.

Since joining the local NAWIC chapter in 1992, Taylor has served as local chapter president, chapter corresponding secretary, chapter treasurer, chapter board director, and various committee chairs. Nationally, her service includes regional director, national treasurer, national vice president and national president-elect.

“If you are a woman in the industry NAWIC is there to provide you with leadership growth, communications growth and personal growth to help you be a stronger leader, employee and person as a whole,” Taylor said.

NAWIC is an awesome resource

Evelyn Clark, of Kiewit Building Group Inc., was so green when she got her first job at an architectural firm years ago, she said she didn’t even know for sure what architects did.

But her boss’s wife belonged to NAWIC and she invited Clark to come along and learn more about the industry.

Now Clark’s been an NAWIC member for 25 years and was the first Alaskan to serve as its national president in 1996-97.

“NAWIC is an awesome resource, she said. “I can always find someone to answer my question. There are always questions and always more to learn.”

A few years after becoming a member, Clark began taking classes through NAWIC’s Education Foundation. She was the first to earn a certificate in Alaska – a Certified Construction Assistant.

The nonprofit education foundation offers its classes to everyone.

“No matter what I do I can keep learning,” Clark said.

Whether it’s through the presentations by guest speakers at NAWIC’s monthly meetings or job site tours, she said NAWIC is a great tool to learn more about the many careers included in the construction industry.

“When we go to the schools and talk to kids – that’s one of the things we try to get across,” she said. “Surveyors, engineers, architects, project managers – so many different disciplines are required to work together from start to finish.”

National president by 2018

Misty Dawn Crim has volunteered for years as an officer in the Alaska chapter of NAWIC. Two years as the corresponding secretary and two years as vice president. This year she is chapter president.

But Crim has her eye on the organization’s top post, which Taylor will occupy beginning in September.

She has her plan mapped out year by year on a series of notes stuck under the glass on her desk where she works as a contract administrator for Wilder Construction Company. Each item on the list represents an NAWIC office at the local, regional and national level she must hold before she can be elected national president.

“I fell in love with NAWIC after the national convention
in Salt Lake City,” Crim said.

It was there in 2003 that she told Alaska NAWIC president Kathy Carlisle she’d like to be the national president by 2018.

But Carlisle didn’t keep the notion to herself. Back home, she told the other NAWIC chapter members about Crim’s goal.

Crim said women like Taylor, Clark and Carlisle have helped nurture her career. Crim even described Clark as her mentor.

“I don’t think I’d be where I am today without her,” Crim said. “She’s a great resource.”

In addition to working at Wilder as a contract administrator and leading the local chapter of NAWIC as president, Crim also is active in AGC and is raising two small children with her husband.

“Wilder’s support has been amazing,” Crim said. “Their support is what makes me want to do it.”

Wilder is a business member of the Alaska Chapter of NAWIC, which will celebrate its 35th anniversary in Alaska in 2008. The Alaska chapter has 52 members in Fairbanks, Kenai, Soldotna and Anchorage.

Last year during the chapter’s annual “Women in Construction Week,” Wilder had four female employees honored with NAWIC’s “Constructive Women Awards.” That’s half of the total awards given, Crim said.

“Ask any one of my bosses about how I’ve changed,” she said. “Being a member of NAWIC really opens your eyes to the variety of careers for women.”

**There is no such thing as a normal day**

Taylor admits she is a multi-tasker who can’t stop working, or networking, even on vacation.

While she has her picture taken for this story she checks her voice mail, returns a few e-mails and goes over a page of numbers on her desk.

Even when she takes a vacation, she said her husband Paul teases her for inspecting the work at other companies’ job sites.
NAWIC aims to enhance success of women in construction

From tradeswomen to business owners, National Association of Women in Construction has advanced the causes of women in the industry for the past 51 years. In 1953, 16 females from Fort Worth, Texas, founded the organization to enhance the success of women in the construction industry.

Two years later it gained a national charter as the National Association of Women in Construction and today has a membership of 5,500 with about 200 chapters in nearly every state.

NAWIC also has international affiliates in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the United Kingdom and Canada.

The group is governed by a 20-person board of directors who serve as volunteers, along with 14 regional directors, the president, president-elect, vice president, secretary, treasurer and immediate past president.

For more than 30 years, NAWIC’s Education Foundation also has offered educational programs for students from kindergarten through high school.

Its award-winning Block Kids program, Building Design program, and the CAD/Design/Drafting Scholarship Awards competitions introduce students to careers and opportunities in construction.

The education foundation also offers three certifications administered through Clemson University: Certified Construction Associate, Construction Document Specialist and Construction Industry Technician.

It has also set-up the NAWIC Founders’ Scholarship Foundation. Nationwide it has awarded more than $4 million in scholarships.

Visit www.nawic.org for more information; the site also contains links to the NAWIC Education Foundation and the NAWIC Founders’ Scholarship Foundation, and www.nawic-ak.org/ to access the Alaska Chapter Web site.
“They could be doing that more efficiently,” Taylor tells her husband. “You’re on vacation,” he reminds her. “And those guys don’t work for you. Let’s keep walking.”

All across Alaska, Taylor can point to the skyline and tell stories about the shipments that were delayed for that building, or how her team solved this or that logistical challenge related to doing business in remote Alaska. Every project has its stories, she said.

“At the end, that project is there and you get to see it again and again. Or you can take friends and family by. It’s a lasting reminder,” Taylor said.

She came to Alaska in 1989 after her then-husband got a job working on Adak. They’d planned to see each other on the weekends until they figured out that a plane ticket between Anchorage and Adak cost $1,264; it was a quick lesson on how construction in Alaska is different than other areas.

**Education is huge**

When Taylor talks to students about her chosen career in construction she encourages them to study hard. “You need the education. You need math and science. You need physics,” Taylor said. “Education is huge.”

Taylor works with NAWIC to get the message out that it takes a diverse group of individuals to take a project from start to finish. Math and science skills are critical skills in the construction industry – whether a person is an engineer, architect or a tradesperson, she said.

Part of the national volunteer organization’s mission also is to enhance women and girls’ knowledge about the construction industry and the opportunities for top pay and good benefits that the careers offer, she said.

To that end, NAWIC operates the nonprofit NAWIC Education Foundation, and the NAWIC Founders’ Scholarship Foundation.

One of the NAWIC Education Foundation’s initiatives specifically aims to interest students in kindergartent through 12th grade in the industry, she said.
Taylor said NAWIC has worked with Alaska youth to interest them in construction careers for about 13 years. NAWIC offers three separate age-appropriate learning opportunities for students in kindergarten through high school.

- Block Kids is NAWIC’s national contest for students in grades first through sixth.
- Build Design is for middle school students.
- AutoCAD/hand-drafting program is for high school students.

“The more you know the more valuable you are as an employee and employer,” Taylor said.

The NAWIC Construction Education Foundation also offers an adult education certification program. The training offers certification as a Construction Industry Technician, Construction Document Specialist and Certified Construction Assistant.

The education courses are offered to everyone - members or non-members, female or male.

Taylor’s earned her Construction Document Technologist certification through the Construction Specifications Institute and was the first person in Alaska to earn both the Certified Industry Technician and Construction Document Specialist certifications through the NAWIC Education Foundation. And she has a Master’s Certificate in Project Management from George Washington University.

Taylor said she also promotes the certification programs in the Alaska NAWIC chapter by conducting study groups and encouraging other individuals in the construction industry.

Crim, who holds a CIT certificate, said, “We’re looking to enhance what you know or if you are looking for new skills.”

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Senior Editor Heather A. Resz is the sole proprietor of the contract writing business, Infinite Designs.
Alaska’s National Association of Women in Construction Local Chapter No. 197 brought together volunteers, sponsors and Girl Scouts Feb. 24, to teach the Scouts more about the opportunities a career in construction offers.

The “Breaking New Ground to Build the Future,” at Williwaw Elementary School included NAWIC’s national competition “Block Kids,” designed to introduce students in grades first through sixth to the construction industry.

The contest allowed Scouts 55 minutes to use 100 interlocking blocks, plus three other building materials, to create a project that a construction company would build, said Tamie Taylor, longtime NAWIC member and NAWIC’s national president-elect.

Alaska Chapter NAWIC president Misty Dawn Crim said nearly 200 Scouts from the Susitna Girl Scout Council turned out that chilly Saturday to learn more about careers in the construction industry.

This year, 124 older Girl Scouts also had the opportunity to learn to read a tape measure, use a hand saw, hammer nails, build a birdhouse and learn the weight capacities of different geometric shapes, Taylor said.

Before Scouts picked up any tools, NAWIC members put them through a safety session on the safe use of saws, hammers, tape measures and safety glasses, she said.

“It was an opportunity to teach the value of construction to these young women,” she said.

But Crim said programs like this don’t just happen.
“They are the result of the construction industry coming together to steer its own future,” Crim said. “Some gave time, some gave funding and some gave both.”

**Block Kids sponsors were:**


“It was very much a success,” Crim said. “NAWIC plans to continue working with the Girl Scouts to offer similar educational opportunities.”

Volunteers from Alaska’s National Association of Women in Construction Local Chapter 197 spent a few hours Feb. 24 introducing Girl Scouts from Alaska’s Susitna Girl Scout Council to careers in the construction industry.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF NAWIC OF ALASKA LOCAL CHAPTER 197

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With its unique, straight grain pattern, VG (Vertical Grain) Fir is one of the most distinctive looking woods in North America. Grown in the Pacific Northwest, this beautiful coastal softwood provides designers with a rich visual quality and a clean look. Long used by builders for window casings, doors, mouldings, mantels, flooring and framing lumber, VG Fir has become popular for use in furnitures and cabinetry. We are pleased to offer VG Fir as a standard species in our frameless cabinetry line.

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Now that the construction season is underway, you’ve checked your tools and equipment, put together your team and made sure your plans are in place. It’s also a good time to review your financial tools, team and plans.

Financial management is a key success factor for any business. Having a strong financial team in your company gives you the footing you need for future financial success. These “teammates” include an internal finance manager/controller, a certified public accountant, your CPA and an experienced commercial banker.

Finance Manager/Controller

A strong internal financial manager can provide your business with timely, accurate financial reporting. Given the seasonal nature of the construction industry in Alaska, accurate financial reporting is more often than not the difference between a profitable project and one that is not. Beyond reporting, however, you need someone who has the knowledge to analyze the financial condition of the company and make recommendations to improve cash flow, determine the best approach to capital purchases and examine potential acquisitions and expansion plans.

CPA

An association with a certified public accountant can help you set up good financial systems, look at trends and review your plans for growth. It’s important to align your business with an accountant familiar with your specific industry, so take the time to interview several accountants prior to making a final choice. You need someone with experience in your industry who is willing to learn about your business and someone who is comfortable telling you the truth about your business finances.

It’s hard to manage a complex construction business with manual systems or small-business financial software. There are many specialized financial systems for contractors; input from your CPA can help you select one to fit your needs.

Commercial Banker

Take the time to select a commercial bank, and banker, who is experienced in your industry. Use an interview process to learn more about their approach, and make sure you feel comfortable discussing every aspect of your business with that person. The relationship you establish with your commercial bank today provides the stability that enables future success.

Using credit carefully can support smoother operations and provide the capital for growth and expansion; your commercial banker can help you choose the right credit vehicle to match your business needs.

Once you’ve selected your financial team, bring them together several times a year so they develop a good working relationship with each other and with you. Ask your financial team to review the prior year’s results, and consult them when you do the next year’s planning. Teach them more about your business, and call on their expertise to increase your financial knowledge. Together, you and your financial team can rack up the wins for a successful construction season.

Bob Shake is Executive Loan Manager at Northrim Bank. He can be reached at 261-3309.
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ANC is No. 1 for landed weight of cargo aircraft

- Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport handles more than 47,000 cargo flights and about 5 million passengers a year. The value of the public facilities and private investments is between $10 billion and $12 billion.
- It’s also the No. 1 airport in the U.S. for landed weight of cargo aircraft.
- Worldwide, it’s the No. 3 airport for cargo throughput.
- Already the airport serves 49 cargo destinations and 21 passenger destinations around the world with direct nonstop flights.
- Cargo planes use about 2 million gallons of the nearly 2.5 million gallons of jet fuel pumped every day at the Anchorage airport.
- Most of that jet fuel is Alaska North Slope crude processed by Alaska refineries: Flint Hills in North Pole near Fairbanks, Tesoro in Nikiski and Arctic Slope Regional Corporation subsidiary Petro Star in Valdez. The rest comes from Chevron California refineries in El Segundo or Richmond.
- The airport is associated with one in nine Anchorage workers— that’s about 10,000 direct jobs and 6,000 indirect jobs.

Construction projects worth nearly $500 million are underway at Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport.

Airport director Morton V. Plumb Jr. said several of the projects are aimed at making operations more efficient and profitable for savvy international cargo handlers that rely on Anchorage as a refueling stop for their freighters.

Some of the projects are tenant improvements and others are Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities construction projects.

“We are riding the tide of the Asia, more specifically, the China market and North America, that is probably the hottest for cargo trade now, in the aggregate,” Plumb said. “It has to do with our global position—and anything in real estate is location, location, location.”

Take a look at the top half of a globe to see what Plumb means. Surprisingly, Anchorage is near the mid-point of the most direct air routes between many important cargo destinations.

“We are within 9.5 hours of 90 percent of the industrialized northern hemisphere.”

For air carriers, it’s a strategic refueling location that makes flights more profitable, by allowing planes to use up less weight capacity on fuel and carry more revenue-producing cargo.

For example, Plumb said an MD-11 freighter traveling from Shanghai bound for Oakland can refuel in Anchorage before flying on to California, making about $90,000 more on every flight. If just five flights a day capitalize on the savings five days a week, it comes out to be about $117 million a year.

Anchor in Anchorage

Increasingly, carriers are choosing to “anchor in Anchorage,” Plumb says, and invest in the infrastructure needed to make the transition.

Encouraging that trend are generous rules for foreign air cargo flights that allow international cargo to arrive on one plane and leave on another, with the same carrier or a different carrier, foreign or domestic—even on inbound routes to and outbound routes from the rest of the United States.

Some big mostly Asian carriers also use the airport’s facilities, as well as customs, immigration and agriculture services, to offload shipments long enough to refuel, sub-divide and cross-load the cargo for shipment to various cities in the U.S. and Europe.

Plumb said several changes to federal law were required to position Anchorage as a global transfer hub. Specifically, “49 U.S.C. Sec. 417903. Navigation of foreign civil aircraft” has a special section: “(e) CARGO IN ALASKA.”

These rules, along with increased China flight frequencies, create economies of scale on a global scale for carriers.

Design Group VI

Another segment of airport construction is due to the growth in the size of planes. Anchorage may soon be refueling Design Group VI aircraft, including the Airbus A380 and Boeing 747-800F.
# FAA Airplane Design Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design group</th>
<th>Wingspan</th>
<th>Examples of aircraft type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>&lt; 49 feet</td>
<td>Cessna 152-210, beechcraft A36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>49 – 79 feet</td>
<td>Saab 2000, EMB-120, Saab 340, Canadair RJ-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>79 – 118 feet</td>
<td>Boeing 737, MD-80, Airbus A320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>118 – 171 feet</td>
<td>Boeing 757, Boeing 767, Airbus A300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>171 – 214 feet</td>
<td>Boeing 747-400, Boeing 777, MD-11, Airbus A340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>214 – 262 feet</td>
<td>Airbus A380 (in production), Boeing 747-8 (planned)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: FAA
Whether a Boeing or an Airbus, these Group VI super jumbo jets need larger, sturdier hardstands – plus longer, wider spaces to land, taxi, park, maneuver and take off. They’re 30 percent larger than Group V wide-body jumbo jets landing at ANC – mostly Boeing 747-400 and MD-11 aircraft.

All this increased aircraft activity also means an increased demand for electricity. In response, Chugach Electric is installing the 138/12.5kV Postmark Substation, with installation expected to be complete by the end of the year.

PenAir hangar

Not all of the construction is because of international cargo, some is due to in-state air traffic, like PenAir’s project, located near the north end of the airport. PenAir is spending $4.9 million to build a 33,500-square-foot hangar to use for aircraft storage and maintenance, said Danny Seybert, president, PenAir.

“We’re hoping it will hold six to eight Saab 340s, our biggest aircraft,” Seybert said, adding that it would probably hold all of their smaller ones. “We’ve had a fair amount of expansion over the last three to four years, some attributable to the demise of Reeve and some attributable to Alaska Airlines decision to discontinue taking the 737-200 into Dutch Harbor.”

Tom Tibbs, project manager for Janssen Contracting Inc., PenAir’s general contractor, said it is a simple hangar – simple but big. Site work, footings and the foundation aspects of the project were started last fall. The project had 50 people working on it during the peak; it is expected to be operational this September.

“There were huge footings involved … extensive dirt work because of the area,” Tibbs said. “It’s a Butler heavy structure with a 190-foot clear span, which is kind of different – it’s a very big clear span, it’s got pretty much one big room for his airplanes. The hangar door is a Megadoor structure, which is a pretty high-class door system, the same kind FedEx has.”

Federal Express

FedEx has a project of its own going on, $17 million for aprons and a service equipment building. Wilder Construction Company is working on the apron and hardstands. Matt Ketchum, Wilder chief estimator, said they were building a large apron for FedEx and had poured a substantial amount before they even had the tie-downs designed, to get the project done in stages.

“You’ve got to be ready for these planes when they start flying,” Ketchum said. “Most of the civil work on the FedEx job is done.”

The hardstands are huge 600-feet by 300-feet slabs of 15-inch thick concrete resting on 8 feet of gravel. “That’s done and most of that was done last year, all the gravel was hauled last year, including the gravel for Taxiway U.”

Ketchum said Wilder is also doing a couple more hardstands for FedEx where their current planes sit and unload and refuel, which consists of removal, replacement and maintenance.

“We built those in 1990, now we get to replace them 17 years later,” he said. “Whatever FedEx does, UPS does, and vice versa, so UPS is right behind them.”

Taxiway Uniform

Adjacent to the FedEx work, Ketchum said Wilder is also working on Taxiway U (Uniform in pilot lingo) and three remote refueling aprons for the airport that will allow planes to drive through for refueling.

That translates into less need for ground support with tugs and all the other support used when a plane is backing up, he said.

“It’s not natural for a plane to go backwards – now it’s drive-through fueling,” Ketchum said.

Wilder procured the FedEx and Taxiway U projects in 2006 – late spring, early summer – and are set to finish both this year – working six 10s to get it all done on time, he said.

“We did the gravel hauls at night when there’s less traffic, in order to reduce cost and increase production,” Ketchum said.

He said working in a secure area also adds a unique element to the project.

“Every single person that works out there goes through a federal background check from the airport,” Ketchum said. “Everyone has to be ‘badged’ through Airport Operations.”

In addition to Wilder’s $10 million Taxiway U – Remote Refueling Apron and $15 million FedEx projects, Ketchum said they completed an emergency resurfacing project on runway 7R in early June.

“We’d certainly like to have more airport work,” Ketchum said, “and there are still some possibilities.”
Gas-n-go

Dovetailing the airport’s remote refueling apron next door to FedEx is AGLAD Postmark LLC’s site of a $55-million project headed by Lee Nunn, president of Anchorage Global Logistics Airpark Development. The project, comprised of aprons, taxiway and a building, is being done in stages. Nunn said they will probably spend about $16 million in the first stages this summer.

Nunn spoke of a different philosophy when it comes to development. Instead of “build it and they will come” or “speculation,” Nunn said he and his partners build to suit. He asks the question, “In your world, what would you like to have?” Then he sets out to give them what they want. Nunn said architect Gary Peterson is adapting the building design to accommodate what international cargo carriers and service providers want.

He has interest from Atlas, Cathay Pacific, DHL, FedEx, Aeromag Contego and others. He has leases from Kalitta, Pegasus, Trailboss and Evergreen.

“Our ramp features and preferential options are why people are interested in us getting done with it so they can get in,” Nunn said.

Some of those amenities include heated hardstands, buried pneumatics and ground power, de-icing on station, a collection system to recycle the glycol, shower and locker rooms, an upscale pilot lounge and sandwich shop, and an indoor viewing platform facing the runway and air operations.

Another thing Nunn says makes Anchorage perfect for these wide-body cargo planes is the fact that ANC is a cold airport. “So it doesn’t take a lot of fuel to land or take off, it doesn’t cost as much to refuel here and they can carry 15-20 more pallets of revenue-generating freight.”

He’s opting for carrier convenience. “We made it so they can land, pull in, refuel and leave,” Nunn said. “We have the most efficient gas station in the world.”

Pruhs Construction is doing the civil construction on this 40-acre North Airpark private project.

“That’s basically a fairly substantial civil project because of the existing materials that have got to be pulled out and replaced with non-organic
fill material,” Dana Pruhs said. “Water, sewer, storm drains, building pad, warehousing ... and a whole different set of prints of the hardstands for the big airplanes. It’s a phased project and we’re happy to be part of it.”

**Gates N4 & N6**

At the North Terminal, the state has a $3.8 million project at gates N4 and N6. It is but one of several airport construction projects for Roger Hickel Contracting Inc.

“Constructing concrete hardstands that will accommodate the loads of the new generation jumbo jets is very interesting work,” said Roger Hickel. “Earthwork and compaction requirements are higher and concrete mix designs with the associated reinforcing are special.”

He said building projects at a busy airport adds to the challenge.

“Our project was done in phases in order to minimize the disruption to operations,” Hickel said. “Removing, repairing or replacing aircraft underground fuel piping and hydrants are a critical part of the work, and handling the contaminated soils which are usually associated with this work takes special coordination.”

He said they have a specialized group of craftsmen and subcontractors with experience doing that work.

“We like working out at the airport and have completed many projects for UPS, FedEx, Evert’s Air Cargo, Northwest Airlines, Alaska CargoPort, ERA Aviation and the state of Alaska,” Hickel said.

**RON Parking**

The state is spending $19.2 million on a Remain OverNight parking lot – RON Parking 7-11 ANC – with re-fueling aprons for a few giant freighter planes, the cargo jumbo jets.

QAP was awarded the contract and Jeff Roskelley, job superintendent, said they are doing five hardstands for $14.15 million.

“The asphalt is the same stuff we’ve been using out here for 10-12 years,” he said. “It’s a rubberized asphalt on the top, the thickness has somewhat changed since everyone is hoping to receive the A380 Airbus.”

The double-sized hardstands include electrical ground power, so planes can be plugged in and all the engines can shut down, Roskelley said. The asphalt will vary from 13 inches to 15 inches thick.

He said QAP is working with Udelhoven, the subcontractor for the fuel company that is putting in new lines off of one of the main lines of the Point Woronzof tank farm, so it all works together.

**Fuel hydrants**

Tim Jacques, vice president of Udelhoven Oilfield Systems Services, said for most of the work they do, they are contracted directly to Anchorage Service International Group, the company that is contracted to service and operate all of the fuel hydrant systems at the airport. Those systems are owned by Anchorage Fueling and Service Company, a consortium of the airlines that use Anchorage International.

In 2007, they have about $12.5 million to $13 million in projects, $10 million of which is the big project for the Group VI hardstands that QAP is paving. Also this year, Jacques said they did projects at FedEx and at North Terminal.
Gates N4-N6 for Roger Hickel Contracting Inc.  
“We do quite a bit out there on the fuel hydrant side of things, there are only four contractors approved to do any work at the airport,” Jacques said.

Worker needs  
On the QAP RON 7-11 project, like much of the construction going on at the airport, manpower fluctuates because of all the job components such as electrical and fuel line activity.

“Some days we can have 35 trucks running and 12 different operators,” Roskelley said. “Then we get caught up and let the fuel guys and electricians in and we go down to a six-man crew, once we get the grade built then we bring in the paving crew – 12 to 15 QAP hands, plus 35 truckers.”

On-time motivation  
Construction delays could be costly to the airport, so there are contractual motivators for work to be done on time, and if it isn’t, it could prove costly to contractors. QAP’s official start day was May 14, with 70 days allocated to complete the first stage and 50 days for the second stage. “For every day that we don’t complete we get a $43,000

TSAIA wins another Air Cargo Excellence Award  
The Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport has been awarded the 2007 Air Cargo Award of Excellence for the airport category of 1,000,000 or more tons by Air Cargo World.

The Air Cargo Excellence survey is a result of quantitative feedback from Anchorage’s cargo customer base of airlines and airfreight forwarders who ship to or through Anchorage. The award is earned by achieving superior ratings from customers in performance, value, facilities and regulatory operations.

Airport Director Morton V. Plumb Jr. is extremely pleased that the Airport has been recognized again for excellence in service having previously won this award in 2005.

“This is a testament to our professional, dedicated team and the facilities here at Anchorage,” said Plumb. “It confirms our competitive advantage when Anchorage is rated higher than airports like Louisville, Memphis, New York, Miami and Chicago.”
ANC South Terminal Seismic and Security Upgrade—Scaffolding is going up on the $206 million seismic and safety retrofit and remodel of the south terminal, another multi-year project. General contractor PCL is staging the work, which is well underway inside and out. RIM Architects is providing evaluation and design, along with airport planning consultant HNTB and structural engineers Reid Middleton.

penalty," Roskelley said. “It’s been like that the last couple of years, they’ve been throwing liquidated damages penalties if we don’t complete these on time.”

As part of the work this year, QAP is creating another taxiway behind the hardstands they’re putting in.

“We’re setting up Taxiway Golf to be able to minimize the traffic on Taxiway Echo, so that next year when there is a project that comes out on Taxiway Kilo, the power is already stubbed out to Taxiway Lima,” he said. “We’re stubbing out for the future and these taxiways will allow these planes to come in and taxi to right behind these hardstands and shoot out, making it better for ground control of these airplanes, and they’ll be able to get in and out easier.”

The hardstands are going to be stronger, they’ll have 21 inches of concrete, and better, all part of the Group VI requirements. “There is another thing we’re doing in here that’s kind of changing, flush lead-in lights to these hardstands,” Roskelley said. “That is going to lead these planes into each one of these hardstands as well.”
**Rental Car Parking Garage**

Remember all those cranes in the parking lot? The $62 million rental car parking garage, another multi-year project, scheduled to open in July was a private Venture Development project built by Neeser Construction. The cranes may have moved on to downtown, but several rental car agencies and their fleets will be relocated to the airport. Completion of the rental car facility boosts public, employee and rental car parking spaces at the north and south terminals to about 3,700.

**East Airpark**

Alaska CargoPort, next door to PenAir in the North Airpark, has put on hold a planned $3 million apron and taxiway project where they have hangars and facilities for Northwest Air Cargo and others, said Ken Lythgoe, general manager for Lynxs Group of Austin, Texas, the company that owns Alaska CargoPort. Lythgoe said they are waiting for Northwest to finalize its

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**TSAIA wins Balchen/Post Award**

The Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport is the recipient of the Balchen/Post award for excellence in the performance of airport snow and ice control during the winter of 2006-2007. This is the fourth year that the Airport's Airfield Maintenance Department has been the recipient of this prestigious award.

The award is sponsored by the American Association of Airport Executives to promote better snow and ice control and recognize outstanding performance.

Governor Sarah Palin said, “The team and leadership at Stevens International are evident through prestigious awards such as this, and in my travels as well. The traveling public continues to have a safe and reliable airport in a state that frequently experiences many challenges, including arctic-type weather.”

“The Airfield Maintenance Team, led by Dan Hartman, has done an outstanding job with snow removal and that’s why this airport has never closed for snow. They are truly professionals and have provided a safe environment for the movement of aircraft, vehicles and travelers,” said Airport Director Morton V. Plumb Jr.
long-term plans for new aircraft before redesigning the entire project.

Instead, Lynxs is modifying the old 57,400 sq. ft. Reeve hangar adjacent to the main terminal on the east end. “We are doing ramp and floor improvements to handle the 747 for Northwest Air Cargo planes,” Lythgoe said.

The project is expected to cost $1.5 million, on a hangar for which the group paid $3.5 million. Roger Hickel Contracting Inc. was the low bidder and was to commence work before July with an August completion date.

Runway 7R

Wilder completed work on east-west runway 7R at the south end of the airport after an emergency closure in June. Ketchum said they were allowed 14 days and did it in six days.

The work consisted of emergency rotomilling, asphalt removal and repaving on a portion of asphalt on each side of the centerline, avoiding the centerline lighting.

“All we did was go on the outsides of the centerline and removed 35 feet wide on each side, 3-5 inches deep of asphalt,” Ketchum said. “We removed it with a large machine that grinds up the asphalt and repaved that area back, about $1 million worth of work.

In September when there are fewer flights, Wilder will finalize the project when they saw-cut groove the repaved area and stripe it with permanent paint.

Taxiway Zulu

Meridian Investments, owned by Dana Pruhs, is spending $7 million on phase one of a corporate executive airpark project at the South Airpark off Taxiway Zulu. “It’s the first one in Anchorage,” Pruhs said. “They’ve never had one of these before.”

Pruhs Construction is doing the dirt work and McGee Industries is doing the building, which is 40,000-some sq. ft. with five hangar bays for corporate executive jets, and offices on opposite ends, Pruhs said. He started the project in September of last year, and expects to be done in September of this year. Like other projects at the airport, depending on the stage of progress, the number of people employed varies. Pruhs said 20-25 people are working on phase one, which is sold out.
More hangars

Also considered in the tenant improvement mix for Anchorage International are hangar projects at Lake Hood. Four companies hold building permits for hangars: Sramek Aviation LLC, $2.25 million, which owner Robert Sramek Sr. said is looking to be more like a $1 million project because the soils report came in better than anticipated; Miller, $1.1 million; Baker Company, $1.8 million; and Silvertip, LLC, $1.5 million.

Offsite

Noise mitigation continues this year with a $4.8 million residential sound insulation program in a nearby neighborhood by Koch Corporation of Louisville, Ky. The company considers itself the marketplace leader in airport sound insulation and has participated in sound mitigation programs at a dozen airports in the U.S. Over the past four years, 333 Anchorage homes have been a part of the residential sound insulation program, which typically includes the installation of sound attenuating doors and windows.

Future projects

Growth at ANC will continue. Work on Taxiways C, G, K, R to D for Group VI standardization is slated for 2008, along with work on the airport operations center, some tug and access roads, bank stabilization and storm drains. In 2009, runway 7R/25L expansion is planned to make it longer and wider. In 2010, apron upgrades are anticipated at Concourse A and taxiway K. Hundreds of acres are available to tenants for cargo development.

Bottom line

Anchorage International is not only open and ready for business all day every day, but is continuously growing to meet the needs of domestic and global travelers and the ever-larger fleet of international cargo freighters stopping for gas on their way from Asian airports to commerce centers in the Americas and Europe.

Susan Harrington is an editor and author based in Anchorage. Contact her through AQP Publishing Inc.
Alcan General Inc. began construction on the expansion of the Anchorage Museum at Rasmuson Center this spring; and true to the project, the museum’s curtainwalls involved national and international collaboration.

Architects from all over the world converge on the Construction Research Laboratory in Miami, Fla., to test custom curtainwalls made from glass, metal and stone for use in new buildings being constructed around the globe. Kumin Associates Inc. used the lab to test its custom-designed curtainwall.

According to Daphne Brown, Kumin principal architect, the mockup and subsequent testing – including air and water infiltration, dynamic loading, seismic and thermal performance testing – was conducted to ensure the custom design (with custom extrusions, glass, attachments, etc.) met all the industry ASTM criteria for curtainwalls.

The glass was made in Germany and then shipped to China where it was fritted (with reflective stripes on the exterior and matte stripes on the interior), and assembled into a unitized panel, Brown said.

The 4-feet-wide custom panels – some transparent and some opaque with insulation – vary in height from 12 feet to 19 feet, she said. “It’s the height of the largest of the museum’s glass panels that make it an architectural first in Alaska and the nation.”

Normally, glass produced in the U.S. that is to be fritted, laminated and tempered is only 12 to 14 feet tall, she said. The largest glass panel on the museum is 5-feet taller.
endurance test

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State of pollutant discharge system now ON HOLD

BY DIMITRA LAVRAKAS

The 25th Alaska State Legislature has ended and with it the Department of Environmental Conservation’s hopes for this year’s goals toward primacy of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Program.

Senate Bill 91, authorizing the action for primacy passed, but it stalled in the Judiciary Committee.

“If the Senate bill is not passed, we will not have the statutory authority to implement the NPDES program,” wrote Sharon Morgan, project manager for the primacy project, in an e-mail. “Therefore, we will not be able to submit a revised application to EPA by November 2007, because we will not have a complete application. We will have to wait until the next legislative session to reintroduce the bill.”

DEC was still in the application stage of the process that would have eventually made the transfer of the federal program to the state possible. By the DEC’s original timeline based on passage of the bill, DEC would have assumed responsibility for the program over the course of three years, approximately March 31, 2008-March 31, 2011. When primacy is achieved, the program will be known as the Alaska Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Program.

The 25th Alaska State Legislature has ended and with it the Department of Environmental Conservation’s hopes for this year’s goals toward primacy of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Program.

The department will go forward regardless, Morgan said. “DEC will continue to work with EPA on our application and reintroduce the bill next session,” Morgan wrote in an e-mail. Concurrently, fiscal year 2008 will be one of program development and capacity building for the Division of Water staff as we move closer to fully implementing the NPDES Program.”

The $1.5 million earmarked for the program caused news in April when one legislator suggested the state remove the money from the state budget and not take over NPDES as it was already funded and administered by the federal government. Still, the money was not removed from the budget.

“It never shook us up at DEC,” Morgan said in an earlier interview of the funding threat. “The governor (Gov. Sarah Palin) wants it. The House passed their operating budget and there was no stripping of our money, no spotlight on it.”

The push for primacy was set in motion long before concerns were raised this spring in Juneau.

On Aug. 27, 2005, former Gov. Frank Murkowski signed into law Senate Bill 110, which allowed the state to pursue primacy for the NPDES wastewater discharge permitting and compliance program established under the Clean Water Act.

DEC started to gear up

By summer of 2006, DEC had submitted the application to EPA for primacy, developed a program description that outlined how the state would issue permits, ensure permit compliance, conduct enforcement, fund the program and manage information and data.

A working group, comprised of the oil and gas, mining, seafood, timber and construction industries; large community domestic wastewater facilities, and small community and tribal domestic wastewater facilities have met over the past two years to iron out particulars.

And since this February, close to 40 DEC staff members have been training hard in anticipation of the hand-off of duties. So far, 39 have attended the EPA’s Basic Inspector’s Train-
ing, 35 to the NPDES Permit Writers’ Course and 41 were off to the agency’s Water Quality Standards Academy. By June, seven staff members were to have completed all the required training to become EPA-approved inspectors.

What still needs to be worked out, Morgan said, is revisiting the fee regulations to take into account administering the program.

“The NPDES program will be paid for by a mix of general funds, federal funds and permit fees,” Morgan said. “Permit fees are projected to account for 16 percent of the budget.”

For the construction industry, DEC sees a streamlining of the permit process and the relief of having inspectors familiar with Alaska weather and conditions.

“I think it’ll be better,” Morgan said. “We’ll be just as stringent as EPA, but you’ll have local people understanding the Alaska situation. It’ll be our weather, our conditions, whereas with the EPA it was one-size-fits-all.”

The NPDES Primacy Workgroup noted in its final report that some of the potential benefits is that the state will respond more quickly than the EPA to permits and a more timely appeals process. The group also advocated the state use more online components like online applications, payments and electronic permitting tracking.

“If a permit is appealed or challenged, only that portion of the permit that is being challenged is stayed, but the rest of the permit remains in effect and enforceable,” Morgan said.

Also, policy on-site inspections are in discussion.

“How often do we have to inspect the site – that is unclear,” said Mel Langdon, manager of Stormwater and Wetlands for DEC’s Division of Water.

But initially, not much will change as DEC is basically taking over what EPA did, said Langdon.

Morgan said she will post regular updates on how primacy is progressing on the department’s Web site www.dec.state.ak.us. Follow the NPDES link, where there is also a link to receive e-mail updates.

Dimitra Lavrakas is a longtime Alaska writer who lives in Anchorage.
Taking pride in
AGC members’ projects from around the state

Providence House, Anchorage
Builder: Davis Constructors & Engineers Inc.

Segelhorst Hall, Alaska Pacific University, Anchorage
Builder: Cornerstone Construction Company Inc.

JL Tower, Anchorage
Builder: Davis Constructors & Engineers Inc.

Integrated Science Building,
University of Alaska Anchorage
Builder: Cornerstone Construction Company Inc.
what we do

Arctic Blvd., 56th to Fireweed, Anchorage
Builder: Wilder Construction Company

188 WNL, Anchorage
Builder: Neeser Construction, Inc.

Kincaid Park Access Road, Anchorage
Builder: Wilder Construction Company

Atwood Building Parking Center, Anchorage
Builder: Davis Constructors & Engineers Inc.
No children’s story

In the children’s book Chicken Little, it is an acorn falling on the title character’s head that sends the farmyard residents into a tizzy, claiming that the sky is falling. They head off to get help from the government, only to barely avoid becoming dinner for a hungry fox.

The current claims of Al Gore and other nonscientist pundits, that humans are causing global warming sufficient to spell disaster for the planet, seem strikingly similar to this classic children’s story. What may be at risk, however, is no laughing matter.

Activists claim that modest climate change is man-caused, demanding a regulatory solution that may do little or nothing to change temperatures, but has the potential for creating worldwide economic disaster.

“Round one” has already played out, and the result from the U.S. Supreme Court wasn’t favorable. Several states and environmental groups petitioned the EPA to issue Clean Air Act regulations of emissions of carbon dioxide and other “greenhouse” gases from new vehicles as a way of combating global warming.

The EPA commissioned the National Research Council for a study of the subject, asking if a regulatory response was needed, or even appropriate. The resulting study could establish no unequivocal causal link between manmade sources of carbon dioxide and global warming. It also cast doubts on climate modeling, finding it inherently error-prone due to the complexity of numerous variables. Because of this uncertainty, and because of doubts about the limits of its statutory authority, the EPA declined to issue new regulations.

The environmentalists sued, and the District of Columbia Circuit Court affirmed the EPA action. However, the U.S. Supreme Court reversed this decision, telling EPA that it must now begin the formal process of considering new air emission requirements.
This skirmish, however, may be the least of our worries given the potential devastation if activists are successful at using the global warming theory to get critters and plants listed under the Endangered Species Act, a process that may have already begun with the proposed ESA listing of the polar bear.

The ESA is a major concern because so many activities can be limited through creative enforcement of its provisions. Take for instance ESA’s consultation requirement. If any federal permit or approval is required for a construction project, and the project might harm an ESA listed species, the permitting agency must “consult” with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, a process sure to end in expensive, time-consuming mitigation.

Let’s suppose a new power plant or highway is proposed. Once complete, the projects could contribute additional carbon dioxide to the atmosphere. If the polar bear were listed under the ESA because global warming threatens its existence, the federal environmental gatekeepers will be pressured to demand project changes or other mitigation.

Well, not all projects require federal permits, so they are safe, right? Not necessarily. If someone takes an action that harms an ESA listed species they are said to have “taken” the species, a major no-no under the ESA. Extremist environmental groups might, on a selective basis, challenge all sorts of private construction claiming that the project will worsen global warming and “take” the polar bear.

But all is not lost. Plans are being made to meet this challenge and the courts will be an important venue for the fight.

Earlier this year, Pacific Legal Foundation committed to a new program to attack global warming regulations that fail to pass legal muster. The program, much like the issue, is developing but let me tell you a little of what is planned.

Given the potential role of the ESA, PLF will be challenging proposed listings, demanding that the proponents justify the need for regulation with what regulators call the “best available science.”

Secondly, our PLF legal team will be attacking the lawsuits of environmental extremist groups on the basis that they lack the legal standing to bring a suit. Standing requires an identifiable injury, a connection between the injury and the object of the suit, and that there be a remedy that a court can grant. In our opinion, claiming harm to the entire planet certainly makes establishing standing difficult.

The battle over global warming regulation will be fought in the courts of public opinion as well as courts with judge and jury. Articles like this help us spread the warning that regulation, whether it is needed or not, must be adopted in accordance with the law and must respect the rights of individuals.

This is not the first major public policy argument to threaten our liberty. Over its 34-year history PLF has fought many such battles, and with the help of those who share its values, will continue the battle for years to come.

Sonya D. Jones is an attorney in Pacific Legal Foundation’s Northwest Center in Bellevue, Washington, and is the Project Leader for PLF’s Global Warming Litigation Project.

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Sonya D. Jones is an attorney in Pacific Legal Foundation’s Northwest Center in Bellevue, Washington, and is the Project Leader for PLF’s Global Warming Litigation Project.
The Matanuska-Susitna Borough is aggressively developing Port MacKenzie only 2.5 miles northwest across the water from downtown Anchorage. Since the initial 500’ x 850’ barge dock (-20 MLLW) was completed in the fall of 2003, the port has focused on achieving five main goals.

Significant progress has been made in the following areas:

• Utility installation (electric, telephone, natural gas)
• Deep-draft dock construction
• Upgrade and pave 14.4 miles of Point MacKenzie Road
• Initiate ferry operations between Anchorage and Port MacKenzie
• Complete a rail line to the port from the Parks Highway
Utility installation

Three-phase electrical power lines have been extended 11 miles to the port. The lines are buried within the last 2.3 miles of the Port District to eliminate any potential electronic interference with a radar facility on Elmendorf Air Force Base and to allow cranes, modules and houses to be freely moved. Telephone/Fax/Internet lines were brought in via microwave from Eagle River.

Matanuska Telephone Association upgraded Internet access to high speed DSL in May 2007. Design on a 15-mile natural gas line, by Hattenburg, Dilley, Linnell Inc. from Ayrshire Road to the Port, is scheduled for completion by July 2007. Construction of the gas line will take place when funds become available.

Dock Construction

MKB Constructors completed construction of a 1,200-foot deep-draft dock (-60 MLLW) in the fall of 2004. NPI and West Construction constructed a 5-foot wide, multi-use conveyor, rated at 2,000 tons/hour, and more than one-half mile long.

The main purpose of this dock is to export natural resources such as woodchips, coal, sand, gravel, limestone and fuel.

A design to expand the deep-draft dock surface and to add a second trestle to the expanded barge dock is currently being drafted by PND Engineers Inc. A permit has already been approved by the Corps of Engineers to expand the barge dock by 7.86 acres.

PND Engineers Inc. completed the designs on the access road, barge dock and deep-draft dock. Other completed improvements on the docks include a security building, which was constructed by the Job Corps in Palmer; a public telephone booth; and a filter rock ramp for landing craft use on the south side of the barge dock.

A new security gate and other security improvements also are scheduled for completion in 2007.

Road Improvements

The Knik Goose Bay Road was improved with turn lanes, paving, pedestrian path and a new bridge at Fish Creek by Quality Asphalt Paving in 2004. Two Federal Highway Administration grants, totaling $4 million, will be used to reduce the grades on the last two hills leading to the dock from 10 percent to 5 percent and to reduce the side slopes from 2:1 to 3:1.

PND Engineers Inc. is currently designing this project, which is expected to go to bid in 2007 with completion in the summer of 2008. PND Engineers Inc. also completed a 35% design for upgrading and paving the last 14.4 miles of the Point MacKenzie Road. The Matanuska-Susitna Borough received a $15.3 million grant from the state of Alaska to complete this project.

The permits have been obtained and this project is expected to go out for bid in the summer of 2007 with completion by the end of October 2008.

The next road scheduled for upgrade will be the Burma Road from Ayrshire Road to South Big Lake Road. This road upgrade will take 20 miles off the north/south route between Anchorage and all points north of Big Lake.
Ferry

Construction started on the $45 million Cook Inlet Ferry in February 2007 and is expected to be complete by the end of summer 2008. The vessel is being constructed in the Ketchikan Ship Yard, thus providing jobs in Southeast Alaska.

A U.S. Army Corps of Engineers construction permit has been approved for the ferry landing at Port MacKenzie and a second permit is pending for the ferry landing in Anchorage, which is planned between North Star and Flint Hills at the Port of Anchorage.

Tryck Nyman Hayes Inc. is scheduled to complete the design of the ferry landings by September 2007. The project will be bid in October 2007 to allow time for ordering, galvanizing and fabricating the steel in time for construction in 2008.

Final design of the ferry vessel is being completed by Guido Perla & Associates in Seattle. The vessel will hold up to 115 passengers and 20 vehicles. Buses will be used to transport passengers who elect not to drive vehicles on the ferry.

The ferry will be outfitted with radios and could be used as a mobile command and control center in the event of a natural disaster. It could also respond quickly in support of Ted Stevens International Airport in case a plane or helicopter went down in Upper Cook Inlet.

If the Knik Arm Crossing is constructed, the ferry could be used to shuttle workers and materials across the Inlet. After the bridge is constructed, the ferry could be used on other routes such as Anchorage to Point Possession, Kenai, Homer or William-SPORT. It could also be used between King Cove and Cold Bay or as a back-up to the state’s ferry system in Southeast Alaska. The ferry will provide year-round service and will complete a round trip in one hour.

Rail line

Tryck Nyman Hayes Inc. completed a route study for a 43-mile rail line, road and utility corridor from the Parks Highway just north of Willow to Port MacKenzie. The Borough Assembly formally adopted this route in the borough’s comprehensive plan. The Legislature approved $15 million in the fiscal year 2008 budget to complete an Environmental Impact Study (EIS) and preliminary engineering for this project.

The Legislature also authorized the Alaska Railroad Corporation to sell up to $300 million in tax-free bonds to construct the rail line. Once the rail line is extended to Port MacKenzie, it will be much more efficient to transport commodities such as coal from Healy, fuel from the North Pole refineries, limestone products from Fairbanks, and rock.

The rail line could later be extended across the Knik Arm Bridge to save the railroad more than one hour each way between Anchorage and Fairbanks. The new rail line would also allow for commercial trains to bypass communities such as Houston, Wasilla, Palmer, Birchwood, Chugiak, Eagle River, Elmendorf Air Force Base and north...
Anchorage to minimize or eliminate train noise and at-grade crossing hazards along the route.

The existing rail line from Willow to Anchorage could then be used primarily for commuter trains, which would run during commuter hours. Our goal is to complete the rail line to Port MacKenzie by 2012.

Why Port MacKenzie?

Port MacKenzie is being developed to efficiently export bulk commodities from Southcentral Alaska, create new employment opportunities, attract capital investment by private companies, stimulate economic development and provide additional revenues to the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. Port MacKenzie is not competing for the container business at the Port of Anchorage, but is a “complimentary” port designed to export natural resources.

Port MacKenzie has 8,940 acres – 14 square miles – within the Port District dedicated to commercial and industrial development. The docks are designed to efficiently export natural resources, not to off-load container ships, which is the mainstay of the Port of Anchorage. In fact, both ports are working together to get the ferry running across Cook Inlet. The Port MacKenzie project also aims to provide low-cost gravel to the Port of Anchorage to help with its port expansion project.

Once the five goals have been achieved, Port MacKenzie and the surrounding area will provide easy access for low-cost commercial and industrial development, residential expansion and recreational opportunities. Port MacKenzie is still in its infancy. However, within a few short years there will be a transformation of this area located just a short distance across Cook Inlet from Anchorage. In fact, the transformation has already begun. Port MacKenzie is “Open for Business.”

Marc Van Dongen is the Port Director for the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.
Question & Answer
with Colonel Kevin J. Wilson
Commander of the Alaska District,
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

What is the Corps’ workload forecast for the next few years in Alaska?

Right now, we’re executing our largest program ever; it is also one of the largest in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Military construction projects account for the largest portion of our workload. This trend is the result of supporting Army Transformation, as well as Air Force realignments and re-stationing.

For fiscal year 2007, we expect to award contracts for 21 military projects valued at more than $500 million. In fiscal year 2008, we estimate that 16 military projects will be funded for approximately $306 million. And by fiscal year 2009, we anticipate work on 11 military projects in the range of $319 million.

The forecast numbers for fiscal year 2008 and fiscal year 2009 are what we currently see coming to Alaska. It’s important to note that the funding for these projects is dependent upon the Department of Defense budget and congressional appropriations. In particular, the fiscal year 2008 figures could change either up or down.

Meanwhile, our Civil Works program probably has a more direct and long-term impact in the state of Alaska. Currently, we maintain 52 river and navigation projects along the coast of Alaska. Of these projects, 36 are small boat harbors, 10 are channels, four are breakwaters and two are river projects.

In fiscal year 2007, we plan to award contracts for 14 Civil Works projects in the amount of nearly $50 million. For fiscal year 2008, we predict that funding will be available for 11 Civil Works projects totaling approximately $55 million. And by fiscal year 2009, we foresee work on 13 Civil Works projects for roughly $83 million.

Again, I must emphasize that the 2008 and 2009 numbers are our projections based on historical averages. These projects are dependent upon congressional approval.

Finally, our formerly used defense sites (FUDS) program has identified 311 environmental cleanup and restoration projects within the state. To date, 134 projects still need to be completed.

The goal is to finish all work by 2020 at an estimated cost of $1 billion. Last year, we spent $28.7 million on clean-up efforts. Our budget for fiscal year 2007 is $20.3 million.

Col. Kevin J. Wilson (center), commander of the Alaska District for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, receives an update on construction of the C-17 aircraft maintenance complex from Dale Berry (right), resident engineer, and Dan Kornblum (left), quality assurance representative, during a site visit on May 16 at Elmendorf Air Force Base.

Photo: Tom Findtner
In fiscal year 2007, we plan to award contracts for 14 Civil Works projects in the amount of nearly $50 million. For fiscal year 2008, we predict that funding will be available for 11 Civil Works projects totaling approximately $55 million. And by fiscal year 2009, we foresee work on 13 Civil Works projects for roughly $83 million.

— Colonel Kevin J. Wilson, Commander of the Alaska District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
works projects, environmental projects, operation and maintenance of existing projects, as well as administrative services.

Since our contracts are awarded to private firms, most of the dollars spent on Corps projects are invested in the local economy and help to fuel employment opportunities throughout state.

Taking into account workload estimates for the Alaska District’s three major programs – military construction, civil works and environmental – along with our smaller programs, business opportunities should remain abundant for companies interested in performing work for the Corps.

For fiscal year 2007, we expect to award contracts totaling $586 million. In fiscal year 2008, our numbers should be around $417 million. And for fiscal year 2009, we anticipate awards in the amount of $457 million. These forecasts include dollars to cover possible modifications to existing contracts and funding for unanticipated projects.

As you know, the Corps has a statutory responsibility to provide opportunities for small business. We anticipate nearly 40 percent of this program to be restricted to small business.

What are some the Alaska District’s greatest successes in recent years?

We are supporting a very operational military – a military that is fighting a war – while at the same time transforming itself. We provide facilities that directly enhance operational capabilities, training, readiness and quality of life. When you have service men and women who are deployed for up to 16 months, then return home for two years – and in some cases barely a year – before they deploy again, it is imperative we provide quality facilities for them.

A few of our great successes are the:
1. Stryker Brigade Combat Team Program at Fort Wainwright;
2. Army Family Housing Program at Fort Richardson and Fort Wainwright;
3. Bassett Hospital Replacement at Fort Wainwright; and

Another achievement that I’m proud to highlight is our work with the University of Alaska Anchorage, AGC of Alaska and many other construction industry partners to expand the engineering opportunities available by establishing a four-year degree program in construction management.

How would you describe the Alaska District’s relationship with its contractors?

While we enjoy very good relations with most of our contractors, there is always room for improvement. Our relationship with our contractors is vital. We need to continually emphasize that on every contract we are in a partnership with industry and we can’t hope to succeed without our partner succeeding. There is an interdependence that has to be acknowledged and embraced.

That doesn’t mean that we don’t enforce our requirements or that we won’t hold poor performers accountable, but rather both parties commit to performance and mutual support where required. My desire is that we nurture new relationships and build upon existing ones that will endure any specific contract.

As we shift toward a military construction transformation, performance-based mode for executing the program, I think we can agree that the relationship between industry and the Alaska District is critical.

Can you provide examples of process changes (or philosophical changes) that exemplify partnering with the contracting community?

We have committed to more open and forward-looking discussions with our industry partners on things like workload, emerging programs, changing specifications, etc., and I think we have made some inroads with these initiatives.

Also, more of our design-build contracts employ “fast track” provisions to give our contractors more time advantage for the construction season and ordering long-lead items.

In addition, we frequently hold industry days where our staff members are available to respond to questions from our partners, and when the situation warrants it, we hold tailored sessions such as a recent pre-proposal conference on our MATOC (multiple award task order contracts) acquisition. Based on the input received that day, we made changes in our requirements, which tells me that we have some traction on the relationship piece that we didn’t always enjoy.

Why should we seek federal work on military installations? It seems that there is too much “red tape” and too many restrictions compared to other work?

There is no question that working for the federal government introduces some requirements and variables that you might not see with a state agency and certainly not with a
private owner. Much of this is because we are using U.S. tax dollars to execute our work.

To be sure, our own organization and our military program clients, often impose additional and unique requirements that are the product of, in some cases, years and years of experience, and in others, simply wants and needs. Admittedly, many of them have grown too conservative over time and need to be revised, which is precisely why the Corps has initiated its military construction transformation process.

With respect to why contractors would want to work with us, in spite of the unique requirements, from a dollars and cents perspective, the federal government is the largest buyer of goods and services in the world, which makes it an attractive opportunity based on sheer volume of work.

Furthermore, military construction in Alaska is fairly predictable, which often isn’t found in the private sector. We operate in a consistent manner, so our partners know what they are getting. More importantly, we believe we treat our partners fairly and we honor our commitments.

In addition, many of our industry partners like working with us on military installations because it instills a sense of pride and patriotism. You won’t find that on a balance sheet, but this kind of sentiment means a great deal to my team and I, and it is the perfect foundation for enduring and meaningful relationships.

How does the Corps ensure fair and open competition for the tax dollars that it is entrusted to spend?

The Corps of Engineers follows the competition requirements as delineated in the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR), as well as Department of Defense and agency level regulations and policies. All of this is aimed at maximizing competition, which is vital to getting taxpayers the greatest value possible for their hard-earned dollars.

Exceptions to what industry views as full and open competition are almost always the result of either our small business program, or awards made under existing contracts, such as indefinite delivery/indefinite quantity instruments. However, in both cases, our regulations allow for some latitude.

In the case of small business, we are committed to supporting both statutory and agency goals, and certain exceptions to competition are permissible in meeting these goals. We historically perform very well against our small business goals, but it should be noted that we don’t always achieve them.
With respect to indefinite delivery/indefinite quantity contracts, after we award these, we do compete requirements within a smaller pool of contractors, so they are considered competitive actions. These contracts have many benefits to both the government and our industry partners.

For instance, actions issued under an indefinite delivery/indefinite quantity contract accelerate the acquisition process because many of the required activities are accomplished upon the initial award. The end result is that both parties invest less time and resources to achieve the desired result. We always perform well against our competition goal and I don’t see that changing.

**Can the bid process be simplified so more companies have the opportunity to engage in business opportunities with the Corps?**

With military construction transformation, we are trying to address this very challenge, but it is important to note that we are still bound by our regulatory framework in the acquisition process. This means that while some innovation and process improvement is possible, it is doubtful that we will ever get to where some of our partners would like us to be. Areas that we are working to upgrade include standardizing the process Corps-wide, changing technical specifications to draw new players into our market and simplifying proposal submissions.

What improvements are being made to the current Resident Management System/Quality Control System (RMS/QCS) and has it streamlined construction project management enough to cut down on hard copy paperwork?

Contract law still requires production of paper documents with wet ink signatures. RMS/QCS was designed to be a contract data management tool. It stores, organizes, retrieves and exchanges information related to several major contract administration processes including information related to contract milestone dates, submittals, progress payments, financial status, modifications, quality control processes, correspondence, requests for information and schedules.

Even though it was not designed to replace the paper version of contract documents, RMS/QCS has greatly improved and even automated the exchange of certain contract information between the government and contractors. The request for information module in RMS/QCS allows information exchange without the need for paper copies. This feature and RMS/QCS generally have reduced the cost and time required for contract administration.

When it comes to awarding small business contracts, how do the Alaska Native Corporations fit into the criteria for selection?

Congressionally mandated small business programs are utilized to ensure small businesses obtain a fair portion of federal work. Tribally owned and Alaska Native Corporation (ANC) owned firms may be awarded sole-source projects above the 8(a) competitive threshold as long as they are eligible to accept projects under the program at the time of the offer; have the capability to perform the work; and can obtain the necessary bonding for the project.

Although many of these firms compete and are awarded contracts under full and open competition nationwide, the Alaska District takes the opportunity to compete among all 8(a), or sole-source projects, firms under the provisions of the law when we deem it necessary and in the best interest of the government.

For example, there are often situations when our customer may have a requirement with an undefined scope, short schedule and limited funding. The sole-source provision allows the Corps to conduct alpha contract negotiations with a specific firm in order to meet the requirements of the project and the expectations of our customer.

The program also allows for the 8(a) firm to joint venture with other small businesses, small disadvantage businesses and other 8(a) firms. Additionally, under the Small Business Administration (SBA) Mentor Protégé Program, the 8(a) firm may enter a joint venture with a large business and still retain 8(a) status under the program.

It is a developmental initiative that enhances the capability of the 8(a) participant to compete more successfully for federal work and contribute to the strength of our economy. Mentors provide the protégé technical and management assistance, financial assistance and subcontract support in order for them to achieve success. Growing and developing these firms is beneficial for the firms, the government and our nation.

Our ANC partners are critical to our success and are doing some incredible work for us. Certainly, because they enjoy statutory authority under the small business 8(a) program, they are eligible to both compete and receive sole-source awards consistent with the regulations governing the program.

I understand that this is a sensitive matter for many. However, I think it is important to note that we are now seeing a willingness to compete for full and open requirements as well, which tells me that the program is working.
To be sure, these companies have access to capital and bonding capacity that greatly exceeds what non-ANC 8(a) firms, other small businesses, and in some cases, even very large businesses are capable of attaining. That’s why when we develop our acquisition strategies, we exercise great care in not focusing too much of the work in this one area.

Last year, we slightly under performed against our small business goal, of which the 8(a) program was the largest component.

What is the future of design-bid-build when it appears the Corps of Engineers is moving exclusively toward design-build?

Currently, design-build is the preferred method, but not the exclusive method. The Alaska District is participating in an industry study on the results achieved using design-build. We will share knowledge gained from that study along with information obtained from within the industry to collaborate with our customers and determine the best acquisition strategy for their projects.

We still perform full designs on occasion for the Coast Guard, Air Force Reserve, NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), FAA (Federal Aviation Administration), O&M (operations and maintenance) projects, and MILCON (military construction) renovations.

Our civil works program is typically full design. However, best value proposals versus bids are increasingly in use with full designs. CM@ Risk, also known as “CM Assist,” is another viable tool that’s used elsewhere in the Corps and offers possible applications for executing the Alaska District mission.

All that said, I think design-build will be heavily used for at least the next several years, and I doubt that we will ever return to traditional design-bid-build at prior years’ levels.

We’ve heard the leadership of the district discuss “MILCON transformation,” but what does it mean to us?

The Corps will rely on prime contractors to provide a code-compliant building. The transformation-compliant contract is less prescriptive regarding the building products, but very definitive on facility criteria.

Your designs must comply with the contract as it incorporates the Army’s standard criteria and designs. The Assistant Chief of Staff for Installation Management (ACSIM) requires that all installations adhere strictly to those requirements Army wide. As a result, contractors can expect fewer comments during design reviews and less change orders during construction.
Once standard designs have been developed, the Corps will move toward an adapt-build strategy and contractors can expect little flexibility in making changes to standard designs. Contractors will have the flexibility to decide means and methods, select materials and the option to utilize fast-track, design-build methods.

A little background for perspective: MILCON (military construction) transformation currently applies to the Army MILCON program; under transformation the Army will move toward standard designs for its facilities utilizing a design-build strategy.

The Army Corps of Engineers has established eight Centers of Standardization to develop and maintain standard designs. Seven facilities are located in the Lower 48 with an eighth based in Hawaii.

The Corps will execute transformation utilizing a standard design-build model RFP (request for proposal) with industry codes and standards such as the International Building Code (IBC). The Alaska District will work with each Center of Standardization to develop and maintain standard designs for Alaska and will execute contracting and contract administration.

How does the Corps’ Regulatory Program balance reasonable development with the preservation of wetlands within the state?

This is one of the most fascinating aspects of my job. Our regulatory program is responsible for protecting the nation’s aquatic resources, while allowing reasonable development through fair and balanced permit decisions.

We accomplish this in Alaska by requiring applicants to avoid and minimize impacts to the greatest extent practicable, and where appropriate requiring compensatory mitigation.

The fact that 98 percent of all individual permits that we evaluate are issued is evidence that we do a good job of balancing development and aquatic resource protection. We also authorize approximately 800 projects per year under streamlined general permits that allow minimal impacts.

How would you describe your command philosophy on safety?

My command philosophy is that everyone – contractor and government employee alike – goes home at the end of the day the same way they came to work – healthy and without incident.

Regardless of where you work in construction, it is a high hazard business and mistakes are unforgiving.
The Corps of Engineers is a leader in construction safety around the world and we take pride in our record. Whether it’s building missile defense systems in Alaska or schools in Afghanistan, the Corps has a strict safety requirements program. Everyone is expected to follow these proven requirements that work to save property, lives, pain and suffering.

Our guidelines for safety are used by all DOD services and were incorporated into Occupational Safety and Health Administration in 1970 when it became law. Our goal is to have a safe job, built on time and within budget.

After completing your first year as commander of the Alaska District, what is your proudest accomplishment?

I have a great team of dedicated professionals located throughout the state. Depending on where they work, Corps employees are committed to supporting our military, the state of Alaska or environmental stewardship.

I think the Alaska District has a bright future. Our Civil Works program has incredible potential when you consider the future of Alaska’s water resource development and what it truly means to the nation.

Alaska also has a role in the military’s future. The quality of training and quality of facilities available to soldiers and airmen are second to none. Additionally, Alaska’s strategic location continues to be vital to national defense.

I am proud to have the opportunity to command the Alaska District and work with the professionals that are part of this team.

Colonel Kevin J. Wilson became the Commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Alaska District, on July 14, 2006. Wilson previously served with the Alaska District from 1992 to 1995 as the Assistant Resident Engineer for the Elmendorf Resident Office and as the Army Program and Project Manager.
**Member NEWS**  
Happenings on the Alaska construction scene

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**CHERYL EDWARDS is first Alaska Native woman to earn API-653 certificate**

Anchorage-based Kakivik Asset Management is pleased to announce employee Cheryl Edwards is the first Alaska Native woman to receive her American Petroleum Institute, API-653 Aboveground Storage Tank Inspector Certification. Edwards, an Aleut whose family is from the Pribilof Islands, has been employed with Kakivik for four years and tested out on March 28, 2007. She received notification she passed the tests on Friday, May 18, 2007, Kakivik officials said.

“Cheryl started out as a trainee on May 22, 2003. She is proof that hard work and dedication equal success” said Kakivik Special Projects Manager Brian McGuire. “She is a shining example of Kakivik’s continued commitment to educating, training and hiring Alaska Natives.”

API 653 provides minimum requirements for maintaining the integrity of welded or riveted, atmospheric pressure, aboveground storage tanks after they have been placed in service, said McGuire. It covers the maintenance inspection, repair, alteration, relocation and reconstruction of such tanks. These standards define the responsibilities of the authorized inspector during repairs, alterations, and reconstruction.

“These are exciting times we live in when we get to share in someone saying ‘the first,’” said Kakivik President and CEO Myrna Gardner. “Cheryl is proof that with education, opportunity and on-the-job training you can hold any job.”

Kakivik Asset Management performs inspections, quality control, corrosion engineering and nondestructive testing.

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**Bradshaw and Associates receives Alaska’s 1st NWCB award**

Bradshaw and Associates is the first Alaska company to win an “Outstanding Project” award from the Northwest Wall and Ceiling Bureau.

The firm was honored at the Northwest Wall and Ceiling Industries annual convention with a 2007 Exterior Commercial Outstanding Project award for its work on the Mat-Su Regional Medical Center.

Ken Bradshaw, established the Anchorage-based firm of Bradshaw and Associates in 2000. The company is a specialty contractor – namely fireproofing, ELFS and stucco, light gage metal framing, acoustical ceilings and drywall.

Bradshaw and Associates maintains a year-round workforce of highly skilled workers certified through the Association of the Walls and Ceilings, and furnished by the Cement, Mason and Plasters Local No. 867, Carpenters Local 1281.

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**Anchorage engineers earn spot among top design firms**

Anchorage’s PND Engineers Inc. is ranked No. 413 this year among Engineering News Record’s Top 500 Design Firms list. The list ranks companies according to their 2006 revenues.

PND founder and President Dennis Nottingham said “It is indeed an honor to be selected for this recognition and a tribute to the company, employees and Alaska.”

PND was founded in Anchorage in 1979 as a full-service civil and structural engineering firm. Today PND employs 95 full-time, permanent employees and has offices in Juneau and Seattle.

The company’s research and development work has included sound control methods for marine pile driving, techniques for driving piles in permafrost, spin fin high-tension capacity piles, permeable wave barriers, new dock and bridge concepts incorporating the PND-patented Open Cell™ structure, floating and moveable ship transfer structures, economical dolphins and anchor systems, and water filtration and sediment control systems.

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**Kiewit Building Group wins safety award**

Kiewit Building Group’s Alaska Area received the first annual Excellence in Construction Safety Award from Region 9 of the National Association of Women in Construction. Region 9 is comprised of chapters in Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington.

The award recognizes Kiewit’s exemplary safety record and zero incident rate for 2006-07 and was presented during the Region 9 conference in Boise, Idaho, May 19.

Kiewit Building Group has been building projects in Alaska since 1948. Kiewit Corp. is one of the largest construction firms in North America.

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**Carlisle Companies to acquire Insulfoam EPS Business**

Carlisle Companies Incorporated purchased the Insulfoam and Premier Building Systems divisions of Premier Industries.
Insulfoam is a leading manufacturer of block molded expanded polystyrene foam products used primarily as insulation in building and other construction applications and Premier Building Systems is a leading manufacturer of structural insulated panels used in the construction of residential and light commercial buildings. With combined annual sales of approximately $220 million, the two divisions have nearly 750 employees and operate from 13 production and fabrication facilities across the U.S., including an Insulfoam manufacturing facility in Anchorage.

Operating within Carlisle’s Construction Materials group, the purchase broadens Carlisle’s construction products portfolio and extends its reach into vertical areas of buildings where demands for energy efficiency and management will continue to increase.

Carlisle is a diversified global manufacturing company serving the construction materials, commercial roofing, specialty tire and wheel, power transmission, heavy-duty brake and friction, heavy-haul truck trailer, refrigerated truck body, foodservice and data transmission industries.

Last Frontier Chapter of the CFMA wins four national awards

In its first full year of operation, the Last Frontier Chapter of the Construction Financial Management Association was honored with four prestigious awards during the annual conference, May 22 in Phoenix, Ariz.

The Last Frontier Chapter is an Alaska-based group of construction financial professionals with several employees of AGC of Alaska firms in its ranks, including board members President Lisa Vandergriff, The Superior Group Inc.; Vice President Lisa Turner, Cornerstone Construction; Program Chair Jack Greico, Alaska USA Insurance Brokers; and Membership Chair Elizabeth Happel, First National Bank Alaska.

The Alaska chapter received the Chairman’s Excellence Award, Chapter of the Year Award, Distinguished Progress Award, and the New Chapter of the Year Award for 2006. Alaska was selected for the honors from among chapters with less than 40 members.

The Chairman’s Excellence Award is the highest honor a chapter can receive in the Achievement Category of Construction Financial Management Association’s annual Chapter Recognition Program.

The Construction Financial Management Association has 90 chapters in the U.S. with a membership of more than 7,000. It is the only non-profit professional association dedicated to serving the construction industry.

Spenard Builders Supply purchases Polar Supply Company

Spenard Builders Supply, Alaska’s largest building materials supplier and a member of the Pro-Build family of companies, purchased Polar Supply Company, which operated out of distribution facilities in Anchorage, Fairbanks and Kenai.

Polar Supply Company specializes in commercial grade structural, geotechnical, environmental and corrosion prevention products.

Polar’s three facilities will operate as a separate division within Spenard, focusing on major commercial contractors, pipeline and oil companies.

Don Dunavant, owner and founder of Polar Supply Company, will facilitate the transition before retiring. Dunavant grew Polar Supply from a one-man operation delivering materials out of his garage in 1986 to a three locations with more than 40 employees.
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