A NEW ‘BEAR’ IN ALASKA

2010 AGC LEGISLATIVE GOALS
State-funded transportation program remains top priority
Page 14

CHARTING NEW FRONTIERS
$1.5 billion BP Liberty project pioneers extended-reach drilling on North Slope
Page 52
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Note: Winning Bids, Low Bids and Construction Activity

1) Source from projects advertised in the AGC of Alaska Bulletin
2) Calculations based on date of bid
3) Supply/Service; Non-Construction bid results are not always advertised in the bulletin
4) RFP results are not always advertised in the bulletin

**ARCTIC & WESTERN**

COLDFOOT DALTON HWY MP 175-197 REHAB
$25,642,513
Roger Hickel Contracting

DALTON HWY JIM RIVER MAINT STATION SHOP
$4,123,062
F&W Construction Co. Inc.

NOME 04/05 STORM PERM REPAIRS STAGE II
$4,091,282
Ridge Contracting Inc.

BARROW SCADA UPGRADES
$3,077,000
UIC Construction Inc.

BETHEL HOUSE RELOCATION
$140,460
Bethel Services Inc.

**SOUTHCENTRAL**

WILLOW PARKS HWY REHAB
$20,758,919
QAP

ANCH TUDOR/LAKE OTIS INTERSECT IMPROVE
$7,498,670
QAP

CORDOVA MT ECCLES ES RENOVATION
$6,108,656
Chugach Alaska Services Inc.

ANCH MULDOON ROAD RESURFACING
$3,673,328
Pruhs Construction Company LLC

**INTERIOR**

TOK AK HWY MP 1308 WEIGH STATION
$6,460,641
HC Contractors Inc.

**Low Bids for 2009**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>January</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>April</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>June</th>
<th>July</th>
<th>August</th>
<th>September</th>
<th>October</th>
<th>November</th>
<th>December</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
<td>Building</td>
<td>$18,117,445.82</td>
<td>$40,746,284.34</td>
<td>$38,353,923.00</td>
<td>$24,130,743.93</td>
<td>$3,481,000</td>
<td>$26,073,903.00</td>
<td>$4,187,040.80</td>
<td>$3,928,237.00</td>
<td>$12,358,841.00</td>
<td>$17,160,246.00</td>
<td>$2,178,237.00</td>
<td>$1,098,460.00</td>
<td>$202,865,918.09</td>
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<td>Military</td>
<td>$11,215,000.00</td>
<td>$0.00</td>
<td>$82,207.91</td>
<td>$0.00</td>
<td>$7,907,880.00</td>
<td>$0.00</td>
<td>$70,314.00</td>
<td>$4,391,697.00</td>
<td>$2,225,626.00</td>
<td>$392,779.00</td>
<td>$7,907,880.00</td>
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<td>Other</td>
<td>$8,852,103.24</td>
<td>$33,602,215.15</td>
<td>$46,464,918.99</td>
<td>$10,673,169.94</td>
<td>$17,588,185</td>
<td>$877,000</td>
<td>$12,405,872.00</td>
<td>$12,405,872.00</td>
<td>$12,405,872.00</td>
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<td>Transit</td>
<td>$13,448,162.64</td>
<td>$100,650,760.75</td>
<td>$44,737,320.38</td>
<td>$64,241,176.99</td>
<td>$161,852,845.00</td>
<td>$48,051,765.00</td>
<td>$57,635,110.00</td>
<td>$37,681,502.00</td>
<td>$35,988,364.00</td>
<td>$43,478,325.00</td>
<td>$4,977,550.00</td>
<td>$27,489,670.00</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>$61,632,711.75</td>
<td>$174,999,260.24</td>
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<td>$90,645,090.88</td>
<td>$228,745,325.00</td>
<td>$11,215,000.00</td>
<td>$82,207.91</td>
<td>$4,391,697.00</td>
<td>$2,225,626.00</td>
<td>$392,779.00</td>
<td>$7,907,880.00</td>
<td>$1,098,460.00</td>
<td>$8,980,909.00</td>
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KODIAK USCG STEAM REPAIRS
$2,208,100
Brechan Enterprises Inc.

ANCH LANDFILL CELL 10 EXCAVATION
$1,794,190
Southcentral Construction Inc.

ANCH WELL 7 CAPACITY UPGRADES
$1,633,207
SR Bales Construction Inc.

SOLDOTNA KOBUK STORM WATER PROTECTION
$846,991
Southcentral Construction Inc.

PORT MACKENZIE BARGE DOCK EXPANSION
$825,000
Tri State Construction

ANCH 3000 ARCTIC HVAC UPGRADES
$799,258
Frawner Corp.

ANCH WEATHER FORECAST OFFICE ROOF
$787,430
P&D LLC

ELMENDORF LIGHTING REPLACE
$749,165
SBH Services Inc.

ANCH AIA G TERMINAL HVAC UPGRADES
$479,222
Consolidated Contracting & Engineering

MOOSE PASS TRANSFER SITE RELOCATION
$464,450
D&L Construction Co. Inc.

SEWARD WATER MAIN INTERTIE PHS I
$392,779
Prosser-Dagg Construction Co. Inc.

PETEBSBURG BERTHING FACILITY IMPROVE
$958,000
Pool Engineering Inc.

KETCHIKAN BARANOF RESERVOIR SITE PREP
$988,825
Southeast Earthmovers Inc.

COFFMAN COVE ROADS PAVING
$787,430
Secon

KETCHIKAN S TONGASS WATER MAIN PHS II
$771,920
S&S General Contractors

SITKA HOSPITAL ENVELOPE/WINDOW/ROOF REPLACE
$712,000
Wolverine Supply Inc.

SOUTHEAST

YAKUTAT AREAWIDE PAVING/REPAIRS
$5,223,010
Secon

KETCHIKAN VIADUCTS REHAB STAGE II
$5,717,000
Dawson Construction Inc.

KETCHIKAN ELDER HOUSING CONSTRUCT
$2,721,820
McGraw’s Custom Construction

SITKA UAS HEALTH SCIENCE RENO
$1,968,748
Alaska Commercial Contractors

JUNEAU DOUGLAS SEWER PHS IV
$1,781,598
Southeast Earthmovers Inc.

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$-0
$150,000,000
$300,000,000
$450,000,000
$600,000,000
$750,000,000
$900,000,000
$1,050,000,000
$1,200,000,000
$1,350,000,000
$1,500,000,000
$1,650,000,000

YEAR

2005
2006
2007
2008
2009

JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC

BUILDING

$-0
$100,000,000
$200,000,000
$300,000,000
$400,000,000
$500,000,000
$600,000,000
$700,000,000
$800,000,000
$900,000,000
$1,000,000,000
$1,100,000,000
$1,200,000,000

JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC

ANNUAL

$-0
$150,000,000
$300,000,000
$450,000,000
$600,000,000
$750,000,000
$900,000,000
$1,050,000,000

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Scholarship testimonials

Bob Coopchiak

I worked as a union carpenter for the past six years before entering UAA’s Construction Management Program as a full-time student. I would like to thank AGC of Alaska for its financial generosity in awarding me a scholarship. As a family man, this financial help means a lot. I didn’t think I had a chance of being chosen for a scholarship, but filled out an application anyway at the urging of someone else. Thank you AGC.

Pete Clements

The decision to return to college and work toward my goals has been challenging in many ways. With the help of AGC, I was honored to receive a scholarship to help ease the financial burden synonymous with higher education. The Construction Management Program at UAA is providing me with the knowledge and skills for success in the construction industry.

Rory Egelus

AGC of Alaska has assisted me financially throughout my college career, which has allowed me to experience valuable construction internships in the summers. The people of AGC not only assisted me financially, but also provided enthusiastic support throughout my academic life at Montana State University. I look forward to returning to Alaska to begin my career in the construction industry, and anticipate future involvement with AGC. Thank you AGC for your community involvement and kind generosity.

Jacob Mathiesen

As far back as I can remember, I’ve enjoyed attending the AGC Family Fun Night and I still find it irresistible to cut the rigid insulation with a plastic saw! I am in my second year in the Construction Management Program at UAA. When I graduate, I will be the third generation of my family involved in construction in Alaska. I look forward to building Alaska along with AGC.

Lyle Axelarris

After working as a carpenter for several AGC of Alaska contractors in Fairbanks, I decided to study civil engineering at University of Alaska Fairbanks. Working on a civil engineering degree and raising a family is tough work. But AGC’s assistance has made it easier for me to focus on my studies and receive a 4.0 GPA. I am very excited to continue working in Alaska’s construction industry after I graduate. Thank you, AGC!

Travis Weist

The AGC of Alaska’s scholarship has motivated me to maintain my Dean’s List status in the Construction Management Program at UAA. Growing up in the Alaska construction industry has emphasized the importance of continuing education, whether it is a skilled labor apprenticeship program or traditional schooling. Thank you for supporting the education of so many students, including myself. I look forward to the day when I can give back to the AGC community.
A time for real change

We have all heard this is the time for change. I completely agree; however, here in Alaska change means something different than it does for the rest of the country.

Alaska’s economy is driven by new money; money coming in from out of state. A sound long-term fiscal plan has been established but needs to be further developed and engaged.

Alaskans need to concentrate on two sectors: the petroleum sector, including the gas line infrastructure, and the federal government. According to University of Alaska Research Summary No. 13 dated, December 2008, “If the flow of federal and petroleum money disappeared overnight, two-thirds of the jobs for Alaskans would also disappear, because each of them supports a third of those jobs.”

We need to continue to attract and encourage strong reliable companies for the development of petroleum and other natural resources in Alaska.

Deferred maintenance is also an immediate concern. Even though projects along the Parks, Alaska, Richardson, Haines, Elliott and Dalton highways will ensure Alaska has construction jobs for many years to come, we have to keep up with our facilities, roads and right of way construction needs. Let’s take our rights of way as an example. Widening the road right of way, thus clearing the field of vision, will improve safety by reducing the amount of citizen fatalities resulting from moose collisions. This will also allow maintenance crews to maintain the drainage structure more effectively, allowing roadbeds to dry faster, which helps them last longer. All in all, this is a win-win for public safety and our state’s economy.

All of these issues go back to the necessity for a state-funded transportation program. As you may have heard, the federal funding faucet is at risk. The 2009 Alaska Transportation Finance Study states, “Federal support for Alaska’s transportation needs is being challenged by other states because of the perception that Alaska’s financial capacity is substantially better off than other states. The Lower 48 and the federal government see the Alaska Permanent Fund currently has almost $28 billion and Alaska is the only state that collects neither income taxes nor state sales taxes, and its 8 cents-per-gallon gas tax is the lowest rate in the country.”

We must, as a state, step up and start paying our fair share. Alaska has a strong need to implement a program so that we control the costs granted to projects and their timely execution.

In order to support Alaska hire and gas line readiness, it is imperative we continue to press for support of vocation and technical training here in Alaska. We need continued growth in workforce development and regional centers for technical training, with extended efforts to rural areas within Alaska. Part of the attraction for strong reliable companies to come into our state to develop petroleum and other natural resources should be the qualified Alaskan residents ready to go to work. In order to facilitate that, we need to train our upcoming generations here in Alaska in order to meet and exceed the unique requirements.

A state-funded transportation program, and vocation and technical training have been AGC of Alaska’s priorities in the past and will continue to be high on the priority list. Patience will be required while we prove to our Legislature the long-term benefits of a state-funded transportation program. Until vocation and technical training is back in the public education curriculum with all the attention it deserves, AGC will continue to press for funding for workforce development.

AGC, its members, as well as other groups and individuals, have worked endlessly to encourage the Legislature and the administration to develop a fiscal plan based upon realistic revenues, rather than continuing to spend based on windfalls from temporary high oil prices, and dreaming of mega-projects to come. A plan has been created but it needs to be further developed and implemented.

The forefront of issues addressed within the plan should be:
• State-funded transportation program
• Vocational and technical training
• Physical infrastructure
• Deferred maintenance projects
• Natural gas pipeline
• Road safety; a personal priority of mine.

AGC of Alaska has always put the needs of its members first, and with this fierce economy we will strive to make sure change is made and the prosperity for the state of Alaska continues.

I am extremely honored and excited to be AGC’s new chapter president and I will personally work hard to move forward with all of these issues. Time is running out, we need to act now.
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At the annual AGC Conference on Nov. 12, 2009, Alaska Gov. Sean Parnell honored his longstanding commitment to Alaska’s construction industry by speaking to our packed luncheon crowd. Yes, he could have chosen to listen to President Barack Obama’s address to the military at Elmendorf Air Force Base where Air Force One was refueling; and, some have criticized him for not doing so.

What was lost in this partisan bickering over the governor’s choice to meet with his constituents was the fact that the president’s schedule was changing hourly and the importance of the governor’s announcement of his administration’s major five-year initiative to address many of Alaska’s deferred maintenance needs.

Gov. Parnell’s 2011 budget will include – for the first time – an allocation of $100 million specifically for “hammer-ready” maintenance projects that have been put off for years. Parnell said work on the projects can begin quickly to help boost construction employment.

The details of his proposal have not been made public at the time of this writing, but among the items included are state buildings, ferries, roads and bridges. The only specific breakdown of the $100 million is that 37 percent goes to the University of Alaska system, where half the buildings are at least 30 years old.

Looking ahead to a year when we would expect a capital budget to be as lean as last year’s, for the governor to propose such an ambitious plan to tackle our immediate needs shows real leadership and vision. While the state has been chipping away at deferred maintenance for years, much of that funding has been buried in the budgets of various state agencies.

The governor’s proposal will be up front and visible, or to use that tired phrase of the recent past – transparent. It’s also fiscally responsible, in that it takes advantage of a competitive market to address immediate needs, and lowers future operating costs.

Electrical and heating system upgrades will lower energy costs. Replacing deteriorating siding, old windows and fixing leaking roofs lowers operating costs and extends the life of our public facilities. Repairing pavement and bridges before they require complete reconstruction preserves the billions we’ve invested in building Alaska’s infrastructure.

Much of road and airport construction – horizontal work – has been bolstered over the last year by a $315 million transportation bond package the voters approved a year ago, and $250 million in infrastructure stimulus projects.

The outlook for building trades is not as positive, but this proposal will help. The governor picked the right time to propose such a basic but ambitious package; construction material prices continue to decline and competition among contractors is intense, resulting in lower project costs and benefits to the owners. As a state we have invested heavily in workforce development, and must make sure there are jobs to offer the new workers.

Governor Parnell’s commitment to creating construction jobs across the state by tackling the backlog of deferred maintenance projects fulfills the moral obligation we have to maintain the people’s assets. True, there’s not as much glamour in deferred maintenance as there is in new buildings, but the focus on maintenance will pay big dividends later.

This is not growing government; this is sound fiscal planning. Authorizing capital expenditures for deferred maintenance and capital repairs does not add cost to the operating budget. In fact, it should lower operating costs and save a small amount of maintenance funding associated with a higher rate of emergency repairs. It is bread and butter, simple and common. The governor made the right decision.

Once we get going on our deferred maintenance program, we hope our governor will look to the future and dust off some of those “wish list” projects our folks have been dying to build for years. Projects that extend our roads for new homes and businesses, and the economic opportunities we can open up for our children. New hydroelectric projects and economic development corridors – electric interties to extend power to other parts of Alaska – will provide lower cost energy and a catalyst for responsible development of additional road, bridges and the necessary utility systems to support a new generation of Alaskans.
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Alaska’s construction contractors are vital to our economy. Construction is Alaska’s third largest industry; it pays the state’s second-highest wages; employs nearly 21,000 workers with a payroll of more than $1 billion; and accounts for $1 out of every $5 in circulation in Alaska.

As governor, my top priority is to position our economy for growth and strengthen our families for opportunities. For me, that includes keeping contractors busy. It means jobs. It is my goal to maximize construction opportunities in Alaska.

To that end, we will fix the facilities and infrastructure we have, using a predictable and sustainable deferred maintenance plan. It only makes sense to take care of our existing public facilities, vessels, roads and equipment.

For the next fiscal year, I propose including $100 million in the state of Alaska’s capital budget for deferred maintenance projects. And that’s a line item I intend to maintain for the next five years.

To me, taking care of Alaska’s deferred maintenance by “fixing what we’ve already got” is a moral obligation. Think about it: we do not spend years saving our hard-earned dollars, and months planning to purchase a new home just to buy it and then let it fall apart. Similarly, as stewards of Alaska’s finite dollars, it doesn’t make sense for us to let our public assets waste away, either.

Focusing on this deferred maintenance plan will mean Alaska’s construction industry will have jobs it can depend on, each year, for at least the next five years. This sensible budget approach is new to state government – and it’s necessary.

The state of Alaska and the University of Alaska system have more than 2,300 public buildings with a deferred maintenance backlog of more than $1.8 billion. And that doesn’t include roads and vessels which still need work. To begin addressing these issues, each state entity has compiled a list of its highest-priority deferred maintenance items.

The deferred maintenance plan will fund repair and renovation projects across the state for office buildings, university facilities, roads and airports. The projects include upgrading electrical and heating systems, which will lower operating costs; replacing leaking roofs with better-insulated ones; replacing windows and siding to reduce heat loss; and replacing elevators, plumbing and fire alarms.

Here are some specifics about how I propose distributing deferred maintenance dollars:

- The University of Alaska has close to 400 buildings statewide with an estimated replacement value of $2.6 billion. Of the $100 million this year, we would allocate $37.5 million to the university. Deferred maintenance funds will preserve the state’s significant investment in university infrastructure.
- The Department of Transportation and Public Facilities has a deferred maintenance backlog of more than $400 million. We’re allocating a significant portion of the deferred maintenance budget to the department to be used statewide for highway projects, including the marine highway system, and for improvements in buildings, airports and harbors. This includes surface repairs, guardrails, culverts, bridges, terminals and vessels.
- These projects are “hammer ready.” While they will contribute to steady employment for the construction industry, they will simultaneously lower the operating costs of state government through increased energy efficiency and lower maintenance. That’s a win-win for Alaska.

Fixing what we have just makes sense and keeps our construction community employed. I will keep a spotlight on our deferred maintenance plan, and I am counting on your support and advocacy as I take this proposal to the Legislature.

The Parnell-Campbell administration also prioritizes workforce development and job training. We’re continuing the $3.5 million in our budget for Alaska construction academies, $2 million for the Pipeline Training Facility in Fairbanks, and you’ll also see funding for job training efforts in rural Alaska.

The Associated General Contractors of Alaska can be proud of its work in joining private, public and nonprofit partners to build and expand the construction academies across the state.
Congratulations on this highly successful program that gives students real-world work experience while still in school – and the national awards received as a result.

I understand Alaska’s need for an educated workforce, and we have much more work to do. In far too many cases we are not reaching Alaska’s youth. About a third of our youth, 34 percent, are not graduating from high school. The students who do graduate are not prepared to enter job-training programs or post-secondary institutions. Even at the University of Alaska, 65 percent of entering students are in remedial courses. We can do better.

Can you imagine anything more fundamental to providing opportunities for Alaskans than doing everything possible to make sure our youth stay in school, get their diplomas and move on to job training or post-secondary institutions? So, how do we ensure Alaska’s students are prepared for the future? By harnessing the limitless potential of Alaska brainpower. We need to find a way to maximize this natural resource by keeping our students in Alaska.

That is the idea behind the Governor’s Performance Scholarship, or GPS. The GPS is an education policy initiative I’ve announced that will help students navigate their way to success.

The scholarship program will allow all Alaska high school students to earn tuition scholarships for eligible job-training programs and in-state universities. To qualify for the scholarships, students must complete a more rigorous high school curriculum. If a student steps up and takes four years of math, not two; four years of science, not two; four years of language arts; and three years of social studies, and completes the course with a 2.5 GPA or higher, they will have earned these scholarships.

The plan gives students incentives to strive for better grades by rewarding them with bigger scholarships as grades improve. Students that get a C+ average with the more rigorous curriculum, will get 50 percent of their in-state tuition paid; students with a B average will get 75 percent, and students who take the rigorous curriculum and have an A average will get 100 percent of their tuition paid to an in-state university or job training program.

How do we pay for GPS without placing an endless burden on the state’s operating budget? Alaska will have a surplus of revenue this year and we have about $8 billion in two reserve accounts, not counting the Permanent Fund. I’m asking the Legislature to fence $400 million of surplus or savings, invest it, and use the earnings to pay for these scholarships. Thirty years from now, we’ll still have the $400 million, but we’ll also have a better-prepared, better-trained workforce. That’s an investment worth making.

We are well on our way to positioning Alaska’s economy for growth and our children and families for opportunity. Fixing what we already have and focusing on deferred maintenance in our state will secure jobs, and providing incentives for our children to earn scholarships and stay in school will help secure Alaska’s future. Alaska is full of opportunity, and under my administration, we will turn that potential into reality. 

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**ALL SIGNS POINT NORTH**

**WHILE MANY STATES TIGHTEN THEIR BELTS, ALASKA REMAINS A THRIVING COMMERCIAL, INDUSTRIAL AND RETAIL DESTINATION. IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR NEW MARKETS TO INCREASE YOUR YIELD, CALL SPAN ALASKA. WE PROVIDE SMART SOLUTIONS FOR SHIPPING TO ALASKA, AND WE HAVE FOR 30 YEARS.**

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State-funded transportation program

A sustained state-funded transportation program has been an AGC priority for many years and will likely remain a priority until we have such a program. A viable program should have sustainable funding and focus on traffic congestion relief, safety, maintaining the existing system and new road construction.

AGC of Alaska participated in a study completed last winter that considered a variety of funding mechanisms for a state funded program. You might be interested in reading the Alaska Transportation Finance Study at: www.akml.org/documents/2009TransportationStudy.pdf

The federal funding faucet isn’t always going to flow as it has in the past – we have got to, as a state, step up and start paying our own share. While they are the same currency, recent experience has shown for a transportation project, a federal dollar is worth only about 75 cents, compared to a state dollar. Because there are so many strings, rules and regulations attached to a federal dollar that decreases its purchasing power, we can get more accomplished faster with state dollars.

Vocation and technical training

Another of our regular legislative priorities for the past few years has been funding for vocation and technical training. The administration has been very supportive and the Legislature has been generous with funding the efforts. We need to continue our efforts toward targeted growth in workforce development and regional centers for technical training, with extended efforts toward rural Alaska. This is especially important for Alaska hire and gas line readiness.

A state-funded transportation program and vocation and technical training have been priorities in the past and will continue to be focal points on our radar screen. It will take a few election cycles to convince state government of the long-term benefits of a state-funded transportation program over the more immediate gratification of project-by-project appropriation. Until public education puts vocation and technical training back in the curriculum with the attention it deserves, AGC will continue to press for funding for workforce development.

Other legislative priorities include:

Gas line infrastructure

Alaska needs to get ahead of the curve on gas line infrastructure projects. These are projects along the Parks, Alaska, Richardson, Haines, Elliott and Dalton highways that have been identified as major deficiencies and impediments to a safe and efficient gas line construction project.

They include major highway upgrades and replacement of deficient bridges. Reasonable estimates of the transportation need range from $500 million to $700 million. Depending on how the state undertakes this effort, it could take more than a decade to complete the necessary work. Also, depending on how the state proceeds with them, many may be eligible for project reimbursement through the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission tariff.

We have a general target date for the gas line, and whether it slips a few years, we know what work needs to be completed prior to construction. We want to maximize Alaska hire on the gas line – both workers and contractors – and we want our contractors and workers building the gas line, not still rebuilding roads and bridges when gas line construction starts. The state should put together a coordinated and sequenced construction program funded by general funds, savings and bonds to begin work on essential gas line projects.

A variety of alternative delivery formats should be used in order to avoid impacts to the delivery for transportation projects in the regular state program, including program management by contractor/consultant teams and design-build, as well as the conventional design-bid-build.

2010 deferred maintenance program

There has been discussion of facilities deferred maintenance needs for years, but funding for repairs and renovations does not attract the attention new construction does. Building material prices are down more than 10 percent from 2008, and so is the overall volume of building construction. But the number of
contractors and the overall construction capacity of the building sector increased.

In 2009 bids on construction projects attracted great interest with often a dozen bidders, and the low bidder's prices consistently came in much lower than estimates. Project owners have been getting some real bargains.

The state should take advantage of a competitive market and address the considerable deferred maintenance needs throughout Alaska by putting out a deferred maintenance program along the lines of the home weatherization program. A deferred maintenance capital program should be a standalone bill, instead of a number of separate appropriations buried within many state agency budgets.

Deferred maintenance of our existing facilities is a smart investment in the current market. Though there is not a lot of glamour in deferred maintenance, we are all acutely aware of many of the needs. Many of these deferred projects can also reduce the operating costs, and any deferred maintenance project proposed should have the essential element of lowering the operating cost to the owner.

**Examples include:**
- Electrical and heating upgrades that lower operating costs
- Replace leaking roofs that include more insulation
- Replace windows and siding for improved heat loss control
- Renovations that change the use of a building for greater efficiency

This program should not be only for state facilities, but include funding for municipal facilities on a matching grant basis and also include a solid rural component for small communities that have no way to make matching funds, because there are maintenance needs across the state in the cities and in the villages.

Some may say in this current economy we should be cutting back on spending. But funding a capital program for the basic needs of facilities deferred maintenance and taking advantage of a competitive market in a lean budget year clearly passes the red-face test.
Medical review officers: Who are they?

If a business never takes an inventory, it usually doesn’t last long. The same can be said for reviewing roles within that business. In this case we’re looking at the responsibilities of the medical review officer within WorkSafe. As we address the medical officer’s role, we also need to look at why we test for drugs and alcohol in the first place.

Testing is about safety – nothing more, nothing less. Ruling out illegal drug use provides a safer workplace and that’s the foundation of our program.

The medical officer’s main function is to determine legal versus illegal drug use. The medical officer is an advocate for the accuracy and integrity of the drug-testing process, and provides an in-depth analysis. This includes reviewing the custody and control form on all specimen collections to decide whether there’s a problem that may cause a test to be cancelled.

The medical officer is not required to review laboratory internal chain of custody documentation. No one is permitted to cancel a test until the medical officer has reviewed the documentation.

The medical officer’s responsibilities include: providing feedback to employers, collection sites and laboratories regarding performance issues; reporting to and consulting with the Office of Drug and Alcohol Policy and Compliance or a relevant Department of Transportation agency when someone has questions or needs clarification concerning its regulations; and resolving any drug-program issues. Employers and service agents are prohibited from limiting or attempting to limit the medical officer’s access to Department of Transportation files if requested. They also cannot retaliate in any way against a medical officer for discussing drug-testing issues with the Department of Transportation.

The medical officer’s basic purpose is to determine whether there is a legitimate medical explanation (legal reason) for confirmed positive, adulterated, substituted and invalid drug test results.

Another basic tenet of the Department of Transportation and company-based drug testing is they are forensic testing programs – not medical. This means the process looks for, and can take adverse action, when a medical officer reports a positive test result. However, while the medical officer provides a medical review of test results, this action does not mean the medical officer has established a doctor-patient relationship with employees. This is very important because under Department of Transportation regulations, medical officers are not required to follow federal guidelines for patient confidentiality.

If medical officer uncovers questionable test results they must investigate and then notify the appropriate party (i.e. Health and Human Services, Department of Transportation, employers, service agents, etc.) for assistance. Some of the problems may include cancelled or problematic tests, incorrect results, problems with blind specimens and more.

The medical officer is also responsible for ensuring the timely flow of test results and other information to employers, and for protecting the confidentiality of drug-testing information. They do this all through maintaining compliance with Part 40 and other Department of Transportation regulations.

It’s crucial for medical officers to be familiar with all Department of Transportation regulations as each agency has its own process for returning employees to the workforce who’ve tested positive.

For more information, refer to 49 CFR Part 40, 121-169 Subpart G, or contact a WorkSafe representative.

Matthew Fagnani is president of WorkSafe Inc., a full-spectrum workplace drug and alcohol program that offers instant-results testing.
what a rush

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‘Take care of that contractor’ tenet insulates Vertex for success

The Rocheleau family’s Fairbanks roots dip almost as deep as the miles of underground utility pipe their company has encapsulated in insulation since inception of Vertex Insulation Inc. 31 years ago.

Born and raised in Fairbanks the Rocheleau sons, Rick, Ron and Rory, hold key positions in the insulation and specialty coating business based in Fairbanks’ industrial section. Their mom, Shirley, is enjoying retirement after minding the office for more than 20 years.

Rick Rocheleau assumed the helm as president when family patriarch Robert Rocheleau passed away in 1991. But it’s the business values the father instilled in his sons that elevated Vertex to the largest and most reputable insulation company in Interior Alaska.

“Take care of that contractor,” said Rick, recalling his father’s mantra. “My dad drilled that into us kids a long time ago.”

Digging up city streets to lay water or sewer line involves a menagerie of workers and equipment for the contractor, the company president explained. Temperatures in the Fairbanks area can easily plunge to minus 50 during the long Alaska winter, making insulated utility pipes a necessity.

When pipe is set and a project gets to the point where foam is needed, “We darn well better be there,” he added.

“We have been able to stay ahead of our competition by having enough trucks, equipment and people to man five to six projects at the same time,” Rick said.

Company name evolves

Robert Rocheleau began implementing his business philosophy when he arrived in Fairbanks in 1954 as general manager for Seattle-based Vermiculite Contractors on projects at Fort Wainwright and Eielson Air Force Base.
Vermiculite is a lightweight product commonly found in potting soil. Used in combination with concrete or asphalt, vermiculite was used extensively for insulation purposes in the 1950s and 1960s, Rick said.

But a revolutionary new product – polyurethane foam – was called for in the request for proposals to construct a new Fairbanks JC Penney store in 1966. Robert jumped on the foam bandwagon.

“Hey look, look at this new stuff,” his son said, recalling his father’s enthusiastic pitch to local contractors and engineers. “This will revolutionize insulating pipe in Alaska.”

“They were amazed by it,” Rick said. The City of Fairbanks was one of the new product’s first customers. The city continues to use polyurethane foam on all its underground piping, he said.

Insulating with vermiculite was very labor intensive, Rick said. It involved building forms around the pipe, a six-man mixing crew, pushing wheelbarrows filled with insulation into the ditch and pouring it into the forms, drying time and finally removing the forms.

But with polyurethane, a two-man crew could drive up, wheel out 150-feet of hose with a spray nozzle on the end, and while one man sprayed the foam around the pipe, the other could keep the hose from tangling.

“It’s like an art work,” Rick said. “It takes quite a knack to spray foam smooth and uniform, and it usually takes several years to become an expert.”

Foreseeing vermiculite was on its way out as insulation, owners of Vermiculite Contractors made a slight name adjustment to Vermiculite Technicians, which evolved into Vertecs Corporation. The Rocheleau family bought out the Alaska holdings of Vertecs Corp. in 1978 and changed the name to Vertex Insulation Inc.

As for the company’s membership with AGC of Alaska, Rick said it’s been so long, he doesn’t remember when they joined. Being a part of the organization has facilitated networking with other contractors, safety training and access to plans and bid documents, he added.

**Bring it on**

Vertex’s president is proud no job is too small or too large for his company.

“We insulate underground piping, tanks, basements, walls, roofs – if it can be insulated, we most likely have insulated it,” Rick said.

Vertex recently finished a four-year project re-insulating all the remote gate and check valves on the trans-Alaska oil pipeline stretching from Prudhoe Bay to Valdez. The original insulation had been in place since construction and needed to be removed to inspect all parts of the valve. A properly operating valve is vital in isolating problems within a certain section of the oil pipeline.

Always on a quest to conserve energy, Vertex took part this summer in a challenging and environmentally friendly project with the Cold Climate Housing Research Center constructing an earth-bermed home in the village of Anaktuvuk Pass. Located north of the Brooks Range at an elevation of 2,200 feet, the village is the last remaining settlement of the Nunamiut Inupiat Eskimo in Alaska.
The Cold Climate Housing Research Center built this demonstration house in Anaktuvuk Pass last summer. Its Sustainable Northern Shelter program combines traditional designs with modern building techniques to build affordable, culturally appropriate, energy efficient housing. The home has a steel frame, partially soy-based insulation, a spray applied coating, earth-banking and a sod roof.
According to the housing research center, the cost of constructing a conventional 1,000-square-foot house in the village can approach $850,000. Using this innovative method of construction, a similar-sized energy efficient house can be built for less than $180,000.

Earth-berm construction uses greener, more environmentally friendly foam and implements a reverse type of construction. Walls are constructed half underground, sheathed with plywood on the inside with 9 inches of foam sprayed on the exterior of the house, plus a polyurea coating.

“There’s no siding. It’s sprayed nice and smooth,” Rick said of the earth-bermed homes, which are traditional to the Nunamiut people.

And in place of the standard petro-product polyurethane, Vertex is using a spray foam with 20 percent of the total product composed of soybean oil or recycled plastic bottles.

Funded by the Tagiugmiullu Nunamiullu Housing Authority, the project plans to build additional homes in Anaktuvuk Pass and in the North Slope region.

The project is getting national attention, Rick said.

Vertex has been nominated for several awards by the Spray Polyurethane Foam Alliance for its use of the greener foam. But Vertex will have to wait until February’s 2010 Spray Foam Conference in Orlando, Fla. to learn the outcome.

It may not draw national recognition, but Vertex’s work in cutting energy costs in residential housing is equally important.

Spraying 3 to 4 inches of foam where floor joists meet the outside wall can cut down on fuel bills, Rick said. Foam is also a vapor barrier, eliminating the need for Visqueen.

“Although more expensive, foam is the one true investment in your home that will pay you back,” he said.

The onset of winter whittles the Vertex crew from about 15 employees down to six. In addition to equipment maintenance, the crew keeps busy insulating a variety of items, from water troughs to delivery vans to connex containers.

“It’s something to do in the winter,” Rick said.

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Nancy Erickson is a freelance writer living in Seward.
ome people just like challenges.

The core of any construction project is logistics, and the companies of family-owned Superior Forest Products Inc. (SFP) make simplifying tough logistical situations their specialty and their passion.

“We won’t bid a project on the road system,” explained Ron McCormick, founder and president of SFP. “It doesn’t allow us to be creative.”

The challenges of large construction projects in Bush Alaska can be daunting, but McCormick and his colleagues tackle those challenges with SFP’s construction division, Northern Construction Service (NCS).

NCS, under Project Manager Garrett McCormick, Ron’s son, and Superintendent Roger McCormick, Ron’s brother, has made a name for itself by taking
on tough projects, such as several Alaska Department of Transportation snow removal and sand storage buildings in rural Alaska communities including Kotzebue, Levelock, Nondalton, Pilot Point, Chevak, Scammon Bay, Napakiak, Akiak and Aniak.

Each site had its own challenges. While most of the storage buildings NCS constructs are pre-engineered metal buildings, the facility in Kotzebue used 25-foot-high, 14-inch thick poured-in-place concrete walls made from sand and a special aggregate, supplied by the local Native corporation and run through NCS's volumetric mixer.

Going the distance became more than a slogan with NCS and its sister company, Alpine Lumber & Building Products. Whether it is moving building materials from the Pacific Northwest to a remote Alaska building site, delivering 25 semi-truckloads of boardwalk materials to Kuskokwim River communities, providing a single 26-foot-long pressure-treated bridge timber to Anchorage or sending hundreds of 4-inch steel staples to Dutch Harbor, every project is approached with the same energy and high level of customer service, explained McCormick and his son Garrett, SFP's vice president.

"We'll go to whatever ends to offer the highest level of service to customers," Garrett McCormick said.

In Kotzebue, as at each of its construction sites, NCS supplemented core employees with local hires. Garrett McCormick said it is the company and family's policy to learn from the local communities, respecting the cultures of each village.

"We make it a point of discussion with our crew in every project," he said.

In Selawik, NCS teamed with Brice Inc. on a boardwalk and landfill road project. NCS placed nearly a half million board feet of pressure-treated lumber to construct 1.5 miles of boardwalk, employing its core crew and 15 local hires.

While the logistics of working in Bush Alaska can be off-putting, they raise a different response in NCS. NCS's operating strategy is to provide an increased margin of error that creates the opportunity for higher-than-traditional profit margins.

To accomplish this, they use traditional and nontraditional business tactics. McCormick and NCS make use of close
associations to other key businesses — in this case, Alpine Lumber & Building Products, and a major wholesale building materials distribution company, with which Ron McCormick has been associated since 1985. The two associations give NCS important ties to materials suppliers and direct deep-water dock facility access. Ron’s brother Scott was the first employee of Alpine Lumber in 2006.

NCS invests in safety education, training and cross training of core personnel, including using resources available through the Associated General Contractors of Alaska. The company also emphasizes retaining loyal and dependable key personnel, which includes several McCormick family members.

While those strategies may be typical among many businesses, the McCormick family’s companies take a slightly different approach in three areas of their business strategy. NCS only chooses construction projects with remote access. NCS restricts its focus to projects where the majority of the work is repetitive and narrow in scope, similar to other projects it has completed. NCS limits the number of projects in progress for more concentrated control by the company’s senior managers.

“The kinds of things we like to do take some creativity, especially in regard to logistics,” Ron McCormick explained. “We like things that are challenges but still in our scope. It takes the application of experience and knowledge to successfully complete a task.”

Not unlike solving a puzzle, McCormick admits.

“I’m more comfortable with a task...
most people wouldn’t touch,” he said.

But he doesn’t take on those tasks alone. Along with his son and brother, there’s his son-in-law, nephew and other family members, including his wife of some 40 years and co-founder of SFP, who handles the office operations at the company’s facility in Coos Bay, Ore., where Ron and Sue McCormick are based.

“I don’t do anything without talking to her,” Ron McCormick said.

Ron said his son is the company’s sounding board on all business decisions. “Garrett is the calming wind in any storms we encounter.”

Roger McCormick is the construction manager and superintendent. He provides the field leadership at most projects. Marc McCormick is a longtime employee and earned his position as foreman and assistant superintendent with hard work and dedication. Son-in-law Jerod Holcomb is office manager at the company’s Salem, Ore. office.

Ron and Sue McCormick have four grandchildren. The oldest, Tucker, 12, was on the work site at Selawik.

“He loved it there,” Ron McCormick said.

For McCormick, it isn’t possible to separate family and business.

“It’s family,” McCormick said of the SFP companies. “There’s a culture of working really hard but being forthright and having a great time. We have a real passion for what we do. It’s part of our life. It’s not a job, and we enjoy the heck out of it.”

McCormick said he was pleased that at the recent AGC conference in Anchorage, he experienced that same passion for the industry from AGC leaders like John McKinnon, Dick Cattanach, Sam Robert Brice and Dave Cruz, who each stopped by Alpine Lumber & Building Products booth to thank the McCormicks for their participation in the conference trade show. While it was Alpine Lumber’s first vendor booth at the conference, it isn’t likely to be the last.

“We received a lot of benefit, more than I expected. The networking was phenomenal. It was a great event and I’m glad we did it,” McCormick said. “On top of all that, it was a lot of fun.”

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Victoria Naegele is an Alaska writer who lives near Palmer.
Employee relations 101

Blast through the wall of human resource confusion

You can search the Internet for days and find Web site after Web site with information regarding the repercussions of poor leadership in a business and the results to the employer. We call it the fear factor. Nothing can replace treating your employees with dignity and respect. The Golden Rule still applies.

As a business owner what human resource hazards will cause issues for me?

A few common hazards are:

• Lack of policies and procedures to ensure all employees are treated equally
• Lack of basic job descriptions
• Classification of non-exempt employees as exempt
• Classification of an employee as an independent contractor
• Not understanding what “at-will” employment means to your business
• Inconsistent application of policies, treating one employee more favorably than another, for example
• Lack of documentation to support your decisions
• Failure to address performance/behavior deficiencies immediately
• Waiting too long to terminate a poor employee

Why would not having policies and procedures create concerns? Because as human beings we live in a civilized society with rules, and employees want their place of employment to have rules. Policies lay those out, both positive and negative. Your policies tell the employee what they need to know about your company and what they can expect.

Why would you need a job description? This document describes the responsibilities of the employee. How can an employee be an effective member of your team if you don’t tell them what you expect them to do? Job descriptions are living documents and are only a basic outline. They don’t need to be complex or complicated.

Misclassifying employees can cause liability to your company as the Fair Labor Standards Act determines if employees are eligible for overtime. If you fail to pay appropriately, your employee may visit the local Department of Labor office and file a complaint against your business. This means huge headaches for you. (How do triple damages sound, just for a start?) Do make sure you classify your employees appropriately.

Classifying employees as independent contractors is commonly used by many small businesses to avoid deducting and paying federal, state and locally mandated taxes. Unless you are sure the person meets the federal tests to be an independent contractor, don’t do it. It may bring you more headaches than you ever thought possible, and who said dealing with the IRS is fun?

At-will employment is a concept recognized in almost all states. You can terminate the employee with or without cause and with or without notice. The employee can terminate their employment with or without cause and with or without notice. As an employer this notice should be in your handbook, application and other relevant documents. You should never terminate an employee without justification. Your best defense is to document, document, and did I mention document?

Inconsistent application of policies may ruin your business and ensure failure. Employees expect to be treated fairly, and The Golden Rule is leadership at its finest.

Documentation takes too much time? Personnel files are the beginning of the documentation trail and should include the application for employment, any performance assessments (if you do them), attendance records and any agreements you ask the employee to sign. If you fail to document employment issues, you have nothing to prove your version of the truth. Woe to the company that can’t supply the evidence of what they have told or advised employees.

Confronting employees about workplace deficiencies is difficult and takes true leadership. It’s likely the hardest task a manager or supervisor will ever perform. It’s easier to do nothing and hope the problem goes away or doesn’t repeat. This very seldom is the case. The quicker you address concerns, the less likely the behavior is to reoccur. Address both positive and negative issues.

Waiting too long to terminate a poor employee only causes other issues. Your employees all know who is pulling their weight. If you have done everything possible to make a positive change to the employee’s performance/behavior, then you need to cut your losses and let the employee go. Companies experience far fewer repercussions when they allow employees to leave with dignity and respect.

Lawsuits are some of the biggest human resources risks companies face today—especially when profit margins have decreased and the nation is facing record high unemployment.

A few issues that can cause nightmares for your business are:

• Employees pilfering company documents and trade secrets
• Sending inappropriate text or e-mail messages that create a sexual or hostile environment
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The Alaska ConTrAcTor

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• Wage and hour claims
• Age discrimination claims
• Amendments to the Americans with Disabilities Act
• Associational discrimination
• Retaliation claims
• Lack of succession planning
• Ignoring employees’ complaints or concerns
• Exposure from social networking sites

Even companies that do everything right, from a human resource perspective, are not immune, but they incur less risk than companies that ignore human resource as a core part of their business.

Barbara Stallone is a partner in The Human Resource Umbrella; an Anchorage-based human resource consulting company. If you have questions you would like answered in future columns, email Barbara@HRUmbrella.com, or (907) 727-2111. The Human Resource Umbrella, LLC is a member of AGC.

This column provides information about the law designed to help users safely cope with their own legal needs. But legal information is not the same as legal advice – the application of law to an individual’s specific circumstances. Although we go to great lengths to make sure our information is accurate and useful, we recommend you consult a lawyer if you want professional assurance our information, and your interpretation of it, is appropriate to your particular situation.
By Tracy Kalytiak

Denis Wiesenburg knew for a long time the University of Alaska Fairbanks’ fisheries faculty and students in Juneau needed a new building. But it was an elevator ride that finally convinced other university officials the building was inadequate.

“Our chancellor was new; we brought him to Juneau to meet our faculty, tour the buildings in which we were working,” said Wiesenburg, dean of UAF’s School of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences. “We were all in that elevator going up to see the labs and offices on the third floor. But the elevator wouldn’t get there; it was just too old. It would almost make it, and then go back to the basement. On its third time in the basement, someone pried open the door so we could get out.”

Five years later, UAF scientists, faculty and graduate students do their research in an $18-million, three-story, 30,000-square-foot facility at Lena Point, about 50 yards away from the new federal National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration research facility. The total project cost of the UAF facility at Lena Point was $26.5 million, Wiesenburg said.

Groundbreaking took place April 20, 2006. A NOAA subcontractor did facility site preparation at the UAF site and NOAA then used that area from April 2006 to February 2007 for project storage and crew parking. Kiewit Building Group Alaska Area began putting up the building in April 2007 and completed construction of the UAF facility in October 2008.

J.E. Dunn Construction was the general contractor for construction of the new $34-million NOAA facility, which replaced a 50-year-old building. The $51 million in appropriated money for that building also paid for its environmental assessment and building a road to the facility.

Steve Ignell, deputy director of Auke Bay Laboratory at NOAA’s Ted Stevens Marine Research Institute, says the old building wasn’t very energy efficient, had inappropriate laboratory space and was a difficult place in which to maintain air quality. Small outbuildings and a few trailers were used to augment the larger buildings.
"The location was nice, but we had people crammed into all sorts of nooks and crannies," Ignell said. "Obviously we were straining our capacities and a new facility was warranted."

One hundred people work at NOAA's facility, which is located on 22 acres at Lena Point. NOAA has a lease with UAF that allowed the university to erect a building there, Ignell said.

"From a mission-related point of view, we are closely connected," he said. "About a third of the people who work here have their degree from UAF, and in addition to our numerous collaborative projects, we have extensive field and laboratory work suitable for training their students. It's a great fit for both institutions, and the co-location fosters that."

The work done by NOAA and UAF is key because of the impact fisheries have on Alaska's economy.

Sport fishing generates an estimated $1.6 billion in total sales, $548 million in total income and 15,879 jobs, according to a 2007 University of Alaska Anchorage study. Commercial fishing generates $5.8 billion in total sales, $1.75 billion in total income and 78,519 jobs.
“We do stock assessments and habitat impact analyses,” Ignell said. “The analyses are used in the establishment of harvest levels by the management agencies.”

Wiesenburg says fisheries are incredibly important to Alaska.

“What we do in that building is train the next generation of leaders in the state,” he said. “We have four different fisheries degrees. The scientists who are studying the fisheries are here and we’re providing an educated population and workforce for the future.”

Wiesenburg says most of the graduate students in UAF’s SFOS’ Fisheries program are educated in Juneau. Among graduate students, 70 percent stay and work in Alaska after receiving their degrees, he said. Of those, 37 percent find work with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and another 20 percent work for federal agencies like NOAA or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. “We really feel we’re serving the work force and economy of this state,” he said.

Shannon Atkinson, UAF’s interim director and professor in the fisheries division, studies the life cycle of a variety of marine animals, including Cook Inlet belugas, Steller sea lions and corals. She’s learning why some populations fail to adapt to change in their environment, how the animal body adjusts to change and how change makes animals behave.

Atkinson says the new facility at Lena Point makes it possible to raise the level of research and service. Nine UAF fisheries faculty members and 50 graduate students work in the new building.

“It’s a wonderful place to work,” she said. “We have a teaching laboratory with movable fume hoods to bring down over a sample so you can manipulate the hood and lighting to do special dissections. Someone can do a web-cam dissection of a squid here in Juneau and someone up in Nome can be watching it. We’ve gone very universal in our approach to teaching.”

The UAF building shares a pump building with NOAA that brings in seawater from Favorite Channel and lets it flow down to both facilities. The water is used in tanks where animals and fish are held in captivity. The two facilities also share a sewage system.

Seawater is pumped into the SFOS facility and used in circulating research tanks, as well as for cooling the building. Aaron Steelman, Kiewit’s project manager, said in a written release.

“This project also involved the integration of buckling restrained braced frames into the structural design,” Steelman stated. “These BRBFs greatly reduced gusset connection size and are allowed for more useable floor space.”

Steelman said mechanical and electrical components ensure proper ventilation and air pressures in the facility’s 11 lab spaces while allowing for user comfort in other parts of the facility.

“You might be handling hazardous chemicals like formalin in some parts of the building and want to make sure it’s isolated from other parts of the building,” Wiesenburg said.

The facility includes a hazardous storage building, exterior freezers, seawater supply and waste connections to the nearby NOAA facility and an emergency generator, Steelman said. The lab space includes teaching, analytical and seawater laboratories, all with unique electrical and telecommunication requirements.

The lab spaces can be used for a multitude of scientific disciplines, ranging from computer labs for statistical analysis to wet labs with a running seawater system and saltwater research tanks.

“Some things you can share a lab with, but some uses aren’t compatible,” Wiesenburg said. “You can’t gut fish and do high-precision genetics work in the same lab. You need some space designed specifically for the work you have to do.”

Tracy Kalytiak is an Alaska writer who lives near Palmer.
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We Care.
Last year, AGC of Alaska celebrated its 60th anniversary. Very few folks in our organization are still around from that time – a full decade ahead of Alaska’s statehood – but the minutes from that first meeting say it was a need to negotiate a uniform labor agreement with the Building and Construction Trades Union that led to the formation of AGC of Alaska.

Representatives from six general contractors met in Seattle Sept. 27, 1948, and decided to create an Alaska chapter. The six – Stock & Grove; M. P. Munter Company; Morrison-Knudsen Co.; S. Birch and Sons Construction Co.; C. F. Lytle Company; and Green Construction Company – were all national AGC members with contracts in Alaska. When the national AGC organization granted a charter for an Alaska chapter in December 1948, no one could have imagined all the other benefits it would offer members six decades later.

One of the more important benefits the organization provides – and perhaps one of the most difficult to quantify – is that of government watchdog and industry advocate.

We do this at every level – from the local government, Alaska Legislature and U.S. Congress, to state and federal regulatory agencies – to affect positive change where needed and prevent negative impacts where possible.

Many of you personally support the AGC Political Action Committee with the purchase of PAC raffle tickets. (Of course, some of you were asked to purchase a ticket when your cell phone conveniently rang during an AGC event!) The funds raised from the annual raffle support candidates for the Alaska Legislature who support the construction industry and indicate their understanding that unnecessary government regulation is harmful to our industry, business development and job growth in our state.

Thanks to the support of a handful of dedicated members, the “49ers,” AGC of Alaska maintains active efforts in Juneau throughout the legislative session to keep a finger on the pulse of activities that can develop very quickly.

AGC members frequently travel to Juneau and other districts around the state, meeting with agencies and elected officials to work on issues and regulations, and to further develop strong working relationships between owners and industry. Additionally, AGC members travel as a group to Juneau in February each year for the “Legislative Fly-In” to meet with the administration and legislators in small teams to relay our legislative priorities in person.

We have numerous other important AGC committees, subcommittees and task forces that work on issues with state regulatory agencies, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and labor unions on behalf of the industry as a whole.

With the clout of representing more than 600 Alaska member companies and with these advocacy efforts, we have managed to effectively earn the ear of legislators, administrations and the public for many important issues, projects and educational objectives.

Ongoing legislative objectives continue to promote a healthy capital budget for funding projects that promote economic and resource development, and help create an efficient and safe transportation system.
For many years AGC recognized a looming crisis in meeting the workforce requirements for the industry's future. With government help, a tremendous effort has been funneled into public relations campaigns to improve the industry's image, reintroduce vocational education back into schools, and develop post-secondary education for construction management.

The downward trend is starting to turn around and many young people are purposely choosing one path or another into the construction industry.

We are a statewide organization, yet we find our members face many different issues depending on their locations. As municipal and borough governments address controversial problems, such as the Municipality of Anchorage’s rewriting of the Title 21 Land Use Code, construction noise during the summer in Anchorage, or gravel mining in the Mat-Su Borough, the AGC and the local members work together to make sure the construction industry’s voice is heard in the debates.

Our national organization, AGC of America, supports our chapter and our members in a variety of ways, from education and safety to contract documents, technology advancements and national construction news. Some of the most important work they do is to represent the construction industry in Congress and with federal agencies.

Capitol Hill’s newspaper, The Hill, lists AGC as the only commercial construction industry association on its “Top Lobbyists of 2009” list. It was cited specifically for its work in “crafting” the economic stimulus package.

Nationally, AGC is also deeply involved with the current health care reform debate, Employee Free Choice Act and cap-and-trade legislation. Beyond just opinion, they can back up their opposition with extensive economic studies that show the harm to our industry. They are actively supporting the Clean Water Infrastructure Financing Act and reauthorization of the federal transportation bill.

It’s like that old saying, “together everyone achieves more.” By working together AGC members nationally and locally are able to accomplish what none could individually.
Aurora Construction Supply Inc. primarily provides specialty products for the construction industry.

To illustrate the broad range of items the company supplies, President Dick Engebretson used the example of a school project where the company supplied chalkboards, tack boards, projection screens, doors and door hardware, expansion joints, corner guards, toilet accessories, toilet partitions and room signs.

Specialty products provide the fine-tuning end of construction, or the final touch, he said.

Ever since Aurora Construction Supply began operating as an on-budget, on-time, on-point business in Fairbanks in 1978, Engebretson said the company has been a member of Associated General Contractors of Alaska.

The membership has been a benefit to the business, Engebretson said, in three specific ways.

First, before the electronic age, members had access to The Plans Room, when bidding for and researching projects. “Hard copies were available to review at the AGC office, and plans/specs could be checked out for a night or a weekend,” Engebretson said. “Rules were strict about returning what was checked out and privilege could be lost for non-compliance. This helped ensure that everyone had an equal chance to bid.”

As president of a smaller company, Engebretson said AGC has great medical insurance for members. “Being able to take advantage of group rates is huge for a small firm.”

And the third benefit, networking. “Getting involved, serving on committees, participating in seminars, attending board meetings,” Engebretson said. “It’s amazing how far that goes in your business over time.”

Dick and Barbara Engebretson are the backbone of the company. “Aurora Construction Supply Inc. would not be without her,” he said.
Married 50 years, the couple routinely attends industry specific trade shows out of state and has attended the AGC National Convention for the past 10 years.

Currently, in its 33rd year of operation, Aurora is going strong and remains focused on its primary mission, customer service. Or, as Engebretson describes it, “seeing a sale through from beginning to end.”

Each step of the process is important, he said.

“If I’m successful in the bidding process, my goal is to get submittals in for approval in a timely manner, then get approved materials shipped timely to meet the contractor’s schedule. If there are problems along the way – and there are always problems here and there – address them, take care of them, [and] get them resolved.”

“By doing this,” Engebretson said, “customers don’t hesitate to do business with us in the future.”

Aurora Construction Supply has worked on projects from Kaktovik to Barrow to Ketchikan and beyond.

“Aurora Construction Supply Inc. would not be without Barbara.”

“In other words, all over the state of Alaska,” Engebretson said. Because Aurora specializes in specialized materials, the company is asked to work on every type of project, including office buildings, hospitals, schools and remodel projects. The company has been in the business long enough, it’s now providing materials to renovate schools that it helped construct new.

One of the company’s most powerful tools is Engebretson himself. Each project the company works on benefits from his personal experience working in the field, his keen insight and application knowledge regarding field situations.
“When a guy from the job site or a project manager calls with an issue or a question, I am usually able to visualize what he’s talking about. I feel I’ve gained an advantage by having worked in the field,” he said.

John Anderson, Vice President of Roger Hickel Contracting Inc. in Anchorage has worked with Engebretson and Aurora Construction since the mid 1970s.

“Before the existence of voicemail, cell phones, fax machines, e-mail, instant messaging, etc., staying up-to-date on orders placed with Dick had its challenges, but we always found a way to make it work for both of us,” he said.

“Dick follows up on orders better than any other vendor I have worked with,” Anderson said. “If he needs to work nights and weekends to make things work right he does it. He may not always be the cheapest first cost, but he will get product delivered to you in the agreed-upon timeframe and at the agreed-upon price.”

As a customer, Anderson said he’s often benefited from Aurora Construction’s commitment to sell specialty products backed by friendly customer service. He said that’s what makes the Fairbanks business so successful.

“Customer service, customer service, customer service with a hearty laugh, a grin, a twinkle of the eye thrown in for good measure.”

Aurora Construction’s three-decades of building Alaska inform the bids it makes and decisions about how to get the work done.

“Over the years I’ve developed a good relationship with architectural firms throughout the area,” Engebretson said. “Sometimes they call me for information and recommendations. Sometimes I call them if I believe a specified product isn’t going to work in a particular application.”

This type of specialized, personal commitment to each project and each customer have helped Aurora Construction build a reputation for quality that should help it thrive long into the future.

Jessica Bowman is an Alaska writer who lives in Anchorage.
There’s never been a better time to consider ADR agreements for employee disputes

Alaska may be far removed from the Lower 48, but we are not insulated from its economic challenges. Local newspaper headlines report layoffs and hiring freezes with some regularity. Nearly all sectors of industry in Alaska, including construction, are tightening belts and following a “mean and lean” operations strategy. This means it’s more difficult for a terminated employee to find another job. A disgruntled employee, unable to find other employment, is more likely to consider a wrongful termination suit against employers forced to downsize. Litigation is costly and time consuming. Employment litigation in particular can take on a life of its own because employees are personally invested and cases are often emotionally driven. Add these factors to the glacial speed of litigation, and defense fees can outrun the dollar value of a case.

Mandatory arbitration of employment disputes offers swift, fair and cost-effective resolution of employee claims. Fortunately, mandatory arbitration (or mediation) of non-union employment disputes is enforceable in Alaska, and proven to be a valuable method of dispute resolution.

Arbitration is a process in which a neutral third party renders a final binding decision after a hearing at which both parties have an opportunity to be heard. It is more or less a trial, only without protracted pretrial deadlines and extended trial dates. Most trials are set at least one year out; most arbitration cases are heard and decided within months.

Arbitration is cost effective and less intrusive to business operations, but there is another less obvious benefit – it allows management to “fight the good fight.” The costs and risks associated with jury trials often compel companies to make the business decision to settle a case, rather than try it to verdict, even when the facts and law weigh in their favor. Arbitration streamlines the fact-gathering process and provides for a prompt hearing on the merits, so companies can vigorously defend cases that do not call for compromise.

The risk associated with litigation is a good segue to another benefit of arbitration – reduced volatility. Arbitration cases are conducted by a single person, or panel, but when a jury is selected in an employment case, chances are it will consist of more employees than employers. Jurors tend to put themselves in the shoes of the employee-plaintiff and focus on the fairness of the employer’s actions – not the business necessity behind the reduction in force or the performance problems that drove the decision to terminate.

In the arbitration process, because the focus is on the facts as applied to the law, there’s less opportunity for the emotions involved in a tough business decision to taint the outcome of the case.

The specifics of an enforceable arbitration agreement are beyond the scope of this article. They are not complicated, but must comply with certain requirements dictated by state and federal law.

Arbitration may not be the panacea to all human resource concerns, but it offers at least one cost-effective alternative to the high-stakes gamble of a jury trial.

Danielle M. Ryman is an attorney with DeLisio Moran Geraghty & Zobel.

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It is well known and generally accepted that the sooner we can get an injured employee back on the job, the better the chances are we can reduce claim costs, reduce the number of lost days and reduce the chance the employee will never return to work.

We usually have a two-week period to get injured workers back, after which the chances they will return gradually decreases. After two years off the job, the chance of an employee returning is almost zero.

So what happens after two weeks? People discover daytime television. They lose contact with their daily routine and co-workers. They start to pay attention to those attorney advertisements on TV and billboards. They start to feel more like “patients” than “employees.” After a bit more time they discover although a burden, they can live on 66 percent of their previous income. And of course, some people have been quite seriously injured and require a long rehabilitation time.

Smart employers will develop and implement a modified return-to-work, or MRTW, process to get injured workers back into the workplace as soon as possible.

It starts with written job descriptions. Employers need to identify the exact physical requirements of the job so when the injured worker receives clearance from their health care provider that they can perform light duty, you have exact numbers to work with. For instance if someone’s job is surveyor, but they have to lift 60 pounds twice per week, you can find another co-worker to do the lift.

You also need to identify all the tasks (not job titles but tasks) that can be performed by someone on light duty. This works best by brainstorming with everyone in the organization. With a little creativity, and an open mind, you should be able to come up with hundreds of potential tasks.

When you know your injured worker is going to see a physician due to a serious injury, give them papers to take along. A “Dear Doctor” letter informs the physician you have a MRTW program, and are quite anxious to have your employee back to work no matter how light the duty. The second is the attending physician’s recommendations that clearly state how much bending, lifting, twisting, standing or sitting they will allow.

Then match the attending physician’s recommendations with your list of tasks and start calling job sites (if the worker cannot be accommodated at his/her own job site – this can be due to contract reasons, clients, remote site assignment or just plain too small – but the best place is at his/her own job site).

Once you have identified the specific tasks, you will draft an MRTW plan. This written document has a beginning date and an ending date, rate of pay (usually less than the regular wages) and conditions along the way (such as follow-up doctor visits or therapy).

It is critical this agreement be in writing, signed by all parties and has an ending date. Without these elements, you are running the very real risk of creating an unintentional permanent Americans with Dissabilities Act accommodation. All of a sudden (without documenta-
tion) you may have a new position that does nothing but file reports and answer the phone. Oops!

The plan is then reviewed at regular intervals. It can be renewed, but must be in writing. Then when the worker is ready to return to regular duties he or she must return to the physical therapist and pass a final return-to-work assessment before being cleared to return to work.

At that time the plan ends, and be sure to notify the worker’s compensation carrier as the disability portion of the claim is now complete.

Impact

The overall cost impact of MRTW is difficult to fully calculate, as there are many issues involving morale, goodwill and reducing potentially large losses. The benefit of keeping an injured worker in the work force, fully socialized and responsible for dressing and working each day will reduce claim cost substantially. Again, exact dollar figures are not possible, but it is a safe bet a good MRTW plan should reduce disability costs 25 percent to 50 percent. This can create savings from hundreds of dollars to hundreds of thousands of dollars — depending on the number of employees and claims.

Cost of implementation

There is no cost to have a good MRTW program in place. It’s free to develop the forms, meet with project managers and determine a strategy.

Under the most inexpensive circumstances, a specific plan is developed that matches the remunerative wages required by the worker’s compensation claim — in other words, you simply pay them to work, instead of having the comp carrier pay disability. In this case it is like “free” labor, and carries no additional costs.

In many cases, however, the prevailing wage for the work performed or the value of the work received will exceed the disability payments. Then it will actually cost more than disability, but you are also receiving value for labor dollars paid, so it is not really an expense.

Chris Ross is the Director of NMS Training Systems in Anchorage, which offers assistance to clients with advanced injury reduction techniques, cultural change, leadership, hiring and selection, safety and health compliance, risk management and strategic planning.
AGC offers 1st dance class for members

While AGC of Alaska has made a name for itself offering all sorts of training year-round, in fall 2009 for the first time the professional association sponsored dance classes for members. For years, AGC of Alaska’s annual dinner dance has been the hottest ticket of the social season, according to AGC of Alaska’s special projects coordinator Margaret Empie.

Ticket sales set a new record this year when all 570 tickets to the dance sold in 17 minutes, she said.

It was Executive Director John MacKinnon’s idea for AGC of Alaska to partner with member Michelle Holland, who owns Holland Roofing Co. and a new business called Alaska Dance Promotions, to offer four free group dance lessons for members who expected to attend the dinner dance.

Couples practiced basic social dances that would be suitable for the styles of music played at the annual dinner dance, Holland said.
Instructor Rick Ruiz leads a dance class for six couples from AGC before the annual dinner dance at the new Alaska Dance Promotions studio.
AGC 2009 Conference and Awards

AGC of Alaska celebrated the industry with awards for construction excellence and safety at their annual conference November 11-14, 2009. An overflow crowd at the annual dinner dance at Hotel Captain Cook watched as the state’s largest construction association honored members’ achievements in 2009.

This year, two individuals were awarded AGC’s highest honor, the Hard Hat Award, First National Bank Alaska’s Chairman Dan Cuddy and Alice Ebenal Ellingson of Ace General Contractors of Fairbanks. Cuddy accepted his hard hat and congratulations for his long support of the construction industry in Alaska and his company’s long-standing membership and involvement in AGC. Ellingson was president of the AGC Alaska Chapter in 2004 and was the first woman president of an AGC chapter nationwide.

Alaska AGC also announced the following other award winners:
- The Stan Smith Volunteer of the Year award went to Teri Gunter of Senco Alaska. Gunter said, “I was truly honored to receive such a prestigious award. I just got to know Stan Smith before he died, and I hope to live up to even a little of what Stan has done.” Gunter, who was one of the founders of the Associates Council and co-chaired the 2009 AGC convention, praised AGC Executive Director John MacKinnon and staff. “Whether you are a big company or a small one, John always makes time for you,” said Gunter. “The staff is a great bunch of people to work with.”
- The Anchorage Supplier of the Year award went to Ron Funatake of Fasteners and Fire Equipment.
- The Anchorage Associate of the Year award was given to American Fast Freight, Anchorage.
- AGC also awarded two 50-year membership plaques. They went to Ml. McKinley Fence and Andy Milner.

The construction award winners with their hard hat awards.
Alaska USA Insurance Brokers sponsored the 2009 Excellence in Construction Awards, and the winning firms and projects were as unique as Alaska’s challenging environment.

Neeser Construction, Inc. (NCI) was selected for the “Meeting the Challenge of a Job, Over $15,000,000 Vertical Construction” award for the $110 million, 200,000 square foot Dena’ina Civic and Convention Center.

The design/build project was a public-private partnership that employed more than 1,000 trades people and vendors on site and engaged more than 30 subcontracting firms, almost all Alaska based.

The convention center project was completed ahead of schedule and under budget. Despite a slow economy, the Dena’ina has booked millions of dollars more in events in its first year than planned, and 220,000 people have been through the doors.

The construction management and crews faced several unique challenges. The building fills a city block from sidewalk to sidewalk in all directions. This required materials to be staged remotely and significant coordination of deliveries to avoid mix-ups, shortfalls, and conflicts of delivery times. Protected pedestrian walkways along 7th and 8th Avenues and F and G Streets had to be designed, constructed and maintained.

The NCI team used a number of innovative techniques, processes and materials. Staff traveled to manufacturing facilities. Then they toured several civic and convention centers where new ideas and products were showcased before and during the design phase of the work. A satellite supported “Total Station” layout system was used for civil and structural building layout for pinpoint accuracy. The structural steel supplier/fabricator used a new computerized design tool that provides a 3-D picture of the fabricated structure before a piece of steel ever arrives on the

Above, Neeser Construction takes honors in the “Over $15 million” category for the Dena’ina Convention Center in Anchorage. Right, Teri Gunter accepts the Stan Smith Volunteer of the Year Award from John Mackinnon.
building site. The latest technologies in power-actuated framing tools were used with structural designed fasteners to meet or exceed the engineered design. NCI also used a full fleet of newer scissor lifts, extend-a-boom lifts and equipment to erect and construct the building in a time effective and safe manner.

"The NCI team was unwavering in their dedication to quality, safety, and timeliness," said Julie Saupe, President & CEO of the Anchorage Convention and Visitors Bureau. "The development and design/build experts at NCI were the foundation for this facility to become a reality."

The winner of the "Meeting the Challenge of a Job, Under 55,000,000 Vertical Construction" was UNIT Company for the Anchorage Municipal Light & Power (ML&P) Plant 2 Cooling Water Supply Failure Repair project.

UNIT was called in when a catastrophic failure shut down a major power plant and electricity producer. During testing of its cooling water lines, ML&P had a failure in one of its huge 36" cooling water pipes that resulted in extensive damage that undermined the building foundation as well as breaking the concrete slab and causing the slab on grade to be pushed up as much as eight inches above its initial elevation. Many pieces of equipment were pushed out of their correct alignment. UNIT received a call within an hour of the event and mobilized labor and equipment on the same day notice to proceed was given. UNIT quickly analyzed the specialized trades required to perform the repair work and selected firms based upon their availability and local resources. They were quickly able to meet the needs of ML&P. The retrofit work was performed seven days a week to get the plant back on line.

Top, the Vendor Room offers some driving challenges with a simulator. Center, All About AGC participants include two career counselors from the Anchorage School District. Left, economist Neal Fried talks about economic forecasts.
The project required UNIT to incorporate elaborate dust control measures to minimize the impact of construction activities in an active power generation facility. UNIT maintained a close working relationship with plant operators to minimize any impact the repair activities had on the facilities that remained in operation.

UNIT was able to rapidly solve complex issues including caverns underneath the building large enough for people to walk through and soil underneath structural footings that were forced out by the tremendous water pressure. While UNIT was mobilized, ML&P also directed UNIT to complete upgrades to the existing plant including improving a wastewater treatment tank and adding drywells around the building.

Granite Construction Company was given the award for “Meeting the Challenge of a Job, Over $3,000,000 Transportation, Marine, Heavy, Earthmoving” for the Glenn-Bragaw Interchange, a $30 million design/build project.

Prior to any work occurring, Granite Construction, the Alaska Department of Transportation, HDL Engineers (the independent quality control firm), and DOWL-HKM (the project designer) all met for a professionally facilitated partnering meeting. During this meeting common goals of safety, quality, communication and schedule were identified.

The project began in 2007 with the demolition of several homes and office buildings to clear the footprint for the future interchange that would include a multi-span bridge carrying Bragaw Street traffic over the Glenn Highway. Working closely with their design partner DOWL-HKM, Granite was able to value engineer key areas of the project.

The 2008 season began with the removal of an existing pedestrian overpass, immediately followed by the construction of 19,000 square feet of mechanically stabilized earth walls (M.S.E.) and a multi-span bridge.

Challenges arose several times throughout the construction including the discovery of contaminated soils. In each instance the team came together and a solution was developed that emphasized shared goals. The project also utilized a number of innovative construction techniques, including the use of EFCO traveling forms in the construction of the pedestrian tunnel. Directional drilling was used to relocate utilities without disrupting traffic flows. The use of a paved onsite diversion rerouted traffic while continuing construction.

Top right: Another successful convention, says Executive Director John MacKinnon.
Center, Tiffany and Robby Capps and Dana Cruz enjoy the President’s Reception. Right, AGC America President Doug Pruitt and wife Becky and AGC Alaska President Sam Robert Brice and wife Theresa join John MacKinnon at the reception.
Granite worked alongside ML&P engineers to devise a series of structures to allow increased height and span of existing electric lines. During the relocation of water services Granite pioneered the use of HDPE, a product, then new to Alaska, that was more durable, repairable and cost-effective than traditional ductile iron.

Granite credits the flexibility of the design/build process which allowed the project team to revise and refine the original design during the course of construction to respond to changing conditions and community feedback. This resulted in an outstanding final product that the community now enjoys.

Roger Hickel Contracting received the award for the “Meeting the Challenge of a Job, Under $3,000,000 Transportation, Marine, Heavy, Earthmoving” category for the Kincaid Summer Improvements, a multifaceted project which included construction of seven natural turf soccer fields, a soccer stadium and a snowmaking system. As a result of these improvements, World Cup events and US Olympic Qualifying trials are already being planned for the park.

In addition to serving as the construction manager, Roger Hickel Contracting also served on a pro-bono basis during pre-construction design and value-engineering exercises. Although initially over budget, through a close partnering relationship with Land Design North and the Kincaid Project Group, the original project design was modified to accomplish the entire project’s original scope and intent, while also meeting a reduced budget.

The 18-acre project posed several challenges, including lead-con-
taminated material encountered at an abandoned firing lane. An artificial turf field was installed to safely encapsulate the lead and eliminate its potential as a source of lead contamination to the environment. This approach not only solved environmental concerns but will also extend the soccer season for local soccer players and enthusiasts.

In addition to working on a pro-bono basis during the pre-construction phases of this project, Roger Hickel Contracting made generous monetary and labor donations to the project.

American Marine Corporation continued their AGC award winning streak with their award for “Excellence in Construction for a Specialty Contractor: Transportation, Marine, Heavy, Earthmoving with Specialty Contractor as Sub-Contractor” for the Trading Bay Subsea Diffuser Installation Project.

This project involved marine, sea floor assembly of pipe sections, secured to the seafloor using articulating concrete anchor mats, to form a freshwater diffuser system for the discharge of treated process water.

The job required divers to work strictly by feel to position and then bolt the pipe sections to one another. Divers had to work quickly because of the water depth and extreme tides. The entire operation was conducted at sea, in a remote location, using a dive support vessel and landing craft. During the project Redoubt Volcano was erupting and producing significant ash fall in the operations area.

Despite the unique challenges involved, the project was completed early and under budget, with no occupational illnesses, no equipment or vessel damage and no equipment failure or downtime.

Top right, the Governor congratulates the Safety Award winners. Center, AGC Accounting Director Judy Montgomery and Hal Ingals share the moment of selling “one more PAC ticket.” Right, Vicki Hitzges speaks at the “How to Succeed in Business” symposium.
There were no discharges, releases, or spills during the course of the operation.

The award for “Excellence in Construction Award for a Specialty Contractor: Transportation, Marine, Heavy, Earthmoving with Specialty Contractor as Prime Contractor” went to Alaska Trailblazing, Inc. for the Portage Glacier Road Rock Slide removal project.

The project was the result of a naturally occurring rockslide at Portage Lake that placed about 50,000 cubic yards of rock across the road to Whittier in April 2009. Alaska Trailblazing read about the rockslide in the weekend newspaper and contacted the Alaska DOT Monday morning about obtaining some of the rock for their landscaping business. By 11 a.m. that day, their timely phone call resulted in a challenging, and rewarding, contract for Alaska Trailblazing.

By 1 p.m. they were mobilizing equipment to the site. They had to coordinate large pieces of heavy equipment and transport them to the jobsite under weight restrictions. Logistics were also a challenge, as the area was a “dead zone” for wireless and cell phone service.

Safety was also a challenge. Large fractured boulders the size of a motorhome had come down with smaller boulders and debris in a large unstable pile. The rock overhang left on the face of the mountain was also unstable. “While we were clearing debris, rocks kept falling from above,” said project manager Jason Kersten. DOT geologists determined that some of the rock overhang would need to be blasted. Alaska Trailblazing then hired a helicopter service and a blasting contractor to begin the work.

For thirty days, Alaska Trailblazing crews worked 16 to 24 hours a day to get the road open in time for the summer tourist season. On May 12, they opened a newly paved section of road for the first cruise ship arriving in Whittier that afternoon.

The “Sustainability in Construction Award,” a new category this year, went to DV Contracting Services, Inc. for the Fort Wainwright Railhead Facility, a
design/build railhead and truck loading facility for the U.S. Army Garrison at Fort Wainwright, Alaska.

The project required work in wetlands and rerouting an existing creek and the 58-acre site. Although Clear Creek was considered a derelict channel, DV Contracting and the Corps of Engineers environmental team felt the creek had a value to the surrounding ecosystem. These structural and environmental concerns eventually led to a wetlands permit modification, allowing the placement of fill into the wetlands area.

DV Contracting, its design team, DPW Master Planning, DPW Environmental and the Corps of Engineers agreed on building two force protection berms, totaling nearly 12 acres within the project footprint. The bio mat from Clear Creek at the rail loading facility was carefully removed and placed into the new creek bed to preserve the natural biological ecosystem.

“DV Contracting has assumed the integrity and work ethic developed by West Construction at its inception, and through its association with West Construction, we will continue to maintain its standard of excellence and safety on all future projects,” said CEO Bob West.

At the Marsh USA “Excellence in Safety” awards luncheon during the annual convention, the following companies received awards:

- **Small contractor**: Kiewit Building Group Inc., Anchorage
- **Medium contractor**: Jacobs Engineering Group, Anchorage
- **Large contractor**: Davis Constructors and Engineers Inc., Anchorage
- **Individual**: Steve Stuart, American Marine Corp., Anchorage
- **Associate Member**: Beacon Occupational Health and Safety Services, Anchorage

Conference photos by Danny Daniels

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**AGC AWARD WINNERS FOR 2009**

**Hard Hat Award**
AGC’s Top Award
- First National Bank Alaska
- Chairman Dan Cuddy
- Alice Ebenal Ellingson
- Ace General Contractors, Fairbanks

**Stan Smith Volunteer of the Year**
Teri Gunter
Senco Alaska, Inc., Anchorage

**Associate of the Year**
American Fast Freight, Anchorage

**Supplier of the Year**
Ron Funatake
Fasteners and Fire Equipment, Anchorage

**Marsh USA Excellence in Safety Awards**
- **Excellence in Safety**: Large Contractor
  - Davis Constructors and Engineers, Inc., Anchorage
- **Excellence in Safety**: Medium Contractor
  - Jacobs Engineering Group, Anchorage
- **Excellence in Safety**: Small Contractor
  - Kiewit Building Group, Inc., Anchorage
- **Excellence in Safety—Individual**: Steve Stuart, American Marine Corp., Anchorage

**Alaska USA Insurance Brokers Excellence in Construction Awards**
- **“Meeting the Challenge of a Job”**
  - Buildings Over $15 Million
    - Neeser Construction, Anchorage, for Denali Civic and Convention Center, Anchorage
  - Buildings Under $5 Million
    - Unit Company, Anchorage, for Municipal Light and Power, Anchorage

**Transportation, Marine, Heavy, Earthmoving Over $3 Million**
- Granite Construction Company, Anchorage, for the Glenn Bragaw Interchange
- Roger Hickel Contracting, Anchorage, for Kincaid Park Summer Improvements

**Specialty Contractor as Prime Contractor**
- Alaska Trailblazing, Inc., Anchorage, for Portage Glacier Road Rock Slide

**Specialty Contractor as Sub-Contractor**
- American Marine Corporation, Anchorage, for Trading Bay Subsea Diffuser Installation project
- DV Contracting Services, Inc. for Fort Wainwright Railhead project

**Fifty Year Membership Awards**
Mt. McKinley Fence
Andy Milner

Darl Schaff emcees the dinner dance for the 17th year.
AGC’s Successful 2009 Conference

Left, top to bottom:
George and Barbara Tuckness dance the night away; Nothing like working the chain gang; The Brothers Brady, Tim and Jim share conversation; Four lovely ladies looking for an evening’s fun; The AGC staff having a fun evening.

Right, top to bottom:
Sophie Minich speaking at an awards luncheon; Avery Horshel and Roxanna Horshel surround Bill Vaughan; Dick Cattanach, of CEF and Margaret Empie; AGC at the 49ers dinner; Herb Lang and Dale Mormon talk serious construction business; Paul French, Faby Membrilla and Jeff Dinwiddie at the 49ers event. Below, Karen and Roger Hickel enjoying a lighter moment.
CYCLE SWINGS: WHAT’S YOUR UPSIDE?

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History will be made in 2010 when BP Alaska begins drilling the longest wells ever attempted – some reaching six to eight miles from surface location to subsea formations – that contain an estimated 100 million barrels of recoverable oil.

The $1.5 billion Liberty project will chart new frontiers in ultra extended-reach drilling; a technology pioneered by BP on Alaska’s North Slope, and at Wytch Farm in the United Kingdom. Advances in drilling tools used down hole, such as measurement while drilling and drilling mud motors, have enabled these pioneering advances.

“Liberty has been a multi-disciplinary effort that spanned more than four years,” said Max Easley, the BP Alaska executive overseeing the project. “A key part of this was securing numerous permits from state and federal agencies, and working closely with North Slope community leaders to assure them we are developing the field responsibly with minimal environmental impacts. Despite all these challenges the project has moved steadily along; safely, on schedule, and within budget.”

The Liberty field was discovered in 1997. It is the first offshore project in Alaska fully located in federal waters. Drilling will occur from an existing satellite pad – called the Satellite...
Drilling Island – that is part of the BP-operated Endicott field. Endicott is located in the shallow waters of the Beaufort Sea about 15 miles east of Prudhoe Bay. The drilling island is connected to Endicott’s Main Production Island by a five-mile-long gravel causeway.

**Leveraging technology**

“Liberty’s design has eliminated the need for the construction of new processing facilities, an offshore drilling island or offshore pipeline,” says BP Alaska’s Darryl Luoma, the project’s general manager. “We plan to make use of the causeway and Endicott oil processing facilities to enhance safety, provide year-round overland access, maximize environmental protection and minimize the project’s footprint.”

To accommodate the Liberty drilling rig, camp, wells, manifolds and ancillary facilities, the drilling island was enlarged during 2009. Extensive improvements to the large, Sagavanirktok River Bridge were completed by Alaska Interstate Construction.

To handle the exceptional demands of rotating and moving a drill string in a well bore more than eight miles long, Parker Drilling Inc. fabricated the most powerful land-based rig ever for the task.

“The rig has to be able to apply an exceptionally high turning force to the drill pipe,” said Luoma. “Consequently, a key component in the new rig is the massive top drive, the device slung in the rig derrick to grip and rotate the drill pipe. This piece of equipment delivers more than two times the power requirement to turn the drill pipe as any other piece of equipment used on the North Slope. In fact, the power of the drive is the highest rated on any drill rig worldwide.”

The long wells will also require fluid pressures up to 7,500 pounds per square inch; compared with the 3,500 to 4,500 pounds per square inch of a typical Prudhoe Bay drilling operation.

The rig is outfitted for Arctic conditions, including low-temperature steel and thermal sound dampening insulation. Powered by natural gas, it is equipped with an integrated control system that provides centralized monitoring, command and management systems.

The rig will operate with a rotating crew of about 170 people, which include the mud contractor and those involved in directional drilling, mud logging, tubular running and BP supervision.

Last summer it took three weeks to barge the unassembled rig 3,300 miles from the manufacture’s site in Vancouver, Wash. to the Liberty site on the North Slope. Rig assembly began immediately and continues.

**Contractor support**

About 40 contractors have been involved in the Liberty project, including North Slope civil and construction work; camp fabrication; trucking and transportation; rig power module fabrication; engineering and consulting support; field seismic surveying;
The Liberty wells will reach down about two miles below the seabed, and extend out six to eight miles from the drilling rig to reach the reservoir. This would be like drilling a well from the Port of Anchorage to the New Seward / Huffman Road interchange.

camp operations; and maintenance and purchasing.

Beginning in January 2009, Liberty camp fabrication was performed in Anchorage by Builder’s Choice Inc. Last summer the completed modules were trucked to the North Slope via the Dalton Highway. Delta Development Group Inc. is the general contractor for on-site construction.

The three-story, 32,000-square-foot camp can accommodate 160 workers. It is a self-contained facility that includes kitchen and dining areas; 40 bathrooms; water/wastewater storage; an exercise area; a medical clinic; and conference and media rooms. Workers began occupying the camp in mid-July.

“We are very proud to have been a part of this $11-million project and appreciate BP’s commitment to local vendors,” said Mark Larson, BCI president. “The economic ripple effect of using local contractors and vendors is always quite significant within the state and its communities.”

Drilling training

While the Liberty drilling rig is being assembled, BP Alaska is gearing up for drilling operations to begin in 2010. Preparations include rig operations training at Parker Drilling’s Training Center in Anchorage. Opened in May 2009, the center is equipped with cutting-edge technology, including globally networked audiovisual tools, 3-D simulation, drilling, well control...
models of some of the industry’s newest rig designs and a staff of instructors with extensive industry experience.

Sean Mills, Parker’s drilling training manager, said the drilling rig simulator provides trainees with hands-on experience and teaches them to respond to real-life drilling situations.

“We’ve programmed the simulator with geologic and reservoir information that is specific to Liberty,” said Mills. “Trainees encounter realistic simulations of temperatures, pressures, penetration rates, pipe vibration, torque and drag, and other conditions as they work the simulator controls.”

**High-strength drilling pipe**

Liberty’s ultra-extended reach wells require tubulars that exceed regular Prudhoe-type specifications in size and strength. When the first shipment of pipe for Liberty and other BP Alaska North Slope drilling programs arrived at The Port of Anchorage in August 2009, it was the culmination of a year-long collaborative effort by BP, The Port of Anchorage, Japanese pipe manufacturer Sumitomo Metals, Sumitomo Corporation, its Alaska subsidiaries Tubular Solutions Alaska, and Unique Machine Inc.

“Traditional routes for drilling pipe and other tubulars were either through Houston or The Port of Everett in Washington state,” said Steve Sautel, BP Alaska’s logistics manager. “But in 2007, the federal government relaxed trade restrictions on Japanese steel mills, allowing for the importation of a wider range of products without heavy import duties.”

Sautel said shipping pipe and tubulars directly to The Port of Anchorage will greatly reduce transit times and save significantly on costs for Liberty and drilling programs in other North Slope fields.

Following processing by Unique Machine in Anchorage, primarily threading, drilling pipe destined for the North Slope is sent by Alaska Railroad to Fairbanks and then trucked to Prudhoe Bay via the Dalton Highway.

Oil production from Liberty is scheduled to begin in 2011, and will ramp up to a peak production of about 40,000 barrels per day. BP Alaska has 100 percent equity in the field and will be its operator.

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Writer Frank E. Baker is a communications consultant for BP Alaska and lives in Eagle River.
There’s a new breed of bear in Alaska and its claws carve out a big economic impact in the state. In 2005, the Base Closure and Realignment Commission decided to save tax dollars by combining 26 military installations into 12 new joint base installations. The purpose of this directive is to combine like services to increase efficiencies and save money.
Bristol Design Build Services LLC constructed the new Troop Medical Clinic on Fort Richardson.
There’s a new breed of bear in Alaska and its claws carve out a big economic impact in the state. In 2005, the Base Closure and Realignment Commission decided to save tax dollars by combining 26 military installations into 12 new joint base installations. The purpose of this directive is to combine like services to increase efficiencies and save money.

Elmendorf Air Force Base and Fort Richardson are among the installations that will be joined. On June 24, the Air Force will activate a new Wing designated the 673rd Air Base Wing (673 ABW) comprised of 5,600 support personnel from Elmendorf AFB and Fort Richardson. The name of the combined installation will be Joint Base Elmendorf Richardson, or JBER (pronounced J-Bear).

One might ask how the Air Force and Army can join when they have completely different missions.

“The Army and Air Force have worked together here in the Anchorage area since 1947,” said Air Force Col. Jeffery Vinger, commander of the provisional 673rd ABW. “All BRAC does is formalize a close working relationship that we’ve shared working together jointly under Alaskan Command all along.”

The Army and Air Force still have their defined roles and those will not change; only the organization providing installation management support to each of the services will change. Now the Air Force will provide support for both installations.

Both installations currently use military, civilians and contractors to perform common installation support functions such as law enforcement, fire and emergency services or environmental and facility maintenance, both use similar processes to accomplish those functions. The BRAC noted the installations share a common boundary and therefore have an opportunity to consolidate the execution of installation support functions, potentially realizing savings while also providing more consistent and effective support.

The BRAC directive expands what Elmendorf AFB and Fort Richardson have already been doing by working together to a greater level. Some areas where Elmendorf AFB and Fort Richardson have already consolidated and are working jointly include the fire department, the joint hospital, the joint military mall and
the joint mobility complex. Some of these have been joined for years so the arrangement is not new to Elmendorf AFB and Fort Richardson.

Within that support the Regional Contracting Office-Alaska (RCO-AK) on Fort Richardson and the 3rd Contracting Squadron (3 CONS) on Elmendorf AFB will combine functions to standup the new 673rd Contracting Squadron (673 CONS). The procurement functions for the Joint Base including U.S. Army Alaska Command (USARAK), Headquarters 11th Air Force, Headquarters Alaskan Command, other mission units on Elmendorf AFB and any tenants currently receiving contract support from either the RCO-AK or 3 CONS will be provided by this new 673 CONS organization.

Rest assured the new 673 CONS is up to the challenge to support approximately 12,000 military, 30,000 dependents, 4,000 civilian employees and 20,000 military retirees. The 673 CONS will also support businesses in the community and will be a huge part of the economic engine within the state of Alaska.

Currently, the value of goods and service contracts that will be part of the new squadron is more than $811 million with approximately $85 million spent annually on consumable goods.
The purpose of joining these two procurement offices is to save tax dollars by combining resources and contracts whenever possible and to synergistically improve contract support.

What does this mean to Alaska contractors? With the future consolidation of contracts will there be fewer opportunities for businesses to compete?

According to Lt. Col. Richard Elmore, Commander of the 3 CONS, “Consolidating contracts is one of the end results of joint bases’ purpose, however there are many unknowns with merging two installations, new requirements may emerge from the fallout and future new missions could result from the efficiencies of JBER. Also, for many of the contracts that will be consolidated, the contractor will need to hire additional personnel or subcontractors. So there will still be opportunities as before the merger.”

Recently Col. Vinger attended Chamber of Commerce meetings in Anchorage and the Mat-Su Borough to explain the mission of JBER in Alaska.

Business owners expressed great interest and valid concerns on the future of where JBER was headed. One key question was why? Vinger stated, “Implementation of joint basing allows the local installations to consider best practices that can free resources duplicated between the installations for other priorities. Through the use of best practices, the 673rd ABW will ensure war fighting capabilities of both
Air Force and Army mission units are preserved or enhanced.”

In other words JBER will improve the way we defend our nation and protect our nation’s interests.

Also of interest to local businesses was whether any contractors would lose jobs due to joint basing.

Vinger said, “All contracts will transfer intact as awarded. As each contract reaches its normal expiration, each will be looked at as they normally would and assessed for which ones can be consolidated and will be advertised and solicited as such to promote fair opportunities to the maximum extent possible in accordance with federal acquisition regulations.”

A follow-up question was how JBER will affect the common contractor?

“This merger will have a positive effect on contractors. Many contractors have contracts with both installations and as we all know, the differences in regulations, rules and such are vastly different,” said Vinger. “This often creates undue hardship on the contractor, thus causing additional costs to the contractor just to handle the differences. The merger will create one set of rules (from the Air Force) so the contractor will only deal with one standard, thus saving them resources and in turn driving down contract costs and ultimately saving tax dollars.”

A Mat-Su Borough businessman asked, now that service contracts will encompass both installations, thus bigger, larger service required, will they be opened up to large businesses where small businesses can’t compete fairly?

Vinger said federal acquisition regulations still apply.

“There will be no change in how we procure goods and services. As before, depending on the cost magnitude and complexity of the requirement, we must first offer to small businesses, so therefore small business in most cases will be the only ones competing.”

Another area of concern was where JBER money will be spent. Vinger said last year the military spent more than $20 million in the Mat-Su Borough and more than $190 million in the Anchorage area purchasing goods, services, infrastructure repairs and minor construction services.

Future new construction such as the new F-22 hangars and related buildings...
will continue to be administered by the Army Corps of Engineers, which will not be part of the new 673 ABW organization. Any future new investment dollars are not known at this time.

To facilitate joint base transition, Alaska Command Commander, Lt. Gen. Dana Atkins last year formed a one-of-a-kind enterprise team of subject matter experts from Elmendorf and Fort Richardson to ensure the merger happens smoothly and on time.

Atkins said, “It is imperative that we get this right the first time, it’s too important to our mission and too important to our people.”

The JBER Enterprise team has set up a hotline (384-JBER) for any questions or concerns.

One recent call asked, “Where will the combined contracting office be?”

The main contracting office will be located at the existing Air Force contracting office on Elmendorf AFB at building 10480. There will also be a store-front office located on Fort Richardson in the existing Regional Contracting Office in building 600. Contractors and customers will continue to have a seamless avenue to contracting specialists.

For contractors interested in doing business with JBER, the 673 CONS is currently constructing a new Web site. In the mean time, the Small Business Administration’s Procurement Technical Assistance Centers – online at www.ptacalaska.org – can assist with JBER and all other federal agencies. The 673 CONS will also be advertising all future requirements at www.fbo.gov, the Federal Business Opportunity Web site.

Joint basing is an innovative approach to finding better ways to use finite tax dollars. JBER will improve its processes for contractors to conduct business with the military, building better partnerships with the community, driving cost down and enhancing the defense of our nation. JBER is and will continue to be a driving force within the southcentral Alaska economy.

On June 24, there will be 5,600 new bears in Alaska, JBERs that is, protecting our nation in a better and more effective way, jointly.

Paris E. Everson is a Master Sergeant in the United States Air Force, 673rd ABW (Provisional) Contracting.
Recruit, train, employ – these three words are the mantra for partners in the urban Alaska Construction Academies. This is the fourth year for the academies, which help students and adults with little technical experience obtain basic skills and entry-level employment.

The goal is to serve industry by providing knowledgeable, motivated, entry-level employees, and to serve students and job seekers by allowing them to explore their aptitudes and interests under the guidance of experienced, hands-on instructors from the industry. An important part of the strategy is to increase the likelihood trainees will find jobs by tailoring instruction to the needs of local employers and providing referrals for job opportunities, often directly, but also through the Alaska Job Centers.

The urban academies in Fairbanks, Mat-Su, Anchorage, Kenai Peninsula, Juneau and Ketchikan are funded through the Construction Education Foundation by grants from the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development and the Alaska Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development.

By the end of June 2009 more than 3,400 middle and high school students had been exposed to the construction industry and/or received training in a construction-related course, and more than 400 adults completed one or more construction classes. By the end of July 2009 approximately 70 percent of adults were employed.

The middle and high school programs include introductory classes such as introduction to construction; woodshop I and II; computer aided drafting; welding; and industrial technology.

Adult classes are 50 to 60 hours long and often include carpentry, welding, electrical, plumbing and drywall finishing; as well as short-term certifications such as OSHA 10, first aid and forklift operations.

This fall, through a grant from the Denali Commission, efforts are underway to begin construction academies in Bethel, Dillingham, King Salmon, Nome and Kodiak. The successful urban model is being replicated and includes a local advisory board with representatives from local school districts, job centers, regional training centers, Alaska Native corporations, adult training providers, housing authorities and local contractors.

The local advisory board is charged with identifying the priority jobs and skills needed by employers, and to determine the classes needed to teach those skills. Construction-related classes will be offered for high school students and adults in early 2010.

The academies’ programs recruit and screen young people interested in learning more about construction trades and careers. Before being accepted into one of the academies’ classes each applicant must submit an application form and a resume as well as take a test of basic skills to ensure they have the basic math and reading skills necessary for construction work.

All applications are reviewed and qualifying applicants are scheduled for an interview with a local employer, a job center staff and an adult training instructor. Top contenders are invited to join a class. All classes include personal safety and teach safe use of hand and power tools.

For more information about classes or how to hire academy graduates, call the local construction academy, visit the Web site at www.alaskaca.org, or contact Kathleen Castle at (907) 222-0999.

Kathleen Castle is the Executive Director of the Alaska Construction Academies.
Tilt-up concrete panels accelerate pace of construction at Goose Creek Correctional Center campus

4 of 5 buildings enclosed in Neeser’s 1st year of work

BY HEATHER A. RESZ

An aerial view of the Goose Creek Correctional Center with Mount McKinley and Foraker in the background.
Eight months after Neeser Construction Inc. broke ground on the $216-million Goose Creek Correctional Center campus in April 2009, it has completed the exterior walls on four of the campus’ five buildings.

The support and education building, the administration building, the warehouse and the vehicle maintenance buildings were enclosed by the end of 2009. Workers are now completing the buildings’ interior systems and finishes.

Work on the general population building will begin in April, according to general project foreman Bob Brandt.

The pace of construction was accelerated by the use of site cast tilt-up panels that were poured on site and tilted into place with a crane, he said.

After a lengthy selection process, the Mat-Su Borough and the state of Alaska signed a $216-million design-build contract Feb. 3, 2009, with Neeser to construct the roughly 80-acre campus at Point MacKenzie.

About 150 people, including subcontractors, are working through the winter. Construction of the general population building will begin in 2010, Brandt said.

“We’re on track to be done ahead of schedule,” he said.

In areas where prisoners will have access, Brandt said each room is designed to specific security ratings. The level of security for each space dictates details like the type of ceilings and doorframes, he said.

In its 39 years constructing design-build projects in Alaska, Neeser Construction has built larger projects measured by square footage, but with a total project cost of more than $220 million, this is the most expensive. By comparison, the new Dena’ina Civic and Convention Center Neeser completed in
2008 cost $111 million.

George Tuckness, senior project manager for Neeser, said he’s been told the project is the costliest vertical construction project in Alaska’s history.

Goose Creek Correctional Center is located 73 miles from Anchorage, nine miles from Port MacKenzie. From Wasilla, follow Knik Goose-Bay Road for 17.2 miles, then right on Point MacKenzie Road for 7.4 miles, and left at the T intersection onto W. Point MacKenzie Road for 4.9 miles to Alsop Road.

The completed prison will employ an estimated 350 people year-round, according to Mat-Su Borough estimates.

Brandt said only the contractor that supplied the cement shipped project materials through the port at Point MacKenzie. Other materials were shipped to the Port of Anchorage and then trucked to the site. Brant said most of people working on the project also are Mat-Su residents.

The Mat-Su Borough financed the project through the sale of revenue bonds. Despite a downturn in economic markets in fall 2008, the borough successfully sold the bonds.

The agreement between the state and borough calls for the Department of Corrections to lease the prison from the borough, operate it and own it in 25 years when the lease-revenue bonds are repaid.

Set for completion in December 2011, the 1,536-bed corrections facility will house Alaska prisoners, currently incarcerated in Arizona due to a shortage of in-state space.

KPB, HOK and Durrant architects partnered with Neeser to put together
the winning project proposal. Subcontractors working on the project include: Dowl Engineers, Superior Plumbing and Heating, Alcan Electrical, JD Steel and Coffman Engineers.

Project administrator Gary Donnelly said the design-build contracting method allowed construction to continue simultaneously with the completion of design details. From full notice to proceed in mid-February 2009 through mid-December the project, has been designed to nearly 100 percent and more than 60 percent of the overall floor space will be enclosed, he said.

Mark Symmonds of JD Steel said the company provides next-day delivery for Neeser’s metal fabrication needs on the project. He mentioned one recent order for 100 steel plates with holes punched in the center.

“Two or three times a week we’re making little milk runs out there,” he said.

The union arm of the company, StressCon, also is tying the rebar for the project, Symmonds said.

Donnelly said the success of the project so far, and into the future, is a result of a tremendous team effort involving the Department of Corrections, the Mat-Su Borough, RISE Alaska, Neeser and its subcontractors and designers. “All of the stakeholders are positively impacting this very large and complex project,” he said.

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Senior editor Heather A. Resz is a long-time Alaska writer who lives in the Wasilla area.
UIC and SKW/Eskimos joint venture wins bid to build Barrow replacement hospital

Architects are RIM and HDR of Omaha

**By Heather A. Resz**

Arctic Slope Native Association has selected the general contractor and architect for the Barrow replacement hospital. General contractors are a joint venture between UIC Construction and SKW/Eskimos Inc. The architects are RIM Architects of Anchorage and HDR out of Omaha.

Funding for the project is through the Indian Health Service. The contract is still under negotiation.

The new 100,000-square-foot, two-story hospital is scheduled for completion Dec. 15, 2012. The replacement facility will be four times the size of the old facility and will offer more exam rooms, patient beds, dental, and offer new services such as eye care and physical therapy, according to bid materials.

Bid documents said the hospital will be a “12 occupancy with Type 1B fully-sprinkled construction with a lower level utility crawl space, and the structure will be elevated a minimum of three feet off the ground to accommodate snow blow-through. The structure will be steel-framed with a steel pile foundation system.”

The new hospital will replace Barrow’s Samuel Simmonds Memorial Hospital; an old wood-framed construction building that does not meet required building codes and will be razed.

The Barrow hospital is the main health care facility for the North Slope Borough. The 88,817-square-mile borough is the largest in Alaska, the largest municipality in the U.S., and home to fewer than 7,000 people.

Senior editor Heather A. Resz is an Alaska writer who lives near Wasilla.
Earlier this year the Alaska Supreme Court administered an expensive lesson to an equipment supplier on the law of mechanics’ liens. The lesson warrants repeating because the failure to understand it can result not only in the loss of the original debt, but also the payment of the other side’s attorney’s fees.

The law of Alaska, as in all other states, provides a remedy for a craftsman, tradesman or contractor who has constructed some structure or improvement upon the land of another private party and then does not get paid for the work.

The law provides that when a person performs work on the property of another, a right to a lien is created. A lien is simply the right, under specified conditions and after certain procedures, to force the sale of the real estate and have the sale proceeds applied to the payment for the work.

When a contractor begins work on property, it creates a right to acquire a lien. The lien still has to be “perfected” by recording a notice of it in the recorder’s office within specified time limits. Then the lien must be enforced, meaning a lawsuit must be filed within certain timeframes.

The fundamental underlying theory of the lien law is when one party has added value to property owned by another, the owner should not benefit from value added without paying for it. That means even if an owner pays the general contractor, if the contractor fails to pay the subcontractor, the subcontractor can then force payment from the owner, even if it means the owner pays twice for the subcontract work. The reasoning behind the law is that it is better for the owner to pay twice because he has the benefit of the work than for the worker who provided the value to go without payment.

The recent case involved a landscaper who had purchased dirt from the landowner-developer that was not needed on a site where condominiums were being developed. The landscaper purchased the dirt, and then removed it to other projects with rented equipment. After the landscaper failed to pay his equipment lessor, the equipment lessor recorded a claim of lien on the developer’s property.

Despite being asked, the equipment lessor declined to remove the lien and the developer filed suit claiming damages. The equipment lessor counterclaimed, seeking to foreclose its lien. The trial court held, and the Supreme Court affirmed, the landscaper’s equipment supplier was not entitled to a lien.

Alaska’s mechanics’ lien law allows an equipment lessor to acquire a lien on real estate where the equipment was used for the construction, alteration or repair of a building or improvement.

But the issue here was whether the removal of the dirt by the landscaper improved the property. Although the removal of the dirt made it possible to construct the foundation for the condominium, the court characterized the transaction as simply the sale of dirt, which had no use in the construction of the condominium.

Even though the removal of the dirt saved the developer from incurring fees and fines because some of it was on the state’s right-of-way, the court held the improvement in value to the property has to be part of an overall plan of construction, alteration or repair before it qualifies as a lien-able activity.

The lesson to be drawn from this case is in order to be a “lien-able activity,” it has to improve the value of the land. Is value being added to the land? If the activity by itself does not actually increase the value of the land, it must clearly be part of an overall construction plan that will increase the value of the property.

Robert J. (Bob) Dickson is a partner of the Anchorage law firm Atkinson, Conway and Gagnon Inc.
The American financial system continues to slowly recover from an unprecedented series of disruptions and a downturn in the economy that started in the second half of 2008.

In a short time frame (to highlight a few):

- Accepted practices and policies by government agencies were now judged to have allowed too much easy credit to flood the system.
- Money center institutions were deemed over leveraged and unable to find sufficient supplies of new capital or sell off excess assets.
- Bellwether industrial companies could no longer support the infrastructure that once provided the dominance over their markets.
- Consumers drastically reduced big-ticket spending that had been fueled primarily by capital appreciation in home values.
- Oversight was now considered weak in need of strengthening through enhanced rules and regulations.

Like a row of dominoes, each new event led to the unraveling of another. It appeared day-to-day commercial and financial activity was on the verge of de-linking from their normal channels. Many businesses and individuals, though not directly connected to these events, responded by hunkering down and shifting into survival mode as a defense against the next unknown.

With the country’s financial system weakened, unemployment rising quickly and the public anxious and frustrated over the breakdown in economic conditions, the federal government took dramatic measures to stabilize both the economy and financial markets.

How these actions ultimately are dissected and judged can be left to the pundits. However it is certain small businesses across America absorbed much of the fallout, from the tightening within the financial system.

As an Alaska contractor, availability of commercial credit lines is a fundamental requirement to keep your business moving forward. It is through these financial sources capital is supplied to meet both day-to-day operating expenses and fund the acquisition of fixed assets needed to successfully complete construction work over multiple seasons.

Clear communications between a contractor and their commercial lenders is the first step in building a strong relationship.

Other steps should include:

Lender visit
Has your commercial lender taken the time to visit your operation or job sites, to better understand the history of your company, and the type of work that is performed? Use these opportunities to introduce the management team who will also interact with the lending source. Explain their roles and duties in the organization.

Financial reporting
This is the blueprint of your company, which provides your lenders the data necessary to analyze the strength, capacity and financial trends for the operation. With growth, the capital needs to acquire additional assets increases. The quality and consistency of financial statements needs to keep pace or ahead of the growth line. Consult with your lenders regularly, to see if your ability to access higher credit lines would be facilitated by stepping up financial statements (consolidated > reviewed > audited).

Provide your financial sources interim financial statements over the course of the year. Consult with your outside accountant that the company’s bookkeeping system is keeping pace with the growth of your business. Requests for higher bonding limits will be aided with improved financial reporting.
As an Alaska contractor, availability of commercial credit lines is a fundamental requirement to keep your business moving forward.

**Bonding and work schedule**

Your bonding company and commercial lender should have very similar analysis points when reviewing your operation. A conversation between the parties would be productive as part of any business or credit facility expansion. Provide your lenders periodic work schedules that are also being produced for the bonding company.

**Lender diversification**

A steady availability of financial sources can never be underestimated. As the last 18 months have demonstrated, commercial lenders can depart markets; be merged into another operation; or internally consolidate. Sudden shifts can leave your company vulnerable to credit access. Having complementary sources to generate the funding needs for the company (accounts receivable credit lines, real estate lending, construction fleet loans), will reduce the risk of suddenly needing to fill a borrowing gap. Your bonding company will also look favorably on your planning.

In today’s electronic world, many financial services can now be performed securely and efficiently based on the customer’s timetable and needs.

Debt is an opportunity cost. When properly managed, debt will provide the capital requirements necessary to fund the asset expansion for a growing construction operation. Strong lending relationships are built over years of business dealings. Access to financial sources improves, as the debtor and lender become well acquainted with each other’s operation and the services that can be provided.

Robert Kedzior is vice president of 1st Source Bank.
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2009 Winners of AGC's Excellence in Construction Awards
Kincaid Summer Improvements for Kincaid Park

Award: Transportation, Marine, Heavy Earthmoving - less than $3 million
Contractor: Roger Hickel Contracting
Portage Glacier Road Rock Slide
Award: Specialty Contractor as Prime Contractor
Contractor: Alaska Trailblazing Inc.
2009 Winners of AGC’s Excellence in Construction Awards

Glenn Bragaw Intersection
Award: Transportation, Marine, Heavy, Earthmoving – more than $3 million
Contractor: Granite Construction Co.
Do you or your company have professional photos to share on recent AGC member construction projects in Alaska? Send us your TAKING PRIDE photos, along with a brief description of the project and photo credits. All photo submissions may be mailed or dropped off to AGC at:

AGC of Alaska, 8005 Schoon Street, Anchorage, AK 99518-3045
If you prefer e-mail:
Contractor@agcak.org

2009 Excellence in Construction winners

Four winning projects are featured in this issue of the Contractor Magazine and the remaining winners will be featured in the Spring 2010 issue of the magazine.
PCL CONSTRUCTION SERVICES INC.
gives $10,000 to Food Bank of Alaska

PCL Construction donated $10,000 in 14 operating cities, totaling $140,000 as part of a collaborative effort to benefit food bank organizations nationwide. The donations will go to nonprofit agencies to purchase needed food and resources. In Anchorage, $10,000 was given to the Food Bank of Alaska.

For the third year, the company also was named one of 2009’s seven “Best Places to Work in Alaska.”

JENNIFER WILL BE MISSED
at our Fairbanks office

Longtime AGC of Alaska Fairbanks branch manager Jennifer Towler has left the office to pursue other opportunities as an AGC member. We will miss Jennifer, all her hard work and complete support to the AGC Fairbanks members. Jennifer and her sister purchased the family business – Samson Hardware – from their siblings and moved the long-time Fairbanks business to a new location. We wish Jennifer and her new business luck and success. Since Jennifer’s new company is an AGC member we will see her often.

WELCOME new Fairbanks branch manager

Please welcome Yvonne McKee, Yvonne is the new Fairbanks branch manager. Yvonne’s hard work and talent along with the training Jennifer and Karen Hautman provided have made a smooth transition of staff for our members in the Fairbanks office. Stop by the Fairbanks office and say hi to Yvonne.
Welcome new AGC Members from September - November 2009

GENERAL CONTRACTORS
- DV Contracting Services Inc.
  - Patricia Howell
  - Anchorage
  - Highway, heavy construction

- Cully Corporation, dba Beluga Construction Company LLC
  - Dolly Norton
  - Anchorage
  - Building contractor

SPECIALTY CONTRACTORS
- Advanced Interiors Inc.
  - Cliff and Glenda Lemmon
  - Fairbanks
  - Interior paint, drywall and trim packages

- Marley Framing Company
  - Steve and Lori Marley
  - Fairbanks
  - Building framing

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS
- MMCO – Machine Marketing Company
  - Scott A. Marler
  - Anchorage
  - Equipment dealer, marketing and consulting

- DNH Inc. LLC
  - Dell Wilson, Mike Gallagher
  - Anchorage
  - Oil and gas pipeline service work and fuel supply

- Rain for Rent
  - Randy Harris
  - Kenai
  - Rental and sale of pumps, pipe, tanks and filtration systems, available 24/7, 365 days a year

AGC of Alaska Calendar

Jan. 23 – Bowl-A-Thon, Fairbanks
Feb. 9-10 – Legislative Fly In, Juneau
Feb. 16-18 – Western Chapter Meeting Presidents/Vice Presidents, Las Vegas, Nev.
Feb. 19 – Northwest Chapters, Las Vegas, Nev.
Mar. 17-20 – AGC of America Annual Convention, Orlando
April 22-23 – Spring Board Meeting, Fairbanks
June 18 – Golf Tournament, Anchorage
July 16 – Golf Tournament, Fairbanks
Nov. 3-6 – AGC Annual Convention, Anchorage

Contractor

Available online!

Links to the electronic versions of the current and archive issues of the Alaska Contractor Magazine are available online at agcak.org under “Hot Topics,” or at AQPPublishing.com under “Business” publications.

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