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Formed in 1969, the British Columbia Sheet Metal Association (SMACNA-BC) was the first international chapter of the Sheet Metal & Air-conditioning Contractors National Association (SMACNA). Founded in 1934, SMACNA traces its history to the National Association of Sheet Metal Contractors established in 1910, and has 2,300 members worldwide.

SMACNA-BC is a member-driven association representing unionized sheet metal contractors in the Mainland of BC, and suppliers to our industry. It promotes the growth and stability of the members and industry.

OUR MANDATE

- To improve the financial stability and business conditions of the sheet metal industry, and to develop and promote methods to improve managerial proficiency
- To improve quality, efficiency and productivity of this industry, and to implement high standards of work
- To establish and maintain high ethical standards of conduct between members of the Association, and between members and owners, architects, engineers, other contractors, and the public
- To study and help in the development and enforcement of governmental codes and regulations, and such legislation as may be necessary for the best interest of the public and the sheet metal industry
- To promote harmony in labour relations
- To exchange technical, professional, and educational information with other contractor associations in the sheet metal industry and its allied trades in Canada and other countries
- To affiliate as a Chapter with the Sheet Metal & Air-conditioning Contractors National Association, Inc.



[BC Sheet Metal Association \(SMACNA-BC\)](#)

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SPRING 2020

FEATURES

8 Forging the Future
The Sheet Metal Workers Training Center has taken the leap into a technology-driven future.

12 Generating Business Before and After the Pandemic
Best practices for helping trades professionals continue to serve clients during changing times.

14 WorkSafeBC Inspections
British Columbia's safety enforcement authority is stepping up inspections as COVID-19 pushes the industry into new and risky territory.

16 Tech Opportunities for Construction Companies
As more technology comes into play, the construction industry is finally waking up to the impact it can have on bottom line profitability.

DEPARTMENTS

4	EDITORIAL	19	ENGINEER'S DESK
5	SMACNA-BC UPDATE	20	CONTRACTORS ADVICE
6	INDUSTRY NEWS	21	IT'S THE LAW
18	FEATURE FOCUS	22	ADVERTISER INDEX

GOT RESILIENCE?

This issue of *Sheet Metal Journal* is going to press at a strange and challenging time. At the time of writing—approximately a day and a half before we go to print in the third week of April—the pandemic curve in BC is coming under control and the province is issuing tiny glimmers of hope. We still must observe regulations and keep ourselves and our neighbours distance and protected, but for the moment it appears we are on the right track, even if it is for the long haul.

But what I really want to talk about is whether we will take from this experience information that will help us deal with this when it happens again—because it will happen again. Maybe it will be another pandemic; maybe it will be a global catastrophe or economic crash, but it will be something. There always is. How will we take what we have learned and use it to build a stronger, more resilient business and personal life so that as things evolve, so do we?

It feels hard to stay home, avoid friends and family, and lose money in your businesses but at the same time there is opportunity brewing. When we rebound—and we will—will you be positioned to take advantage of that? Will you change your habits based on what you learned? Save money, build that contingency fund, differentiate between wants and needs, shop local, exercise more, hug people when you can? I hope so, because doing that is what resilience looks like, and resilience is my wish for you.



By / Jessica Kirby
Editor, Sheet Metal Journal

This issue looks at several ways to practice resilience in all times of economic and social uncertainty. We look at technology—not to replace the workforce, but to assist and develop it. In the same way we no longer pound spikes using rocks or walk across town to deliver messages, technology is here to help us progress, not to hinder our development. Jud Martell from the Sheet Metal Workers’ Training Centre and Kevin Taylor from City Sheet Metal make a great case for technology in training on page 8.

As a quarterly, print publication, covering something as dynamic and fluid as a pandemic is tricky business. Once we hit “send” the words we choose are locked in for life and must be relevant for at least three more months. That is why we are covering COVID-19 only from the perspective of enduring, meaningful resources for contractors who can then apply all or most of it in other circumstances, such as economic downturn or generally improving workforce and jobsite safety and health. See page 12 for a look at keeping customers inspired in times like these, and check out page 14 for what WorkSafeBC is expecting from job sites, because those regulations will be here for at least the rest of the year.

For more current, daily updates on how COVID-19 and other news are affecting our industry, please keep an eye on our website www.sheetmetaljournal.com or follow us on Facebook to get the scoop. And speaking of technology, there is never a bad time to stay abreast of what is happening in the productivity realm, and since we’ve already established that technology is where it’s at, see page 16 for where to keep an eye out.

I’d also like to draw attention to Mark Breslin’s article this issue (page 20) because he speaks to the absolute benefit of running a business during times like these: again, building resilience. His family managed through recession and downturn, and he still came out on top better than ever, most importantly because he observed and took on habits of how to sacrifice and endure the *right* way.

If there is any message I can leave with you—an enduring message, of course, because the next time we “meet” everything will be different once again—is to be safe, be smart, and be resilient. ■

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SUPPORT IN TURBULENT TIMES

I trust you are all staying safe out there during these troubled times. Our always faithful editor of *Sheet Metal Journal*, Jessica Kirby, has reached out to me to provide a brief update as to recent developments at SMACNA-BC, so here goes.

This time of year, I am usually up to my eyeballs organizing and arranging the final details for our Annual AGM and Convention. Please be advised that due to the obvious this event has been cancelled for 2020. We have postponed our contract with the Delta Hotels Victoria Ocean Pointe Resort in Victoria, BC, to the spring of 2023. The reason we extended it to 2023 is because we have already booked Spirit Ridge in Osoyoos, BC for 2021 and the Delta Hotels by Marriott Grand Okanagan Resort in Kelowna, BC for 2022.

Despite the cancellation of the 2020 Annual AGM, we are obliged by law to have an AGM. We will advise you of the details when we are able to. Regarding elections of expired Board positions, this will be done via electronic voting. Dates and details to follow.

All SMACNA-BC Membership Dinner Meetings have been postponed until further notice. Hopefully, if we all maintain social distancing and self-quarantine, this COVID-19 beast will settle down and we can still have our golf tournament and Christmas party.

Board of Directors meetings, Joint Conference Board meetings, and Sheet Metal Industry Training Board meetings are all being conducted as per usual, as virtual Zoom/Teams meetings.

At the March 10, 2020 board meeting, the application for SMACNA-BC Associate Membership for Airtek Canada Inc. was approved.

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Richmond, BC V6V 2W3
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Website: <http://www.greehvac.ca>

The SMACNA-BC Board of Directors has been discussing the unforeseen challenges and issues arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. At a recent Zoom meeting, board members acknowledged the necessary but added cost of health and safety efforts to protect our workforce and their families, but also the loss of productivity from having to adapt to the implemented BC guidance for construction sites operating during COVID-19. The consensus is that productivity on sites is down 25-30%, plus the addition of consumables, such as hand sanitizer, have significantly increased the costs of getting the job done.

The bottom line on these increased costs is that all of these projects were bid on well in advance of this COVID-19 beast;



By / Bruce Sychuk, Executive Director, SMACNA-BC

therefore, the extra costs today are being totally funded by those contractors working on these projects. May contractors want to resolve two issues by closing all construction sites: firstly and paramount is keeping the workers and their families safe from the spread of the beast; the second issue is stopping the bleeding of cash due to lack of productivity.

One other issue that is being kept on the radar is the collection of progress draws and cash flow. These items have not surfaced yet and hopefully will not. We just want to remind everyone that we are all in this together, and we all want to come out of this mess with our businesses intact.

The Canadian Construction Association (CCA) has called for an emergency COVID-19 construction cost reimbursement program.

“We know the Government of Canada understands that the impact of COVID-19 on construction contracts and contractors is unprecedented,” says CCA President Mary Van Buren. “This is an extraordinary situation and the construction industry is asking governments at all levels and private owners for extraordinary consideration to relieve some of these impacts to help ensure that the industry has the capacity and can mobilize quickly to build the Canada of the future.”

Take action at www.pushpolitics.ca/clients/construction/.

Please follow the link and send the letter to your MP.

In closing, please be advised that the SMACNA-BC office, be it the physical office or home office, remains open to assist / advise you through this once-in-a-lifetime issue.

This thing is far from over. And if you think it can't hit close to home, you are mistaken. I remind all of you that we are not out of the woods and that we should all continue to be hyper conscious of social distancing guidelines.

I also want to acknowledge all the health care workers, nurses, doctors, and first responders for their dedication and service. Finally, our thoughts and prayers go out to those who have lost a loved one.

Stay safe.

SMACNA-BC CONTRACTORS CONTRIBUTE TO COVID-19 RELIEF EFFORT

Smith Sheet Metal, Viaduct Sheet Metal, and the Sheet Metal Workers Training Centre (SMWTC) have come together to contribute to the COVID-19 relief effort by donating time and materials in the production of metal nose strips that make homemade face masks more effective in repelling droplets that have the potential to contain and spread illness.

These organizations combined there have cut approximately 18,000 ¼” x 3” (.030) aluminum strips for nose pieces, as of the third week of April.

The material has been donated, either by the employer or by the metal supplier for the SMWTC, as has the time and labour to shear them all up.

Local 280 has been picking the material up once it has been cut from the various sources and packaging them up into the requested quantities. Orders range in size from as small as 40 to as large as 1,000. They are mailed around the province of British Columbia to various volunteers who are busy sewing face masks, and the orders keep coming in.

If any other contractors would like to help in this effort, it would be greatly appreciated. Please contact SMACNA-BC at smacnabc@smacna-ob.org or Local 280 at jpaquette@smw280.org to help out. ■

HALF OF CANADIANS HAVE SEEN THEIR EMPLOYMENT STATUS CHANGE BECAUSE OF CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC: POLL

Around half of Canadians have had their working life disrupted in some way because of the new coronavirus pandemic, including because they lost their job temporarily or permanently, a new poll from Forum Research Inc. suggests.

The April 13 survey by Forum found 49 per cent of those it reached reported COVID-19 had changed their employment status, compared to 51 per cent who said it had not.

Out of those who responded there had been a change, however, 11 per cent said they had lost their job permanently and 40 per cent said they had lost it temporarily. Another 18 per cent reported they had their hours reduced and four per cent said their hours had increased.

Those shifting circumstances are happening as a big majority of Canadians, 85 per cent, are concerned about COVID-19, Forum found. That’s up from 62 per cent at the beginning of March. ■

CANADA’S BUILDING TRADES UNIONS PLEASED WITH FEDERAL ANNOUNCEMENT FOR PENSION RELIEF

Canada’s Building Trades Unions (CBTU) are pleased with the Government of Canada’s announcement to provide relief on federally regulated pensions, in the form of a moratorium on solvency payment requirements for defined benefit plans, through the remainder of 2020.

“Canada’s Building Trades Unions have been speaking with government on behalf of members to communicate the effect of COVID-19 on them and their families—and the health of our pension plans is one area that affects not only our current members but our many retirees,” said Robert Kucheran, chairman, Canada’s Building Trades Unions. “This welcomed federal action is a good start and it is now important that provincial councils work closely with the provinces to get similar legislation enacted for multi-employer pension plans across the country.”

“Multi-employer pension plans, utilized by many Building Trades affiliates, have taken a significant hit due to the uncertainties amid the rapid progression of COVID-19, coupled with solvency legislation that puts additional stress on these plans,” said Joseph Mancinelli, LiUNA International Vice President and Regional Manager of Central and Eastern Canada. “A single-employer plan is funded by one employer; therefore, it’s important to have a solvency funding plan in place. However, Building Trade plans are multi-employer pension plans in which thousands of employers pay into the pensions and should not be subject to onerous solvency funding plans.

“We are encouraged by the announcement from the federal government and will continue to work with the provinces to address inadequate pension solvency legislation across the country to take necessary steps forward in making this a permanent solution.” ■

OOPS ... Our mistake

The winter issue of *Sheet Metal Journal* erroneously identified our law columnists’ company as Kuhn & Co. LLC on page 21. The correct name is actually Kuhn & Co. LLP. Our sincere apologies for the typo and any confusion or inconvenience this may have caused.

ASHRAE: AIR CONDITIONING CAN HELP CONTROL CORONAVIRUS SPREAD

In a move to counter a growing number of “false statements” regarding air conditioners, ASHRAE has announced that HVAC systems can help control the spread of the coronavirus.

ASHRAE says it intends to provide guidance on managing the spread of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19 disease (coronavirus) with respect to the operation and maintenance of HVAC systems in buildings. It asserts that, in general, keeping air conditioners on during this time can help control the spread of the virus.

In a statement on the airborne transmission of SARS-CoV-2/COVID-19, ASHRAE says: “Transmission of SARS-CoV-2 through the air is sufficiently likely that airborne exposure to the virus should be controlled. Changes to building operations, including the operation of heating, ventilating, and air-conditioning systems, can reduce airborne exposures.”

A separate announcement on the operation of HVAC systems to reduce SARS-CoV-2/COVID-19 transmission, ASHRAE states: “Ventilation and filtration provided by heating, ventilating, and air-conditioning systems can reduce the airborne concentration of SARS-CoV-2 and thus the risk of transmission through the air. Unconditioned

spaces can cause thermal stress to people that may be directly life threatening and that may also lower resistance to infection. In general, disabling of heating, ventilating, and air-conditioning systems is not a recommended measure to reduce the transmission of the virus.”

It adds that HVAC filters, along with other strategies, help to reduce virus transmission while removing other air contaminants that may have health effects.

“In light of the current global pandemic, it’s critically important that ASHRAE responds with guidance on mitigating the transmission of the virus, as well as ventilation and filtration recommendations,” said ASHRAE president Darryl K Boyce. “ASHRAE has a significant role to play in ensuring safe and healthy building environments and these statements offer the expert strategies needed at this time.”

“ASHRAE, working with its industry partners, is uniquely qualified to provide guidance on the design, operation, and maintenance of heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning systems to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as to prepare for future epidemics,” said ASHRAE epidemic task force chair, ASHRAE member Bill Bahnfleth.

ASHRAE’s newly updated COVID-19 Resources webpage at ashrae.org/COVID19 has additional details.

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Forging the Future

Industry bands together to address emerging technology trends.

By / Jessica Kirby • Photos courtesy of SMWTC

Reprinted with permission from the March 2020 issue of Partners in Progress. Visit pinp.org to subscribe and learn more about labour-management success.

The Sheet Metal Workers Training Center (SMWTC)

has taken the leap into a technology-driven future with the support of SMACNA-BC's contractor members. The centre participated in a project called, "Technology and an Inclusive Workforce: Forging our Future Sheet Metal Industry," which was developed among industry partners including SMANCA, SMART, the ITI, and several others.

Funded through the government's Union Training and Innovation Program (UTIP), this federal cost-sharing initiative was developed to improve the success of sheet metal workers using new equipment and to address emerging technology trends in the sheet metal industry.

"We have implemented several pieces of equipment and software that will help apprentices stay abreast of the latest offered in training and work and ensure they are prepared to help their contractor employers stay profitable and productive," says SMWTC Training Co-ordinator, Jud Martell.

Through the program, SMWTC's apprentices and journeymen will have access to and benefit from training on a mobile elevated work platform simulator, virtual reality/augmented welding technology, and fan service equipment for new a specialty training course.



The center's welding equipment will also be upgraded to harmonize with technological changes to the welding process. Learning the equipment takes place using augmented reality in which the learning components are added to actual reality.

"When the user looks through the screen they can see the world," says Martell. "When you turn on the machine, it adds the welding points, equipment, and materials to create welding situations in your real world."

Martell says the UTIP project is a prime example of how the SMWTC is defining itself as a training center than embraces innovation.

“We are trying to look into the future and recognize how things will be done differently in the world moving forward,” Martell says. “This technology is a part of that. I can imagine sitting around in 20 years and being surprised about what we didn’t see coming. Maybe by that time you will go to work in a clean room with clean tools where you walk in and fire up your augmented space or your virtual tools to drive the robots that do the actual work,” he says.



Knowing and understanding the technology is a key part of staying ahead of changes in the future, he adds. “Ours has traditionally been a reactive industry. We’ve realized that if we don’t think about new technologies or solutions until the contractors mention it, then someone else is probably already doing it.”

Kevin Taylor, owner of City Sheet Metal in Vancouver, British Columbia, recognizes the ways technology continues to change the industry.

“From computer software, project managing programs, safety sites, equipment, advertising, and training, technology has increasingly become part of our business,” Taylor says. “Since taking over City Sheet Metal in 2008, we have incorporated all of the things listed above in order to stay competitive in a forever changing market.”

Competitiveness was the main reason City Sheet Metal has adopted new technology as needed, but these decisions were also made out of a keen understanding that failure to innovate means certain doom in the construction and any industry.

“It is easy to sit back and pat yourself on the back and think you are doing a great job,” Taylor says. “But if you are not



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| Flo-Matrix Air Ventilation | Varsteel Specialty Metals |
| HVAC Systems and Solutions Ltd. | Wm. P. Somerville 1996 Ltd. |
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thinking about the future and how you can improve your team for success you will quickly fall behind.”

The willingness and drive to be part of innovation in the industry is something that sets SMWTC apart, Martell says.

“We can’t have contractors say, ‘we are thinking about this thing’ and say, ‘okay we will think about that later,’” he says. “Just look at the 80s when people were talking about computer-assisted drawing and manufacturing and people were saying, ‘That’s crazy talk. It’s never going to happen.’ Now, CAM and CAD are normal.”

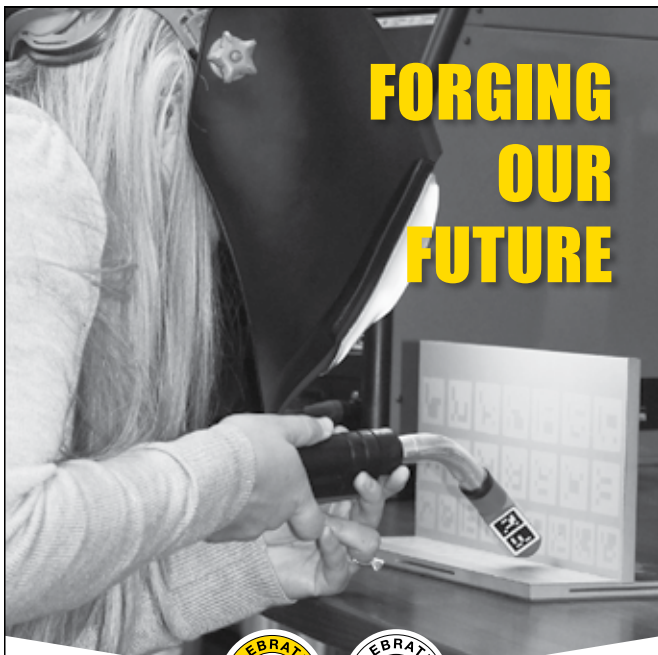
He adds that anyone who didn’t take the evolution of computer-aided drawing seriously suddenly found themselves surprised and untrained because they didn’t get ahead of it.

“You have to get on board,” Martell says. “Some of the union people were the ones who failed to adopt, and you can actually track the rise in work for the non-union side to coincide with this time period. In the beginning, everyone also thought it was a crazy idea to put one trade into a training center and provide direct access and communication to the people building that trade, yet here we are.”

Of course, some firmly believe that implementing technology and automating certain job functions hurts the industry. Seeing the scenario as one where a machine is displacing a human being can make implementation a hard sell.

Taylor says technology is here to stay and firmly believes it doesn’t kill jobs but changes the way those jobs are completed.

“Technology is allowing us to complete jobs quicker, safer, and more profitably,” he says. “We are constantly looking for people to join the industry, and with man hours continuing to rise it is a hard argument to say that technology is killing jobs. It is, however, almost mandatory in order to get them done on time.”



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“We are constantly looking for people to join the industry, and with man hours continuing to rise it is a hard argument to say that technology is killing jobs. It is, however, almost mandatory in order to get them done on time.”

—Kevin Taylor, City Sheet Metal

In the long run, it is up to contractors and the labor force to work together, evolve together, and approach the future of construction in a unified, open-minded way, Taylor says. As a board member at the Sheet Metal Training Center, Taylor feels it is essential and that the center is obligated as industry leaders to train apprentices on all the new technology available.



“The staff at the training center is constantly updating course content, adding new advanced training courses, and updating the equipment,” he says. “It now includes a virtual platform training lift along with the virtual welding machines. This will not only prepare our apprentices for the future; it may also attract the next generation to get into the trade.”

Martell agrees, saying the SMWTC and its contractor partners don’t just do work for today—they also work to build the resilience and critical thinking to apply skills to whatever is coming next.

“We are all in together,” he says. “Partners are so important for building and maintaining our community. ■



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Generating business during and after the pandemic

By / MechBiz

Some contractors offering HVAC, plumbing

and/or refrigeration services have been considerably impacted by COVID-19, while others have adjusted processes to cope with new product procurement structures and expectations of customers and government agencies, and are as busy as ever.

To help trades professionals continue to serve clients during these changing times, home service and commercial contracting software firm ServiceTitan has compiled advice and best practices from contractors across North America. These are aimed at helping companies provide service to customers during the current crisis, and to prepare for customer expectations when states of emergency are lifted.

Step 1, they advise, is to let your client base know that you're open and are taking steps to protect their health. This message should be put out via all marketing channels, and should be reinforced in all customer communications. Videos sent to customers and shared on social media are very effective in reassuring clients that your company is taking all necessary precautions, and putting the safety of customers at the forefront of service practices.

Making the mechanical service experience contactless will illustrate to your customers, and your employees, that you are taking their health and well-being to heart.

And it is also important to ensure that your technicians and other team members have the information they need to be consistent when handling service calls, or requests for service.

"Set expectations that the shop is following guidelines," explains Tom Howard, ServiceTitan's vice-president of customer experience. When customers call to request residential service, he says that most contracting companies "are asking if anyone in the home has had any symptoms in the past seven days, and if they have, they ask to reschedule."

Explaining to customers that there is a need to continue regular servicing of equipment is advisable, says the software provider in its *COVID-19 Playbook for Contractors*, as is adjusting sales focus toward indoor air quality and water

filtration products, since consumers are becoming more concerned about ensuring that they have clean air and water at their homes and places of work.

As with other sectors, like food service, making the mechanical service experience contactless will illustrate to your customers, and your employees, that you are taking their health and well-being to heart. Using a thumbs-up rather than a handshake, taking online payments, sending digital statements rather than printed receipts, and using virtual meeting platforms to conduction meetings and sales calls are all ways to adjust processes.

Where there has been contact with surfaces during the servicing or installing of equipment, ensuring that the technician uses disinfecting wipes and uses proper PPE during the call should

also be standard operating procedures—this information about your protocols should also be shared with customers.

“We can acknowledge that it’s awkward to have a conversation from six feet away, and ask customers to not to take it personally that the tech is going to disinfect everything,” says Howard.

Nobody can predict how long the pandemic and viral outbreaks will last, but the world will return to normal at some point and we will come out of this. At that point, says the company, what will be important is not just what happened to us during this time, but what we look like coming out of it, and how well we have positioned ourselves for whatever opportunities will be available then. ■

BCCA COVID-19 VIRTUAL HOTLINE SUPPORTS BC CONSTRUCTION SECTOR

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, the BC Construction Association is bolstering the resources it provides online with a virtual hotline to gather the observations, questions, and requests for guidance from the construction sector, including trade and general contractors, project owners, tradespeople, manufacturers and suppliers, and other service providers.

The information shared will be considered by BCCA as it helps guide the industry response to COVID-19. To support any survey/hotline participant that requests assistance, BCCA has assembled a team of industry experts able to help address a wide range of industry issues in the areas of human resources, finance, project terms/contract terms, legal, health, safety, communications, supply chain, or government (regulation, policy, tax, program, legislation, etc.) BCCA's team of industry experts include BC Construction Safety Alliance, BC Ministry of Finance, BCCA Employee Benefit Trust, CBRE Ltd., Canadian Construction Association, Council of Construction Associations, Jenkins Marzban Logan LLP, Jouta Performance Group, Myers Norris Penny (MNP), Pace Group Communications, Partnerships BC, Wylie-Crump Ltd., and WorkSafeBC.

BCCA is also advocating for the provincial government to, among other things, introduce deferred property and payroll tax payments, and review timelines for public sector construction projects in the event it's possible to accelerate projects in K-12 and post-secondary institutions.

Although BC's provincial health officer has confirmed construction sites are exempt from guidelines on group gatherings and can remain open, anyone who's sick should not be going to work. Additional health and safety precautions should be put in place and information shared with crews.

Here are some guidelines for construction sites:

- Reduce the number of people on site to facilitate social distancing between workers. If needed, adjust schedules or scale back.
- Wear PPE at all times as long as it is safe to do so—safety goggles, masks, and gloves.

- Workers should not congregate in break areas and lunchrooms.
- Workers should not share PPE.
- Workers should not share tools.
- Introduce extra handwashing stations.
- Do not spit on worksites
- Do not share cigarettes and/or vaping equipment.
- Do not use sea cans as breakrooms.
- Do not rideshare/carpool to/from work with people outside your household.
- Clean out jobsite trailers daily—arrange for commercial cleaners to clean and disinfect areas of the project.
- Introduce an on-site COVID-19 committee to create a best practices plan to ensure worker safety.
- Create a task force focused on supporting your company's staff and customers.
- Make sure workers know about the Ministry of Health Self-Assessment Tool.
- Make sure workers know they should not come to work if they're feeling sick

Construction Specific COVID-19 Resources

- Guidance to Employers: Performing Work in Private Residences
- What to do when Physical Distancing is NOT possible?
- Presumed COVID-19 Case on Site Procedures
- Hand-washing Station on a Construction Site
- Guidance to Construction Sites Operating during COVID-19

For a complete list of Resources and Signage visit <https://www.bccsa.ca/index.php?id=451>

The British Columbia Construction Association (BCCA) works with four Regional Construction Associations (NRCA, SICA, VICA, and VRCA) to serve more than 10,000 employers in the provinces industrial, commercial, institutional (ICI) construction industry. For more information, visit us at www.bccassn.com (website), @ThisisBCCA (Facebook) and @thisisBCCA (Twitter). ■

WORKSAFEBC Inspections



By / Warren Wrey

British Columbia's safety enforcement authority is stepping up inspections as COVID-19 pushes the industry into new and risky territory.

WorkSafeBC recently announced an “inspectional initiative” to ensure British Columbia worksites are complying with new COVID-19 regulations.

Prevention officers will make sure employers and sub-contractors identify known and foreseeable hazards, evaluate the impact on workers, and take steps to control risks consistent with health and safety requirements and direction from public health officials, WorkSafeBC director of prevention field services Dan Strand said.

“The initial focus of the inspection will be to engage the employer and worker representatives in a conversation to determine if they have basic controls in place to ensure the health and safety of workers,” Strand said.

Areas of focus, he added, will include whether physical distancing is taking place, sufficient hygiene supplies are provided and if the employer is adhering to COVID-19 guidance from the B.C. provincial health officer.

Where plumbed facilities aren't available employers must provide access to portable washroom and handwashing facilities, Strand said.

He explained that the inspections will be province-wide and “WorkSafeBC prevention officers will be inspecting B.C. construction sites for as long as necessary during this unprecedented public health challenge.”

Enforcement measures are also a possibility if companies aren't complying with new COVID-19 regulations, he said.

“WorkSafeBC will consider issuing orders for non-compliance and may issue stop-work orders if there is a high risk of serious illness,” Strand said. “Penalties may be imposed for flagrant violations.”

The safety of WorkSafeBC's inspectors as they enter potentially unsafe or contaminated areas is also a top priority, he noted.

“We've developed an exposure control plan (ECP) for prevention officers during the inspection initiative, which includes training on the ECP and appropriate safe work procedures. Officers who access and inspect these workplaces

are trained in this ECP and follow safe work procedures and physical distancing,” he said.

“We are also taking steps to reduce person-to-person contact, since many inspectional activities can be done remotely,” Strand added.

As the province’s population has retreated to their homes in order to self-isolate from the virus, WorkSafeBC has seen an increase in enquiries throughout the month of March, Strand said.

“In the last week, we have been getting between 200 and 350 enquiries per day about COVID-19 from workers and employers. While I don’t have detailed breakdowns available at this time, generally, the vast majority of callers are looking for health and safety information during the pandemic. However, we have also received calls about potential health and safety violations at worksites, and we take every one of these calls very seriously,” he said.

WorkSafeBC is also partnering with stakeholder safety and industry organizations to help spread information on the ongoing pandemic, Strand said.

“We also work closely with our stakeholders and industry associations such as the BC Construction Safety Alliance, BC Crane Safety, and the BC Common Ground Alliance



As the province’s population has retreated to their homes in order to self-isolate from the virus, WorkSafeBC has seen an increase in enquiries.



to provide information to workers and employers, and to help them understand regulatory requirements and share useful tools to help protect workers during the COVID-19 pandemic,” he said.

The BC Building Trades has been collecting questions from anonymous employees and forwarding concerns about specific worksites and implored WorkSafeBC to act previous to announcement of the inspection initiative on March 24.

“We are continuing to reach out to both workers and employers, and we are aware of the important concerns raised by the BC Building Trades,” Strand said. “Our outreach to workers and employers in the construction sector will continue as we all work together to reduce the risks of COVID-19.”

This article originally appeared in The Journal Commerce on March 31 Canada. constructconnect.com/joc/news/ohs/2020/03/worksafebc-starts-covid-19-focused-inspections ■



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The 5 Best

Tech Opportunities for Construction Companies

By Jason Krankota

Construction has been one of the slowest industries to adopt technology. That's partly cultural—folks in the industry like to solve problems with their own ingenuity. Many firms are still family owned, and there's still a lot reverence for tradition. Finally, this is an industry with thin margins, where the first funding priorities are equipment and personnel.

But, it's also partly because there hasn't been a lot of technology built to meet the needs of the industry. Before smartphones, it was hard to bring technology to the field. Even then, you had to have a good Wi-Fi connection, which wasn't consistently available, or an expensive data plan. And, a lot of early field capture technology was based on someone having to manually input data into a device. That was a non-starter; having superintendents manually entering data didn't really provide much in the way of productivity gains and made for a lot of unhappy superintendents.

Now all that is changing. Founders are aging out of the industry, creating an opportunity for younger generations to apply technology with less resistance. Project owners are requiring the use of different technologies as a condition of funding. And, there is an increasing number of great solutions specifically designed for the industry. Connectivity and computing power have increased dramatically, making mobile applications a lot more reliable, robust, and user-friendly. Cameras, drones, GPS, and RFID technology are making it easy to capture data without human intervention.

As more technology comes into play, the industry is finally waking up to the impact it can have on bottom line profitability. Here are some of the technology opportunities construction companies should have on their radar:

1. AR and VR

Whether it's on a computer screen or through a headset, augmented and virtual reality are taking the output of BIM software and creating virtual models of a structure subcontractors can walk through before it's even built, allowing them to collaborate and spot potential issues in a virtual environment.

For example, an electrical contractor could walk through the schematic of what the mechanical contractor would have built so they can say, "Okay, I see that there's going to be a standpipe here, so we'll run our conduit right next to it." That leads to less rework and fewer scheduling delays. AR can also be used to help train workers in a more effective and cost-efficient manner.

2. AI: Not yet

Artificial intelligence could potentially have a big impact on the industry, but probably not for quite a few years. One immediate application is job site safety. There are already rudimentary tools that can analyze video from jobsite cameras and spot hazards. They can also determine from workers' movements whether or not they're accessing a scaffold or carrying materials up a flight of stairs correctly.

Eventually, AI could be used to help improve project scheduling by learning from data from past projects and flagging issues that could lead to delays. It could analyze the performance of buildings over time and offer materials recommendations. But AI needs relevant data to learn from, so the industry needs to digitize first.

3. Internet of Things

If you look at industries that are starting to see some success with AI, such as healthcare and manufacturing, everything is happening more or less in one place. That makes it easier to put sensors on a machine or robot and capture data. It's a bit more of a challenge when you have multiple job sites and a lot of movable equipment, so taking data capture out of the hands of individuals and automating it, and storing data in a centralized place where it can be managed is the frontier right now.

4. Back office efficiency

Most firms are using some sort of automated accounting platform, but there are still gaps that need to be filled.

Invoice routing and approval is a big one. People are literally having the back office scan invoices and then email out invoice images to the project superintendent. Invoice images are "digital paper," meaning they're not actual digital artifacts. Any data that's on them has to be manually entered, and the whole routing and approval process is manual, as well.

Then there's the payment process itself. Solutions built to

handle procure to pay actually only handle procure to invoice approval, so then you need a payment's automation solution on top of that. The good news is that automating payments is pretty easy to do, and it doesn't depend on automating the invoice workflow, which is a much bigger project.

5. Business intelligence

Most ERP systems offer tons of reports, but people want to combine that with data from other sources. They want to be able to look at the data three-dimensionally and be able to drill into it. ERP systems don't have that kind of capability, and as the amount of data companies have access to grows, so does the need to have a business intelligence platform to pull it together and generate analyses and models.

There are a lot of challenges to overcome before construction becomes a fully digitized industry. It's still hard to deploy technology organization wide when you have workers on multiple job sites. Do you pull everyone off the job to come in for training? Probably not. Adoption can move pretty slowly, with some workers using the technology and others holding to traditional practices, resulting in the industry overall heading in the right direction of the benefits, even if it's not happening at a rapid pace. ■

Jason Krankota is VP of Construction Sales, West Region at Nvoicepay. His expertise in construction business technology spans 20 years, with 10+ years focused on corporate payments, accounts payable, and expense management solutions.

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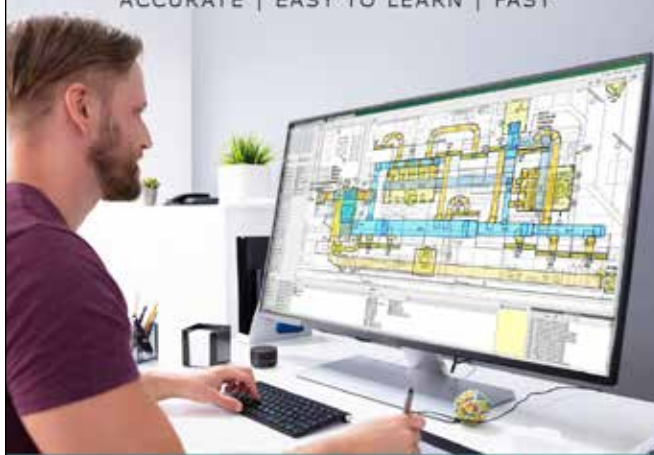
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THE FUTURE OF DUCT INSULATION AS A DESIGN ELEMENT

Insulation is one of the main elements that can help building design engineers create more efficient buildings, meet increasingly stringent energy codes, and find ways to improve sustainable building operations. The trends in building designs are constantly evolving as architects and engineers find new ways to improve building comfort, design, and efficiency.

In looking at future building trends it doesn't take long to see that energy efficiency is a prime concern today. Requirements are becoming more stringent in today's green building designs.

Presently, ASHRAE data shows that buildings account for approximately 40 percent of energy consumption. Finding ways to reduce this energy draw is the key to future global sustainability of our building stock.

This is where insulation becomes a key factor that can help building designers create more efficient buildings and meet today's more stringent codes and energy usage requirements, says insulation manufacturer Johns Manville in an article for *SNIPS* magazine. The company manufactures Microlite Black PSK, black duct wrap created specifically for aesthetic applications.



Photo courtesy of Johns Manville

“However, as building design trends evolve and change, we are seeing an increased emphasis on utilizing spaces that have historically been tucked behind façades,” says the article. “Just walk into any restaurant or coffee shop, and look up; you'll see that designers have left the ceiling exposed, ducts, pipes, and all.”

Exposed ceilings also bring new challenges. Many, ducts warm and cold, may need to be insulated to help achieve the goals of net zero design. “Also, as insulation is not typically designed to be left exposed, designers have had to decide between leaving duct systems uninsulated or choosing an insulation that does not fit into the design concept,” says Johns Manville.

Painting insulation after the fact to match a motif cancels the UL 723 rating. Not insulating is not recommended as uninsulated duct runs less efficiently than insulated duct, but it also runs the risk of forming condensation on the duct surfaces. This could lead to mold and mildew growth and other issues.



By Norm Grusnick, P.Eng.

In addition to providing temperature and condensation control, insulation can also be integral to controlling the acoustics of the space, which is a key component to many of the new building standards like LEED or WELL Building Standard.

“As the need to control thermal and or acoustic properties of exposed duct systems has become more pressing, the insulation industry has responded with materials that are designed with aesthetics in mind,” says Johns Manville. These materials have different outward finishes.

The insulation industry now has matte finish black coated duct wrap with matching tape and white duct wrap with matching tape, manufactured by Johns Manville. This gives designers plausible options to enhance the aesthetics and viability of open exposed ceiling systems. ■



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ADVERSITY SHARPENS THE EDGE

At the time of this writing our country and industry are confronting major adversity. The words “uncharted territory” have been overused but convey the uncertainty of profound change and challenge. But adversity always has a purpose—and I am sure you can even see that in your personal lives as well. On the back end of any major problem, issue, setback or challenge—upon thoughtful or strategic reflection we can see how it becomes a platform for perspective and progress.

I have been witness to a lot of turmoil in this industry, starting when I was a kid. My union carpenter turned contractor dad had 150 guys in the field, an El Camino, a summer house in Twain Harte, and my sisters and I lacked for nothing. Then came the 1975-76 economic crisis. Interest rates went to 16%. No one paid. Lines of credit were non-existent, and very quickly our family’s economic world crashed down taking with it my dad’s company. Our family endured some hard times. But we all came back stronger, wiser, and more successful than ever.

In the 80s I was looking for a job in a recession. None of my friends could find one. The promise of college = opportunity seemed like BS. Then I got a job interview at United Contractors. They got 110 resumes and seven finalists. Hunger breeds desire. They saw that edge and hired me. I guess now, as CEO, it kinda worked out.



By Mark Breslin

In several more down cycles I saw the industry struggle, but the edge created by adversity really showed in the 2008 financial crisis. Remarkably few contractors I know went under compared to what I had seen in other less brutal circumstances. Why? Because the adversity lessons that they had in hand helped them to see what needed to be done. And wiser, shrewder, and more pro-actively, they again thrived.

Now again, we face adversity and uncertainty. The key for leaders is not to be reactive and to stop and remember that this is a moment to bring empathy, understanding, and wisdom to our leadership. The business world is built on the care of the people within it. And for them to withstand adversity, they have to see and feel that you really care. Those that make this their priority will not only sharpen their edge, but obtain a competitive one in the aftermath of these challenges.

They say the Chinese symbols for chaos and opportunity are the same. I’ll have to take their word for it. But there is some irony in that and practical application for us. Perhaps the issue at hand will resolve sooner than later, but the inevitability of a recession seems apparent. Perhaps there will be a significant industry contraction—or, conversely, the next step to recovery may be massive infusions into infrastructure. What I do know is this: no one would be in our business if they were not equipped to deal with adversity. No one who accepts the level of risk that our business has lacks the ability to strategically address profound change.

As leaders at the center of the storm, counted upon for navigation by those who depend upon us, we have the greatest opportunity to sharpen our edge. I tell my staff that how we respond at this moment is our legacy opportunity. Watching my dad sell that El Camino gave me a sobering look at the limits of our control in this life. But what we all have within our grasp is how we respond to it. And I encourage us all to embrace adversity as a whetstone to our edge and our capabilities, not only for ourselves, but for everyone we lead and care about. ■

Mark Breslin is an author, speaker, CEO, and influencer at the highest levels of business in North America. He has spent decades advising CEOs and senior leaders in business, government, labour, and non-profit arenas in both the United States and Canada. His five bestselling books have sold hundreds of thousands of copies and have improved leadership, accountability, profitability, innovation, and engagement for organizations and individuals. See his work at www.breslin.biz

SMART Local 280 /SMACNA-BC Partnership



Left: Jud Martell, Local Union No. 280 President.
Right: Bernie Antchak, Northwest Sheet Metal Ltd., SMACNA-BC President.



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WHAT'S IN A (GOOD) NAME: CONTRACTORS' REMEDIES FOR DEFAMATION BY CUSTOMERS



By Andrew D.R. Delmonico, Partner,
and Ted R. Lewis, Kuhn LLP

Many contractors have been in the position where, for one reason or another, relations with an owner (or other contractor) deteriorate and a legal dispute arises. Occasionally, a contractor may have the unpleasant surprise of finding out that another party has posted reviews online or in the media that could damage its reputation.

In the recent case of *Level One Construction Ltd. v Burnham*, 2019 BCCA 407, the BC Court of Appeal considered a situation involving a contractor's claim against a homeowner for defamation.

The Facts

In this case, the plaintiff was a contractor (the "Contractor") and the defendant was an owner (the "Owner") who had hired the Contractor to carry out renovations at her home. After a series of discussions about the scope of work for the renovation, the Contractor provided an estimate of \$18,908.51 to the Owner, and both parties signed a contract based on that estimate. The Owner provided a \$5,000 deposit per the contract.

A few weeks later, one of the Contractor's employees provided a review of the work to the Owner. The employee's review included a scope of work that had mistakenly been expanded from that of the original contract. As a result of this misunderstanding, the employee gave the Owner an updated price forecast that was almost \$20,000 higher than the estimate. The Owner then demanded a full refund of her deposit, to which the Contractor agreed on the condition that the Owner would sign a non-disclosure agreement ("NDA") and accept certain administrative and work-related deductions. The Owner demanded the full amount, and commenced a small claims action when the Contractor would not agree.

A couple months later, the Owner left a negative review of the Contractor on the website Yelp, and sent emails to various news outlets, including the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation ("CBC"). In these communications, the Contractor alleged the Owner's comments suggested, among other things, that the Contractor "scammed" her by providing an artificially low estimate and then increasing the price. The CBC eventually sent a reporter to interview the Owner. During the interview, the Owner made numerous accusations against the Contractor, including that the Contractor's estimate had doubled for the same amount of work. The CBC then ran several stories, including a TV news story and an online article, conveying the Owner's position. The Contractor then commenced a defamation claim against the Owner.

The Decision

At trial, the BC Supreme Court held the Owner's statements were not defamatory, if her words were given "the least harsh interpretation." The trial judge also found that the Owner was entitled to rely on a defence of fair comment, which protects statements of opinion on matters considered to be in the public interest. This decision was overturned on appeal.

In its reasons, the Court of Appeal found the lower court was wrong in finding that the "least harsh interpretation" should be given to the Owner's allegedly defamatory comments. In British Columbia, a statement is considered defamatory if it would tend to lower the reputation of the person to whom it refers in the eyes of a reasonable person. In considering this, the Court clarified that neither the worst possible meaning nor the least harsh interpretation should be given to the comments in question.

The Court of Appeal also found that the Owner should not be able to rely on a defence of fair comment with respect to her claim that the Contractor had quoted her twice the price for the same work. In order to be protected on the basis that a statement is fair comment, the facts upon which the comment is based must be correct. In this case, the Owner knew about the change in the scope of work that had resulted in the Contractor's higher price, and left this important information out when giving her interview and review. Because her comments actually contradicted the facts, they were not protected as fair comment.

Lessons Learned

1. If an owner or other contracting party makes untrue statements that you think could damage your business or reputation, you may have recourse to claim against that person in defamation. Contractors should pay attention to the reviews they receive online to ensure customers are accurately representing their interactions with the contractor.
2. Similarly, contractors, subcontractors, and suppliers should think carefully before posting negative reviews themselves.

continued on page 22

INDUSTRY NEWS

continued from page 20

JOINT STATEMENT FROM SMART, SMACNA LEADERSHIP ON COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has posed significant and unprecedented challenges to our industry. Please be assured that SMART and SMACNA are actively monitoring health and industry updates in order to protect the safety and health of our employers, members, and families.

Both SMART and SMACNA understand that this is a highly complex and evolving situation that requires a flexible and common-sense approach to all the issues presented. Labor and management are equally concerned with keeping everyone in our industry safe and healthy, while also recognizing that the critical work performed by our signatory contractors, members and employees needs to continue with as little disruption as possible.

Because of the great variations in the severity of the outbreak, there is no “one size fits all” approach to the issues faced locally. We are encouraged by, and proud of, the cooperative approach taken by many of our local unions and contractor associations to address their unique local situations. It is critical that SMART local unions and SMACNA chapters continue to meet and work together to address concerns as they arise. We encourage parties to share the steps taken and agreements made that may be valuable to other areas addressing similar issues.

Federal and state authorities are issuing guidelines and orders that will dictate many of our actions. However, as individuals, we must assess our own risk factors for health, family and community safety and act accordingly. Employers must take the necessary steps to ensure the health and safety of the

workplace and should rely upon guidance from the CDC, DOL, OSHA, EEOC and state and local governments as those steps are taken.

In addition, the local parties should closely analyze and take advantage of federal, state, and local legislation providing all forms of relief and assistance to individuals and employers so that our industry can recover as rapidly as possible. Both SMACNA and SMART will continue to provide information and analysis to facilitate utilization of these programs.

Our collective hard work at the *Partners in Progress* Conference and through this pandemic will be the solid foundation that we will work from in the coming weeks. Our strong labor-management partnership will serve us well during this unprecedented and uncertain time.

If SMART and SMACNA can provide any assistance to you during this time of crisis, please do not hesitate to reach out to either of us. Most importantly, we hope that you and your families are safe and healthy. ■

IT'S THE LAW

continued from page 21

Although it may be permissible to share your opinion of another business online, statements that distort or misrepresent the facts of your interaction with that business may result in liability for defamation. ■

This article was written by Andrew D.R. Delmonico, Partner, and Ted R. Lewis, Articled Student, who practice in construction law with the law firm of Kuhn LLP. This article is only intended as a guide and cannot cover every situation. It is important to get legal advice for specific situations. If you have any questions or comments about this case or other construction law matters, please contact us at 604-864-8877 (Abbotsford) or 604-684-8668 (Vancouver).

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