

Summer 2026

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NORTHERN SHEET METAL

Building a Reputation Through Precision and Partnership



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The Smith Sheet Metal Story



Mental Health Summit



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PROMOTING GROWTH AND STABILITY IN OUR INDUSTRY

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

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- 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 promote harmony in labour relations
- 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 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.

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SMACNA-BC SUMMER UPDATE

If there has been one constant so far in 2026, it's uncertainty. Every week seems to bring another headline about tariffs, trade negotiations, or the possibility of disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz. Whether it's fuel prices, material costs, or business confidence, it's becoming increasingly difficult to predict what tomorrow will bring.

Fortunately, one thing that has remained consistent is the resilience of our industry. While there is certainly more caution than we've seen over the past few years, most of the contractors I've spoken with continue to report steady workloads through the remainder of 2026. Conversations have shifted from "How do we find enough people?" to "What does 2027 look like?" Tightening margins, increased competition, and ongoing uncertainty have become common themes, making it more important than ever to plan ahead rather than simply react.

One positive development has been the continued progress toward British Columbia's prompt payment legislation. While the enforcement framework is still being finalized, it remains encouraging to see momentum on an issue that has affected contractors for many years. I would also like to thank the BC Construction Association (BCCA) for continuing to advocate on behalf of the industry and keep members informed as the legislation moves toward implementation. Read more on page 8.

Recent Events

Our 57th Annual AGM & Convention at the Delta Hotels Grand Okanagan Kelowna, held May 7–9, was another tremendous success. I would like to thank everyone who attended, along with our sponsors, speakers, and, of course, Leanne, whose hard work behind the scenes helped make the weekend possible.

One of the highlights for me was Friday night's Fun Night. It was great to see so many members embrace the "dress-up" theme, and our Name That Tune hosts did an outstanding job of getting everyone involved—including the kids. Judging by the laughter (and a little dancing on chairs), I think it's safe to say the evening was a success.

Congratulations to Angelo Paris on becoming SMACNA-BC's President, and to Al Benning, Dave Brown, Mark McLaren, Phil McDonald, and Peter Sove on their respective re-elections. Thank you all for your continued commitment to the association and for volunteering your time on behalf of the industry.

For better or worse, we continued our tradition of holding the AGM & Convention over Mother's Day weekend. This year, we recognized all of the mothers attending the President's Dinner with a flower on the final evening. It was a small gesture, but one that was very well received and a fitting way to acknowledge the



Jeremy Hallman,
Executive Director, SMACNA-BC

important role they play in supporting our industry. Photos from the AGM and Convention begin on page 6.

SMACNA Council Meeting – Quebec City

In early June, I had the opportunity to attend the SMACNA Council of Chapter Representatives meeting in Quebec City alongside Mark McLaren of Ridge Sheet Metal Co. The meeting brought together chapter executives and contractor leaders from across North America.

The common message was that although every region has unique challenges, many of the issues are shared: labour availability, economic uncertainty, tariffs, tightening margins, workforce development, and the practical use of artificial intelligence.

SMACNA also provided updates on several technical standards currently under development, including the 5th Edition *HVAC Duct Construction Standards* and new guidance covering industrial duct construction, kitchen ventilation, sound and vibration, and other specialty topics. These resources continue to demonstrate the value of SMACNA membership.

One of the most interesting presentations focused on the construction economy. While modest growth is still forecast, contractors across North America are experiencing conditions very similar to those in British Columbia. Work remains steady, but bidding has become more competitive, and uncertainty continues to influence long-term planning.

On the final day, a panel discussion featuring three residential contractors and fellow Chapter Executive Susan Miller from St. Louis was one of the highlights of the conference. The discussion focused on the residential market, where the panelists estimated they hold approximately 75% of the single-family home market in the St. Louis area.

I'll admit I had my hand in the air more than once. My initial assumption was that they were referring to high-end custom homes or larger residential projects, but that wasn't the case. They explained that they successfully compete for everything from entry-level homes to custom residences, while also building long-term relationships through service agreements, preventative maintenance, and duct cleaning.

We also had some very interesting discussion around staffing. They explained that residential service mechanics could generally transition onto commercial projects when workloads slowed, but moving commercial mechanics into residential work was much more difficult. One reason was customer relationships. They shared that many homeowners request the same technician by name and are willing to wait weeks for someone they know and trust rather than have another technician assigned.

Listening to their approach left me thinking that there may be opportunities within our own market that deserve a closer look. While British Columbia is certainly different from Missouri, it reinforced that there are successful business models worth learning from, even when they come from very different regions.

Looking Ahead

September is shaping up to be a busy month for SMACNA-BC, starting with our 41st Annual Golf Classic at Northview Golf & Country Club on September 11. We have introduced several changes to the tournament format and sponsorship opportunities based on member feedback, and we look forward to another great day.

On September 17, SMACNA National, VETS Group, and representatives from Canadian Mental Health Association will be at the Civic Hotel in Surrey to present the SMACNA Canada

Mental Health Summit. The event will bring together contractors, workers, and industry leaders for education, conversation, and community-building around mental health in the trades. More information is available at smacna.org/business-resources/business-management/safety-health/canada-mental-health-summit and on page 18 of this issue.

Later that evening, Francis Petit, director of engineering at VETS Group, will discuss the recent WorkSafeBC dust collection changes and what they mean for contractors. More information about the upcoming changes is available at worksafebc.com/en/health-safety/hazards-exposures/combustible-dust.

Weather permitting, Leanne and I hope to host the dinner meeting reception on the rooftop patio at the Civic Hotel before moving downstairs for dinner and Francis's presentation. Please arrive at 5:30 if you would like to join us there.

As always, thank you for your continued support of SMACNA-BC. The strength of our association comes from the willingness of our members, volunteers, and industry partners to contribute their time and expertise. I look forward to seeing many of you in September. Until then, I hope everyone has the opportunity to enjoy some well-earned time with family and friends. ■



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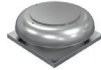

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57th AGM & Convention

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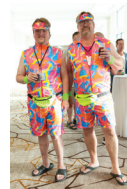
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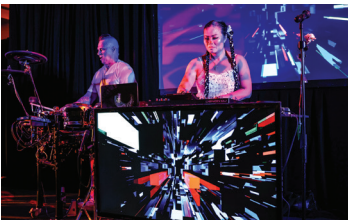
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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: CHANGE ORDER MANAGEMENT AND BUILDING THE CASE TO WIN WITH STEPHANE MCSHANE

*Tuesday, November 17, 2026, at Surrey Hotel
Civic Hotel, Autograph Collection*

This class explores the change order process from a subcontractor's viewpoint and provides participants with hands-on training in recognizing, scoping, pricing, and negotiating change orders. Contract risk management and preservation of rights to increase the chances of financial recovery during project execution. Since the most valued information for contract conflict resolution comes from those closest to the work, the basics of preparing that documentation and effectively translating the information will be discussed. The goal is to gain understanding and review examples of risky contract clauses, the process of claims management, the legalities of change order control, and preparation for lawsuits.

Stephane McShane is associate director at Maxim Consulting Group, specializing in evaluating and implementing business and operational improvements for construction firms of all sizes. With hands-on experience ranging from apprentice electrician to executive management, she brings deep industry knowledge and practical expertise in leadership development, strategic planning, project execution, business development, productivity improvement, and training. An internationally recognized speaker, mentor, author, and teacher, Stephane is known for her ability to motivate teams, strengthen organizations, and drive operational excellence.

Tuesday Nov 17, 2026

7:30 PM - 4:00 PM PST

Surrey Hotel | Civic Hotel, Autograph Collection
Civic C Ballroom

7:00 am - Program Registration

7:30 am - Program Commences

9:45 -10:00 am - Coffee break

11:45 am - Buffet Lunch

4:00 pm - Program Convenes

Contact SMACNA-BC at smacnabc@smacna-bc.org ■

41ST ANNUAL SMACNA-BC GOLF CLASSIC SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

SMACNA-BC is holding its 41st Annual Golf Classic on Friday, September 11, 2026, at Northview Golf & Country Club in Surrey, BC. Since our tournament is held in mid-September,

it is usually one of the last tournaments of the year. With our second-to-none grand prizes, we have a tremendous turn out from our members, associate members, and their guests. The tournament sells out within hours of sending out the notice.

SMACNA-BC would like to provide your company the opportunity to sponsor this exceptional annual event. Donor companies will be publicly recognized both at the tournament and in follow up publicity on SMACNA-BC's website and in the *Sheet Metal Journal* magazine.

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- CASH Prizes - Engineered Air

Sponsorship will be made on a first come, first served basis. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to call the SMACNA-BC office at (604) 585-4641.

Registration for golf opens the last week of July 2026. Companies will be limited to max 12 players, twosomes or foursomes only, no singles. Please note, while your sponsorship is greatly appreciated, this is not a registration spot for the tournament. All registrations are first come, first served.

Proceeds from on-course events/activities will be donated to our president's choice of charity— Helping Families in Need. For more information, visit helpingfamiliesinneed.org ■

BC CONSTRUCTION ASSOCIATION CALLS ON PROVINCE TO IMPLEMENT PROMPT PAYMENT LEGISLATION WITHOUT FURTHER DELAY OR EXEMPTIONS

*Submission led by the BCCA and backed by
construction companies across the province urges
government to finalize the Construction Prompt Payment
Act regulations during this fiscal year.*

The BC Construction Association (BCCA) has released a formal submission in response to the provincial

government's *Construction Prompt Payment Act* Discussion Paper, supported by construction companies and associations from across the province, as the next step toward implementation of the Act's regulatory framework.

The submission is backed by firms and associations representing over 5,000 companies, working across the single-family and multi-family residential, commercial, institutional, industrial, and civil construction sectors, delivering projects of every size and scale throughout British Columbia.

"Ambiguous or poorly defined regulations invite inconsistent interpretation, and for an industry already under financial strain, that kind of uncertainty could have serious unintended consequences," said Chris Atchison, president of the BCCA. "We need the provincial government to prioritize getting this work done, getting the regulatory details right in close consultation with industry, and bringing the Act into force in full, for everyone, at the same time."

The positions and recommendations contained in the submission reflect extensive collaboration among industry associations, allied stakeholders, and leaders across the construction sector. They are grounded in practical industry experience, informed by research into the realities of other Canadian jurisdictions, and refined through legal review to support a practical, effective, and nationally consistent framework for British Columbia.

"Implementing the Act is an achievable initiative that requires no significant spending and will deliver tangible benefits across the construction sector that will strengthen our province's communities and economy," Atchison emphasized. "The submission is unequivocal that the Act must apply to the entirety of the construction industry and come into force at one time and that education and industry resources, not exemptions or delayed implementation, are the appropriate response to support industry through this transition."

The submission further identifies two priority areas for the regulations that will govern the Act:

1. Interest on Late Payments

The prescribed interest rate plays a critical role in determining whether the Act achieves its intended purpose. BCCA recommends that the prescribed interest rate be based on the long-established provisions found in the standard construction contracts published by the Canadian Construction Documents Committee (CCDC) and the Canadian Construction Association (CCA). These contracts are widely used and understood across BC's construction industry and provide for interest at 2% above prime for the first 60 days and 4% above prime thereafter. BCCA considers the CCDC and CCA interest provisions to be representative of the market.

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2. Regulation-Making Powers Under Section 49

The regulation-making powers in section 49 are fundamental to the successful implementation of the Act. Given their significance, BCCA anticipates the government will continue engagement with the Association throughout the regulatory development process and welcomes the opportunity to review these matters with government as they are considered and developed.

For more information, BCCA's full response to the Discussion Paper can be found here: bccasn.com/JointIndustryResponse-CPPADiscussionPaper ■

THE SWITCH TO TYPE II HELMETS TO PROTECT CONSTRUCTION WORKERS IS GAINING MOMENTUM

Regulations often develop slowly, while employers can act quickly to promote worker safety. One private sector initiative that's gaining momentum is the use of Type II helmets—not through regulation, but through corporate mandates by large construction employers.

Last year, the Canadian Construction Safety Council (CCSC), an organization representing a dozen of Canada's largest construction companies, said it would mandate the use of CSA

or ANSI-certified Type II helmets in 2026. That mandate now has a hard stop, July 1, and extends to all workers employed by CCSC members, their trade partners, and site visitors.

Here's the reason for the new policy. Type I helmets are only designed to reduce force as a result of an impact to the top of the head. Type II helmets with an integrated, manufacturer-approved, four-point chin strap are designed to reduce force as a result of impacts to the front, back, sides, and top of the head.

The US National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health reports that traumatic brain injuries account for approximately 25% of all construction-related fatalities, over half of which result from falls, mostly from ladders, roofs, and scaffolding. Other causes include falling objects and struck-by incidents.

"Research shows that Type II helmets, especially those with integrated retention systems, offer greater protection and help reduce the risk of serious or fatal head injuries," says Peter Lineen, executive vice president, health, safety & environment with CCSC member Bird Construction.

That's not a surprise, because the integrated chin straps featured in Type II helmets help them stay in place during slips, falls, and high winds, or while workers are working in awkward positions.

A recent study by the Helmet Lab at Virginia Tech reveals that a shift to Type II helmets reduces average risk for fall-related concussion by 34% and for skull fractures by 65%.

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Type II helmets are considered acceptable under regulations in all Canadian jurisdictions, although there may be specific requirements for either ANSI or CSA certification. A wide selection of products can meet those specs for employers making the switch.

“We believe that Type II helmets are the safest option for our employees and those of our trade partners,” says Lineen. “We also encourage all industry organizations, including individual employers, to join the CCSC in mandating Type II helmets with an integrated chin strap for their employees on construction sites across the country.”

Mike McKenna is executive director of the British Columbia Construction Safety Alliance, which is also a member of the Canadian Federation of Construction Safety Associations. He says that safety associations have an important role to play, not only in assisting employers to be in conformance, but also in encouraging them to seek out the most effective personal protective equipment available to their workers.

“New research continues to identify Type II helmets as the safer helmet design for construction, with improved outcomes for those who use them,” he says. “As British Columbia’s industry safety association, we encourage our members to look at the research and support them in making an informed choice in favour of Type II helmets to protect their workers and also those workers employed by their trade partners.” ■

SMACNA-BC / SMART Local 280 Partnership



Left: Jud Martell, Local Union No. 280 President.
Right: Al Benning, Ames Metal Fabricators 82 Ltd., SMACNA-BC President.



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NORTHERN SHEET METAL

Building a Reputation Through Precision and Partnership

by Natalie Bruckner

When Chris Pearen moved from Vancouver to Kamloops in 2019, there was no clear outline of what his work life would look like. He'd spent years in sheet metal, building his expertise in commercial and custom projects, and through weekend work alongside colleague Blake Lancaster. Over time, that collaboration became more consistent, with both of them taking on projects that demanded skill, precision, and a shared focus on delivering high-quality work.

"Chris and I had been travelling the province for about two and a half years doing really great jobs. We were basically common law by the end of it," Lancaster jokes. During that time, the two of them developed a level of trust essential to their line of work.

The decision to pivot and start their own business came during a period of personal change, when Pearen chose to leave the city, first moving to Kamloops and then to Kelowna. "I didn't want to miss my kids' childhood by doing out-of-town jobs all the time," says Pearen. "Moving gave me a reset. That's when the idea hit us. Why not start our own company?"

From that conversation, what began in the early uncertainty of the pandemic managed to take root and build momentum. Northern Sheet Metal was born.

Today, the company operates with a team of eight, including a bookkeeper and technicians working across HVAC installation,



“As Northern was becoming established, it also happened to coincide with the legalization of cannabis in BC, which created a wave of related work with BC Cannabis Stores and BC Liquor Stores. Those projects took them across the province, from Prince George to Tofino.”

repair, and maintenance. Their work stretches along the Sea to Sky corridor, the Okanagan, and into Alberta, reflecting how quickly the business has evolved from small beginnings into an established operation.

In those early days, the work stayed close to familiar territory. “We just kept doing what we knew, which was small commercial projects,” says Pearen. “We both had experience in multifamily, high rises, wood frame, and a lot of restaurant and grocery store work.” That consistency helped stabilize the company financially, while also shaping the direction of their skill set, particularly as they began to notice how often similar types of projects were coming their way.

As Northern was becoming established, it also happened to coincide with the legalization of cannabis in BC, which created a wave of related work with BC Cannabis Stores and BC Liquor Stores. Those projects took them across the province, from Prince George to Tofino.

Over time, their scope expanded further into retail and national brand work, including projects with Lululemon, Lindt Chocolate, and Sunglass Hut stores. They continued building strong relationships with builders and established themselves as the go-to HVAC company in the Greater Vancouver Area and beyond.

By 2021, they saw a shift in the Sea to Sky and Whistler markets, with more demand for high-end residential work. “We had done some of that in Vancouver, and it just gradually became higher and higher end in places like Squamish and Whistler,” Pearen says. “That’s when we realized this is the market we were looking for.”

Pearen and Lancaster recall an early residential project in WedgeWoods near Whistler that was a catalyst for this shift. The project itself was modest in size, around 3,000 square feet, but the expectations around execution were not. The experience reinforced their belief that careful installation and going above and beyond could create long-term value, even if it wasn’t immediately visible. While it resulted in a financial loss at the time, it ultimately opened doors for them in terms of reputation.

“I will never forget during the walkthrough the mechanical engineer taking particular notice of the installation quality. He was so impressed he invited others to come and check it out,” explains Lancaster. That moment led them to plumbers Ken and Trevor Groeneveld from Ridge Meadows Mechanical, who specialize in high-end residential work. It was the start of one of the many great working relationships that continue to shape much of their current workload.

Perhaps one of the most technically ambitious and forward-thinking projects to date, and an example of their breadth of expertise, was a recent high-value residential build on Bowen Island, valued at around \$70 million. “That project has four air handling units, an HRV system, and a pretty advanced ventilation design,” Lancaster explains. “Normally, you would use a standard off-the-shelf vent grill, but on this one we worked with a system that was automated. It was an exhaust system that would activate when you called for ventilation in a room. The vent would actually drop down and increase airflow significantly, going from a small opening to roughly an inch, increasing extraction in that specific space.”

Northern worked with 3D-printed custom grilles on this project that had to be flush-mounted and match the ceiling finish. “That meant we had to design components that could not only move mechanically, but also, support additional weight and integrate



“Advancing the industry through high end work, raising standards, and building strong partnerships sits at Northern. Sheet Metal’s core and has helped the company navigate challenging periods.”

cleanly into the finish,” Lancaster explains. “We worked with David Hill, owner of Eneready Products Ltd., who is highly respected for his technical expertise and an expert in PoshTime Control. At the end, we brought him to site so he could see the system installed and working. Seeing his product modified like that was pretty special.”

Over the past seven years, Northern has built a reputation for its innovative thinking, and through its partners has been involved in pilot projects, such as a FortisBC initiative testing the real-world efficiency of low emission, high performance gas heat pumps in BC’s commercial and multi-family building sectors.

Advancing the industry through high end work, raising standards, and building strong partnerships sits at Northern Sheet Metal’s core and has helped the company navigate challenging periods. Like many in the industry, recruitment remains an ongoing issue. As Pearen puts it, “We can teach sheet metal, but we can’t teach attitude. We don’t expect people to be fully trained, especially in high-end residential work as it takes time to understand expectations. Someone who doesn’t know the trade can still last a long time if they’re willing to learn.”

The value of a strong team and relationships extends in all directions, and that includes the role SMACNA-BC plays in that ecosystem. “The networking part of being a member is huge for us,” Lancaster says. “It probably means more than money to have access to such a talented group of individuals. You’ve got people like Phil McDonald, Ron Boone, and Mark McLaren, and being in that environment is really valuable. Also, Jeremy Hallman is a great guy with a wealth of knowledge and is always available to answer questions.”

That support system has meant a lot to Lancaster and Pearen as the company has grown, and its impact is often seen in more indirect ways. “Even when it comes to recruitment, when we don’t pull someone directly from the hall, we can call other SMACNA contractors and ask if they have people available. We actually got through a major project a couple of years ago because another contractor lent us people while they were slower and has never expected anything back in return. That kind of cooperation is real,” says Lancaster. ■



THE SMITH SHEET METAL *story*



Jacob, Aaron, and Merle Smith at Smith Sheet Metal's new 28,000-square-foot location.

Smith Sheet Metal Works Ltd. was established in 1998 as a father-and-son company and has been providing HVAC and custom sheet metal fabrication services throughout British Columbia and the Lower Mainland for more than 28 years.

In the beginning, Merle and Aaron rented a small, 1,800-square-foot building in Port Coquitlam. With a \$4,500 loan, they purchased some basic machinery—and away they went.

Like any growing business, there were plenty of challenges along the way, including recessions, changes in government, and more than a few unexpected bumps in the road. Nevertheless, their determination to succeed, willingness to work hard, and commitment to the trade always shone through. Whatever the challenge, they found a way to keep moving forward, growing, and prospering.

In 2000, Aaron's wife, Colleen, joined the dynamic duo and began the daunting task of organizing their shoebox of receipts. She introduced electronic accounting software and brought some much-needed order to the front office the two of them had created. She came to the company with extensive experience, having managed the finances of her family's gas station and worked at a law firm prior to that.

Merle and Aaron are certain that without her, the company would not have grown into what it is today. Her contribution became one of the most important keys to the company's continued success and growth.

In 2003, the family purchased the building they had been renting and expanded the shop area to 5,000 square feet. By then, the company had grown to a team of six employees.

In 2014, Merle retired, marking the beginning of another new chapter. The shop was expanded once again, this time to 10,000 square feet, and the team grew to 16 employees.



Then, in 2023, the next generation joined the family business. Aaron's son, Jacob, graduated from high school and decided to follow in the family's footsteps. He is now a journeyman in the trade and is doing extremely well. Learning the business from the ground up, Jacob continues to develop his skills while earning the respect of his peers.

By 2024, the original shop had been modernized with the best equipment that could fit within the available space. At that time, the company had 20 fabricators working in the shop, producing the sheet metal materials required by more than 50 field employees.

Smith Sheet Metal crews work throughout the province on as many as 60 different construction sites at any given time. Over the years, the company has become well known and respected within the industry, working on projects ranging from small tenant improvements and full restaurant builds to major commercial and institutional projects. These have included the UBC Biomedical Research Centre, the First Nations Health Authority building, various hospital projects, and projects for companies such as Microsoft and Amazon.

By 2026, Smith Sheet Metal had expanded its original building to the largest footprint the property could sustain, and the



even greater role in the company's future. During construction, dedicated areas were incorporated into the new facility for onboarding new employees, health and safety training, and ongoing skills development.

The new shop was also designed with employee comfort and productivity in mind. Four 16-foot-diameter Greenheck HVLS fans were installed to improve air movement and temperature control during the summer, along with radiant heating systems for the winter. An on-demand chilled-water dispenser helps keep the team hydrated, while upgraded LED lighting creates a bright and comfortable working environment.

Team building has always been a high priority at Smith Sheet Metal, so considerable attention was also given to the smaller details that make a workplace better. The new facility includes employee lockers, showers, a dedicated crew cleanup area, and a high-quality lunchroom.

Although the new facility has the appearance and capabilities of a much larger corporate operation, Smith Sheet Metal remains, at its core, a family-style business. The goal is to create a workplace where employees feel comfortable, valued, and proud to be part of the team.

The new layout of the shop and machinery has already enabled the company to become far more efficient while continuing to build an even better product. With the additional space, Smith Sheet Metal is incorporating an entirely new lineup of machinery that will help the team keep pace with increasingly complex projects and tighter construction schedules.

One area that received particular attention in the new facility is the custom stainless-steel department. Smith Sheet Metal is proud to have some of the industry's finest TIG welders, who fabricate a wide range of custom products, including elaborate sinks, specialty tables, exhaust canopies, and railings. They are also always ready for the challenge of bringing to life whatever unique creations our customers may bring to them.

reality that the company had finally outgrown its longtime home became impossible to ignore.

After an extensive search, the family found a new location on the other side of town that seemed to meet all the needs of the growing company: a 28,000-square-foot freestanding building situated on a 1.1-acre corner lot, with excellent accessibility to the surrounding area.

There was just one challenge—the building needed extensive upgrades to become a modern sheet metal fabrication facility and to meet current building code requirements.

The solution was to gut the building and start from scratch.

Fortunately, the existing shell provided a great foundation to work from. Brand-new offices were constructed with a bright, modern, clean, and comfortable design, while the shop was completely reimagined to support the company's current operations and future growth.

With the increasing demands of today's construction projects, more stringent safety standards, the need for improved air-quality systems, and increasingly sophisticated life-safety requirements, the family knew that training would play an

In addition to custom fabrication, Smith Sheet Metal's welders assist with the on-site installation of specialized laboratory ventilation systems. This expertise has proven to be a significant asset and a major success on some of the company's most specialized projects.

Today, as Smith Sheet Metal continues to grow and expand its team, the company maintains the same commitment to quality, craftsmanship, service, and hard work that it was built on.

As a family, we have taken the time to carefully consider the path forward and what we want the future of Smith Sheet Metal to look like. We have chosen a succession plan that will allow the company to continue with the same fundamental values and vision that were there when my father and I started the business 28 years ago.

What began as a father-and-son company in a small 1,800-square-foot shop with a \$4,500 loan has grown into a three-generation family business operating from a 28,000-square-foot facility.

A great deal has changed since 1998—but the foundation of Smith Sheet Metal remains the same: family, hard work, skilled craftsmanship, and a commitment to building something that will last. ■



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SMACNA



Mental Health Summit

September 17 in BC | Civic Hotel

By Jessica Kirby

SMACNA Canada *invites contractors, workers, and industry leaders to attend the 2026 Canada Mental Health Summit — a half-day event focused on mental health awareness, reducing stigma, workplace support, and practical strategies for fostering healthier workplaces in the trades.*

The SMACNA Canada Mental Health Summit, scheduled for this fall, is a half-day event held in Vancouver and Toronto to address the construction industry's most pressing issues in mental health.

Why hold a Mental Health Summit?

A study by the Construction Industry Rehabilitation Program says 83% of construction workers experience moderate to severe mental health challenges during their careers, and trades workers account for more than 20% of toxic drug deaths in British Columbia. According to EllisDon, studies show that suicide is roughly three times more likely than a workplace fatality in the trades.

That's why the Canada Mental Health Summit is important. Presenters Geoff Moffett, workplace mental health facilitator for Canadian Mental Health Association; Caitlin Kantor, outreach worker with Canadian Mental Health Association; and Zachary Hensch, director of corporate health and safety at Vets Group, will bring together contractors, workers, and industry leaders for education, conversation, and community-building around mental health in the trades.

"Understanding mental health concerns is important to helping people be the best they can be," Moffet says. "Workplaces are a source of stress and mental health concerns. It is important to discuss how mental health appears in the sheet metal industry and how to understand supporting each other. Better mental health leads to better productivity, wellness, and overall job satisfaction, as well as leading to fewer accidents and health concerns."

The Summit content addresses the full spectrum—from recognizing early warning signs and understanding substance use to building supportive workplaces and knowing when and how to access help. Expert-led sessions will deliver practical tools to help reduce stigma and sharpen awareness so every attendee can support themselves and their colleagues.

What Attendees Will Learn

The summit curriculum features sessions in four areas: mental health awareness in the workplace, understanding addictive behaviours, reducing stigma and supporting colleagues, and having effective mental health conversations. Throughout, it will address misconceptions around mental health and addictions—an essential opportunity for growth in the workplace and as a community, Moffet says.

"This event will help people understand that mental health and addiction concerns are common, and the more we understand, the more we can normalize these as conditions we all go through at times in our lives," he says. "There are beliefs that mental illness and addiction are things that happen to other people and that people with substance use disorder and addiction should just 'get over it'. This belief stops people from understanding how complex and challenging living with these conditions is and the value of supporting each other in working through them."

Explore the Curriculum

The session titled Mental Health Awareness in the Workplace offers a comprehensive overview, grounded in the core belief that recovery is expected when individuals receive timely and adequate treatment. Using the Mental Health Continuum Model, participants will explore the distinction between mental health as a state of well-being and mental illness as a health condition—and how diversity, systemic barriers, and neurodivergence intersect with mental health outcomes. Facilitators will also address key risk and protective factors, common conditions such as anxiety and depression, and the importance of early intervention.

© iStock / Maden Zivkovic

Understanding Addictive Behaviours will provide an in-depth exploration of the biological and behavioral complexities of addiction and its frequent co-occurrence with mental health conditions. The group will examine addiction as a chronic disease that rewires the brain's reward system, manifesting in behaviours such as substance use, gambling, and compulsive shopping. The session explores self-medication, navigates the Substance Use Spectrum, and teaches attendees to recognize signs of distress through performance changes, cognitive difficulties, and physical fatigue—while connecting participants to specialized resources, including Indigenous-specific wellness supports.

Getting into practical tools to help strengthen the workplace, the Reducing Stigma and Supporting Colleagues session identifies and works to dismantle the social and structural barriers that prevent people from seeking help. It examines three forms of stigma—structural, public, and self-stigma—alongside the role of implicit bias in shaping our perceptions. Practical tools include the STOP method (Stereotype, Trivialize, Offend, Patronize), to help attendees recognize stigmatizing attitudes in real time. The session concludes with strategies for adopting accurate, sensitive, and person-centered language to reduce barriers to care.

The final session, Having Effective Mental Health Conversations, is a practical, skill-building session focused on how leaders

and colleagues can initiate supportive conversations about psychological health. Participants will learn about the legal “duty to inquire” and “duty to accommodate,” how to recognize Signs of Struggle (SOS), such as withdrawal or emotional distress, and a five-step conversation framework: Prepare, “I notice,” “I’m wondering,” “How can I help?” and “Take a moment”. The session also addresses responding to critical distress with empathy, immediate referral, and the implementation of ongoing workplace accommodations.

“I believe that knowledge is power and hope that participants leave with facts that might challenge any negative biases that may be present around mental health,” Moffet says. “I hope people feel comfortable approaching colleagues when there are concerns with any mental health or other concerns. The earlier we address mental health challenges, the better the outcome for everyone. We want to build workplaces that are supportive of each other’s wellness.”

Registration opened June 1, and space is limited. The summit takes place September 17, 2026, at the Civic Hotel Autograph Collection in Surrey and in Toronto on September 30, at the Eagle’s Nest Golf Club. Reach out to the SMACNA-BC office for the link to register. ■



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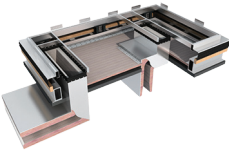
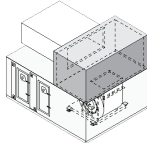
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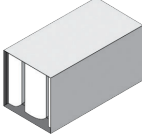
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NFPA-96-2024 EXHAUST DUCT SYSTEMS SUMMARY

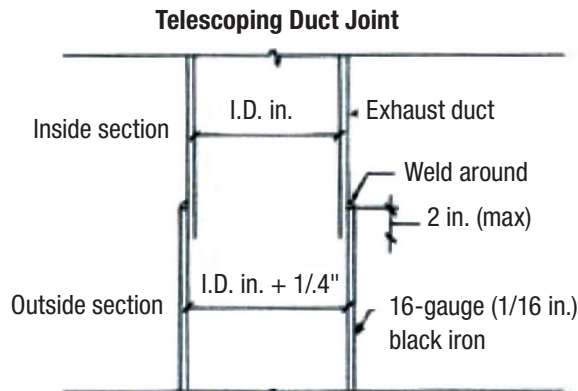
This is a summary of major points in National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 96-2024 Chapter 7 *Exhaust Duct Systems* and is not to be construed as a reprint of the standard. All the information contained in the standard and exceptions to the standard may not be fully covered in this summary.

Grease ducts shall not pass through a firewall but must lead as directly as possible to the exterior of a building. The duct systems cannot be interconnected with any other building ventilation or exhaust system. All ducts must be installed without forming dips or traps that may collect residues. In a common duct system with multiple inlets over several cooking appliances, the lowest end of the main branch must be connected flush to the bottom side of the branch duct.

Openings must be provided at the sides or top of a duct and at any changes in direction. Hoods with dampers must have an access panel for cleaning and inspection. Horizontal ducts must have access panels located every 12 ft. These panels are to be 20" x 20" to allow for inspection and cleaning. The panels must be constructed of same material and thickness as the duct and use gasketing rated for 1500 degrees F. Each access panel in the duct system must have a sign stating, "ACCESS PANEL-DO NOT OBSTRUCT".

Ducts must be constructed of and supported by carbon steel not less than 0.060 inches or stainless steel not less than 0.048 inches in thickness. All seams, joints, penetrations, and duct-to-hood connections must have a liquid tight continuous external weld. Overlapping duct connections of either the telescoping or the bell type must be used for the field welded joints. Butt welded joints are not permitted. The inside duct sections must always be uphill of the outside duct sections. The difference between the inside dimensions of the two ducts to be joined must not exceed 1/4 inch and the overlap cannot exceed 2 inches. (See Fig. 1.)

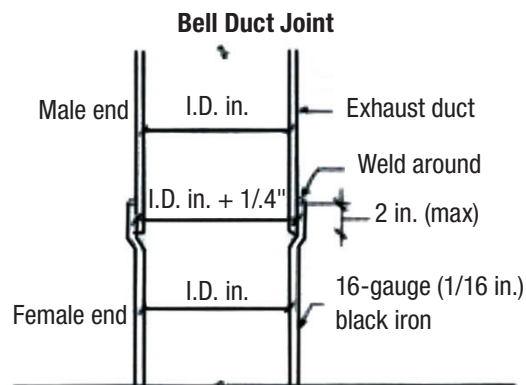
Fig 1. Telescoping and Bell-Type Duct Connections



- Duct size decreases (going upward) with each telescope.
- Smaller (inside) duct section is always above or uphill (on sloped duct), to be self-draining into larger (outside) duct.



By Norm Grusnick, PEng
Commercial Sales Rep,
PACAIRE HVAC Suppliers Ltd.



- Duct stays the same throughout the duct system.
- Smaller (inside) male duct end is always above or uphill (on sloped duct), to be self-draining into larger (outside) female duct end.

The exterior portion of the ductwork must be vertical wherever possible and be adequately supported to the exterior of the building with mechanical fasteners that do not penetrate the duct walls. All ducts shall be protected on the exterior of the building by paint or other suitable weather protective coating or be constructed of stainless steel.

In all buildings more than one storey in height, and in one-storey buildings where the roof or ceiling assembly is required to have a fire resistance rating, the ducts must be continuously enclosed. This enclosure must extend from the lowest fire-rated ceiling or floor above the hood through to the roof to maintain the separation required by applicable codes. The enclosure must be sealed around the duct at the lowest point of penetration and vented to the outside of the building through a weather protected opening.

If a building is less than four storeys, the enclosure wall must have a fire rating of not less than one hour. In buildings of four storeys or more, the enclosure wall must have a fire rating of not less than two hours.

Clearance from the duct to the interior surface of the enclosure of combustible construction must not be less than 18 inches. The clearance from the duct to the interior surface of noncombustible or limited construction must not be less than 6 inches. Each duct system shall constitute an individual system serving only exhaust hoods from one fire zone. Multiple ducts shall not be permitted in a single enclosure unless accepted by the authority having jurisdiction.

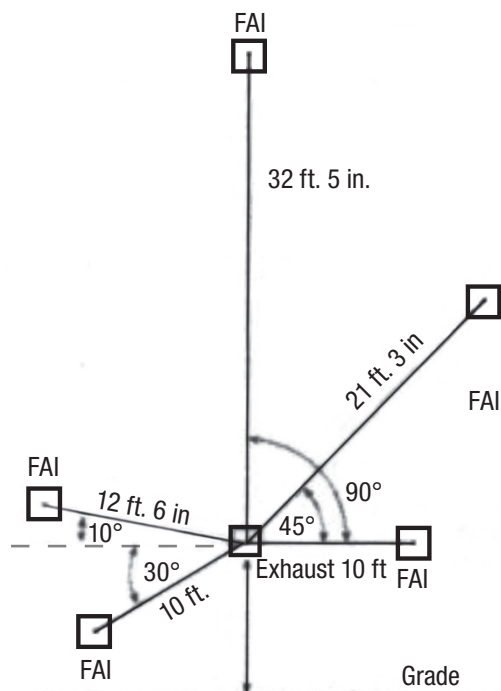
Rooftop terminations require a minimum 10-foot horizontal clearance from the outlet of an exhaust duct to any adjacent buildings, property lines, and air intakes. Where space is limited to prevent a 10-foot horizontal separation between, a vertical separation is permitted as long as the exhaust outlet is a minimum of 3 feet above any air intake located within 10 feet horizontally. The exhaust flow must be directed up and away from the surface of the roof and have a minimum distance of 40 inches between the duct outlet and the surface of the roof.

The exhaust system must have a non-combustible, closed collection container to drain grease out of any traps or low points in the fan or near the discharge. A hinged upblast listed exhaust fan is to be used on rooftops. A safe access and work surface all around the fan must also be provided.

Installations with wall terminations on the outside of a non-combustible wall must have a minimum of 10 feet of clearance to any adjacent buildings or property line. The closest point of air intake or operable door or window above the plane of the exhaust termination must be a minimum of 10 feet plus .25 feet for each 1 degree from horizontal, the angle being measured from the centre of the exhaust termination to the center of the air intake. (See Fig. 2.)

More information see nfpa.org ■

Fig 2. Exhaust termination distance from fresh air intake (FAI) or operable door or window



Fresh air intake (FAI) applies to any air intake, including an operable door or window.

Example: FAI above plane of exhaust: 10 ft + 0.25 ft. per degree between closest edges.



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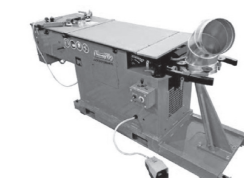


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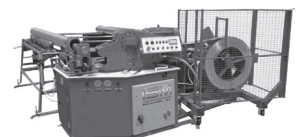
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HVAC: MAPPING THE WORK

How shops can use AI to turn messy, real-world operations into clear processes, usable SOPs, and repeatable training tools.

In many fabrication shops, the hardest part of improvement is seeing the work clearly.

Jonathan Marsh's case for AI starts there. "If a process is vague, undocumented, or trapped in someone's head, the shop pays for it in rework, waiting, and friction," says the CEO of Steel Toe Consulting and a technology strategist who specializes in helping construction companies integrate and implement modern technology and workflows to enhance their operations.

At SMACNA's Fab Forum that took place in April in Chicago, he framed process mapping as a practical way to recover time and reduce wasted capacity, arguing that clear, standardized systems can improve throughput and profitability.

AI can help smooth this process, he says. Instead of waiting for a perfect document or a dedicated process writer, teams can capture work as it happens and let AI help shape raw material into something usable. "That means," he explains, "a supervisor, operator, or frontline worker can contribute with little training, turning screenshots, phone videos, notes, and existing documents into first drafts much faster than traditional documentation methods."

Start with Real Work

Marsh's chronological approach begins with observation.

Before AI can organize anything, the shop must show it what actually happens on the floor. He suggests a simple capture flow that starts with collecting the work in motion, whether through screen recordings, click trails, videos, or notes, and treating those as the raw ingredients for later cleanup.

The next step is normalization. AI can help turn a rough transcript or a pile of observations into a consistent structure by adding step formatting, naming conventions, role labels, and safety notes. In other words, the tool is imposing order on the shop, so that a messy process becomes readable and repeatable.

Marsh identifies screen-based systems as especially useful for digital workflows, since they can automatically generate step-by-step standard operating procedures (SOPs) from software activity. For teams that need training and version control, he points to platforms that combine process documentation with onboarding and approval workflows.

General-purpose large language models can be flexible options for fast drafting and formatting. "That flexibility matters when a team already has its own templates or wants to build a process from transcripts, notes, or scratch," he explains. "It's not that one tool fits every shop, but that a tool matches the kind of work being documented."

Build the Team

Marsh argues that good process work depends on the right people, not just the right software.

AI implementation works best when two roles are present: an innovation lead and a delivery lead. One person sees patterns, adapts quickly, and pushes ideas forward; the other keeps the work sequenced, grounded, and consistent.

He ties that to personality and working style. The process improvement fails when it is either too theoretical or too rigid. "A strong team balances creativity with execution so the result is both practical and scalable," he says.

Process or Procedure

There is a difference between process and procedure in AI adoption.

A process describes the bigger flow of work: what happens, in what order, and how one stage connects to the next. A procedure, by contrast, gets down to the exact steps, rules, and checks needed when the task must be done the same way every time.

Since not every job needs the same level of control, Marsh suggests using process language for larger workflows, such as project life cycles or shop flow, and procedure language for tightly controlled tasks like machine operation, fixed-station assembly, or quality checks.

"The wrong level of detail can make a system either too loose to be useful or too rigid to survive contact with reality," he shares.

From Video to SOP

To do this right, use a simple implementation method, Marsh suggests. First, identify the process or procedure and define its key areas. Next, film the work as it exists today, then review the video with people who understand the operation and create a descriptive transcript.

From there, AI can turn that transcript into a draft SOP or process document, which should then be reviewed, approved, and stored for reuse. He emphasizes that the final system should be searchable, versioned, and organized so teams can return to it later instead of rebuilding knowledge from scratch.

In the end, it's "not about replacing human judgment," he says. "It's more about making expertise visible, reusable, and easier to teach."

This article appeared in the May/June issue of SMACNews. Visit smacna.org/news/smacnews/issue-archive/issue/smacnews-may-june-2026 to read the issue.

HOW CONTRACTORS CAN AVOID THREE COMMON MISTAKES DURING PERIODS OF GROWTH

Periods of growth are exciting for any contractor, indicating strong demand and the opportunity to expand into new markets, larger projects, or new project types.

However, given the cyclical nature of construction, assumptions that hold true during slower periods may not hold when project demand accelerates. Project-by-project budgeting, fluctuating material prices, and labour availability challenges make it difficult to predict and allocate resources accurately and effectively.

As contractors navigate the peaks and valleys of the construction cycle, avoiding three common mistakes can help maintain growth momentum and prevent avoidable strain:

1. Cash flow blind spots when workload increases.

Cash flow may be more challenging to manage when project volume increases quickly. During slower periods, some contractors rely on borrowing between jobs to cover labour, equipment, or overhead. Larger jobs often require significant upfront mobilization costs, and without disciplined forecasting and timely billing, a shortfall may be more challenging to identify. Regularly monitoring cash flow by contract size, timing, and billing structure keeps working capital aligned with the contractor's goals and provides a stronger foundation for larger opportunities. In certain situations, it actually may require infusion of additional capital or possibly a request to the company's bank for a temporary or permanent increase in available line of credit.

2. Relying on outdated or incomplete cost data on new bids.

Every bid is built on assumptions about labour, materials, and

subcontractor pricing. In busy cycles, those inputs can shift quickly, which means the costs or productivity expectations from the last project may not apply to the next one. When those changes aren't communicated or updated, estimators may base bids on outdated assumptions, creating a gap between what the job was priced to deliver and what is required in the field. Keeping cost data current and sharing field updates regularly helps contractors price work accurately during growth.

3. Not reviewing the WIP schedule frequently enough.

With more jobs running at once, underbilling, fading margins, or shifting timelines can surface quickly. If the WIP is not reviewed regularly, these issues may go unnoticed until the financial impact becomes more difficult to control or correct. Consistent WIP reviews help contractors communicate real-time job performance with lenders and protect profitability as project volume rises. Keeping these schedules up to date provides an early warning system and helps ensure that financial decisions reflect the true status of each job. It is recommended that WIP schedules be prepared and analyzed at least monthly.

Periods of high demand allow contractors to reinforce the systems and best practices that will support them in slower months. Using growth periods to sharpen forecasting, improve job visibility, and update cost data helps contractors sustain momentum, not only through the current workload but also as market conditions shift.

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