Located on the bustling Texas Medical Center Campus, TCH NRI was constructed on an extremely tight site, according to Lane Thomson, project manager. “Within this confined space, Tellepsen worked diligently to avoid disrupting the operations of the adjacent medical facilities,” he said. “One of the most complex tasks, in this context, was pouring the foundation -- 5,000 cubic yards of concrete -- in one weekend.

“Several unique considerations went into Tellepsen’s construction approach to TCH NRI. First, the research facility needed to be flexible and adaptable, yet strong enough to accommodate sensitive equipment and research. We used a concrete structure with moment frames, which allowed maximum flexibility for future changes, reduced structural depth, and increased the ceiling heights, plenum space and building stiffness.

“Second, the facility needed to be able to withstand tropical storms. We hired specialists and conducted water, wind, and stress tests to ensure TCH NRI could withstand the extreme elements associated with tropical storms. Third, the facility needed to be constructed on a “just-in-time” basis, with design plans being released just days prior to construction. We collaborated with all stakeholders, putting together a collaborative effort that resulted in a seamless transition between each document release.”

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When you see a story on the news about a fallen soldier, are you left wanting to know more about that person who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country? Who were these individuals? What were their passions and interests? How do their families remember them?

Questions such as these motivated Rob Hatton to initiate the Beneath the Flag project, a book series and documentary film as well as a website and Facebook page. These avenues allow the stories of men and women of our Armed Forces that were lost in combat to be told more intimately through the memories and photographs of their loved ones.

When Hatton learned the story of Marine Lance Cpl. Luke Holler, a San Antonio resident killed in action in Iraq in November 2006, through his family, friends, and brothers-in-arms, Hatton knew that experience established a personal connection beyond that of name, rank, and serial number.

Starting with the launch of the first Beneath the Flag coffee table book in Fall 2013, Hatton will be giving our fallen heroes depth and dimension that transcends the fleeting coverage of an evening news clip.

“We just want people to know that so often there are parents and family members out there who have lost a loved one, and we don’t realize that we could be standing next to them in line at the grocery store or sitting next to them at a restaurant and not have any idea that these people have sacrificed so much,” explains Hatton. “This project is as much to honor the individuals who have sacrificed on the battlefield as well as their families and their loved ones.”

While support from members of the military has been extremely strong, Hatton says he will start with one book and gauge the response. Since all the books are being printed here in the U.S., the significant cost of printing will be a factor in continuing the series.

But, Hatton assures, “We have the experience to understand what it takes to pull something of this magnitude off and do it effectively and successfully.”

Since the age of 17, Hatton has run his own business in one form or another, working in the fields of marketing, publishing, and design—all skills he is applying to ensure the project’s physical manifestations in print and on video.

Meanwhile, Hatton continues to call upon those who have lost someone in Iraq or Afghanistan to share their stories so the project can include as many of our nation’s lost warriors as possible.

For more information or to contribute to the Beneath the Flag project, call Rob Hatton at 210-849-9786 or e-mail him at rob@beneaththeflag.com.

Rob Hatton is compiling the stories of fallen combat soldiers into a series of books and a documentary film.

Keeping their memories alive

The Beneath the Flag image is a mosaic of photos of men and women of the Armed Forces who died in service to their country.

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Taking center stage

Companies, individuals and projects were honored at the 16th Annual Excellence in Construction Awards Gala at the Houston Junior League Jan. 25. Attendees gathered for the awards presentation following a cocktail and hors d’oeuvres reception. The master of ceremonies was Mike Holland, Marek Brothers Systems.

The American Subcontractors Association Houston Chapter (ASA) hosted the event. Each year ASA Houston presents the Excellence in Construction awards in eight categories. The association members nominate individuals and firms in each category. -ab

Project of the Year Under $5 Million: 500 Fannin, Fretz Construction

Project of the Year Between $5-$15 Million: Mayde Creek Junior High Additions and Renovations, Durotech Inc.

Project of the Year Over $15 Million: BBVA Compass Stadium, Manhattan Construction

Project Superintendent of the Year: John Cook, Durotech Inc.

Project Manager of the Year: Jim Penland, Gilbane Building Co.

Architect/Engineer of the Year: Gensler

General Contractor Safety Award: Tellepsen

General Contractor of the Year: Gilbane Building Co.

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**Spotlight**

Michael D. Stall, MSCE, PE, President
Managed Response Inc.

To Michael D. Stall, success is about being happy and balanced. “In my opinion, the keys of success are doing a good job, dedication to the job, helping people and doing the right thing,” he said. “I think being fair and reasonable in all situations and helping people to see what we all need to do now and into the future.”

Where were you born and raised, Michael? I was born in Newfound, Canada. My parents were in the Air Force. My family is from Wyoming. I have lived in Texas longer than anywhere.

“I think being fair and reasonable in all situations and helping people are the most important things we all need to do now and into the future.”

Do you remember living in Canada? No, I was about 3 years old when my family left Canada. I do remember living in Wyoming, though.

Where did you attend high school? I attended Plano High School. I played the drums in the band. Photography was my favorite hobby at the time. I took photos for the school newspaper and the yearbook. I also took pictures for the Plano Star Courier and the Dallas Morning News. I was the Interscholastic Press League Courier and the Dallas Morning News. I also took pictures for the Plano Star and the yearbook.

What was your very first job? I had newspaper routes starting in 1971 and 1972.

Do you attend engineering school? My dad worked as an electrical engineer in the aerospace industry and my mom worked in the newspaper business. What was your very first job? I had newspaper routes starting in 1971 and 1972.

When did you open MRI? I incorporated the company in 1998 and we began working on our first job on Jan. 2, 1999.

We specialize in renovation, remodeling, disaster recovery for fires, wind, floods, collapses and similar catastrophes. We are a licensed Texas engineering firm and we can perform commercial and residential design-build projects.

Laura Brum is the business manager. She has worked with me for more than 20 years. Steven Suchma is a project manager and Gene Monaco is a senior project management consultant.

What are the positive happenings lately at the company? We moved our office to Sugar Land, TX after being in the Galleria area office for 20 years. We are focusing on construction engineering to help people resolve construction and design defects. In addition, we won the Better Business Bureau Pinnacle Award in 2012.

“One day, I was sitting on a towering piece of steel and I wondered how the steel stood up. At that point, I knew I wanted to be an engineer.”

If a young person wants to do what you do today, what advice would you give him or her? Go to a good engineering school and work during the summers for various construction firms to see what type of construction you like.

Where did you meet your wife? Donna and I met in Austin, TX. It was love at first sight for both of us. We have been together for 38 years. Donna works as an independent real estate broker.

What do you like to do in your free time? In my free time, I like woodworking and I do a lot of woodturning. I collected wood from the dead trees in Galveston after Hurricane Ike. There were 40,000 trees that were killed during that time.

I have cut hundreds of pieces from vases, bowls, boxes, vessels, to clocks and boxes from the dead trees. The Ming vase is made of Galveston Sycamore killed by Hurricane Ike. The inspiration was from a Ming Dynasty vase shape where the diameter is the same for the height. It is hollow and the walls are about 3/16” thick from top to bottom. This piece won third place at the Gulf Coast Woodturners contest. The black lines are known as spalting, which is the preliminary phase of rotting or deterioration, which has been stopped with the hand rubbed poly finish. This is my absolutely favorite piece that I have made so far.

The large cedar bowl was made from the only two olive trees in Galveston. The trees were imported in 1947 and planted at the Olive Cottage on Post Office Street. They lasted until Hurricane Ike killed them. I cut the trees down and took them home. This vase is approximately 14” tall and 5” in diameter. I gave this vase to the wife of the Olive Cottage owner.

The large cedar bowl was made from a large Galveston cedar tree that was also killed by Hurricane Ike. This bowl is approximately 15” in diameter and 10” tall. The outside is polished and the inside is left smooth sanded to allow the owner to smell the cedar. The walls of this bowl last less than 3 years, this took at least 60 hours to make it from cutting the log with the chainsaw to finishing. This piece took a first place in the Gulf Coast Woodturners contest.

What is the story behind the bowls and vases? I went to the big tree pile in Galveston where all the dead trees were collected, and because MRI is a contractor with general liability insurance and workman’s compensation, the salvage company let us in to salvage.

I became known as “Mike the Bowl Guy” by the workers at the dump site because I made bowls for each of the workers that helped us salvage and load the wood that was very heavy.

Some of my woodturning friends helped me salvage tons of wood with chainsaws, trailers and trucks. We have stored it and made items from it and have raised several thousand dollars for the Galveston Tree Conservancy that uses the money to re-plant Galveston.

Typically, we show and sell our work during the Thanksgiving weekend Art Walk at the Edna Room in the 1984 Opera house.

In our salvage operations we found Ash, Elm, Cedar, Camphor, Oak, Olive, Norfolk Island Pine, Southern Pine and Sycamore which shows how many different types of trees grow on Galveston.

“In my opinion, the keys of success are doing a good job, dedication to the job, helping people and doing the right thing.”

Do you still enjoy photography? Yes, I do photography almost every day. For work, I mostly take photos of broken building parts to document defects and correct work.

It is motivating that I have the opportunity to take photos on the job. I also take landscape photos for fun every chance I get.

Do you have any other hobbies these days? Yes, I enjoy bay fishing for trout, flounder and redfish in Galveston, TX and Rockport, TX. I usually go fishing with family and friends in the spring, summer and fall seasons.

Do you travel in your free time? Yes, I travel to see my aunt in Wyoming twice a year. She is 97 and likes family visitors. My wife Donna and I had a great time on a recent vacation to Gold’s Beach in Oregon. The scenery was gorgeous. We also did a jet boat tour up the Rogue River. It was really fun!

What is the most rewarding part about your job? I enjoy helping people repair their houses and businesses after disasters so they can go home or back to work after fires, floods and hurricanes. Sharing their trauma and then their joy at being able to resume their life is satisfying and rewarding as a professional engineer. —ab
and result in that much needed increase in cash flow. The IRS requires Form 3115 for this purpose, and it can still be filed for ‘automatic changes’ effective for the 2012 tax year up until the due date (including extensions) of your 2012 tax return. Discussed below is two such ‘automatic’ accounting method changes of which you may be able to take advantage this year.

Excluding Retainages in Accrual Method of Accounting for Short-term Contracts

If your company uses the accrual method of accounting for its short-term contracts (those contracts started and completed in the same year), then you may request an automatic change to the accrual method excluding retainages. This entails the reporting of the retainage portion of a contract to be deferred until the work is “completed and accepted” by the owner. If this does not occur until a subsequent year, then tax on this retainage portion will not be due until that subsequent year. This change in accounting method also requires that any retainages payable to subcontractors must be excluded from deductions for that project until such time that the work is “completed and accepted” by the owner.

Segregating Property Costs of Real Property Used in Your Business

This tax deferral strategy involves the accelerated depreciation deduction of components of property owned by and used in your business. It can be used when property is constructed or purchased, even if the construction or purchase occurred in previous years. Usually, a relatively inexpensive engineering study must be done that segregates the total cost of the real property into categories, such as personal property, land improvements, building components, and land.

Once the engineering study is complete, then the various categories of property segregated may be available for shorter useful lives rather than the standard 20-39 year useful life to which real property or building improvements are normally subject, which will most likely result in significant accelerated depreciation deductions currently.

Another advantage of this automatic change in accounting for depreciation is the ease of writing off the un-depreciated cost of an asset that becomes damaged or needs replacement. An example of this is a roof that needs replacement. Under the traditional method of accounting for real estate improvements, there would be no disposition and tax loss for the roof if the costs of the original building were not segregated. If cost segregation was applied, then the re-placement of a roof with un-depreciated cost would be reported for tax purposes as a disposition and a loss would be allowed for that remaining amount.

Page Heard joined Van Houten & Associates in 2007, and has been a CPA for over 23 years. Her experience includes ten years as an Internal Revenue Agent in the Austin IRS office, and six years in public accounting with VHA, with primary emphasis on tax preparation and tax planning provided to construction-related companies and their owners. Page can be contacted at page.heard@vanhoutenpc.com or 512-310-9277.
A merger fastened together

Changing Roles

The Texas Masonry Council (TMC) has hired Jennifer Wilkins as the new community planner for the Houston/South Texas region. Wilkins brings with her a vast understanding of the non-profit industry as well as an extensive background in marketing, management and business development. For the past four years, she was owner of Jennifer Wilkins and Associates Business Services, a business that provides outside marketing, event planning and business development. In her role as community planner, Wilkins will help cities and communities by providing education and information about masonry.

LEGAL

I did the work; now how do I get paid and can I recover my attorney’s fees?

West W. Winter, Partner
McNelis + Winter, PLLC
San Antonio, TX

Good questions! A number of avenues and causes of action exist in Texas to assist contractors, subcontractors, and suppliers in obtaining payment for work properly performed and materials provided for a construction project.

Mechanic’s and Materialmans Lien

Perhaps the most significant tool in your arsenal will be the Mechanic’s Lien. Governed by Chapter 53 of the Texas Property Code, statutory mechanic’s liens, if timely and properly perfected, secure your right to payment against the project. While the specifics of proper lien perfection are complicated and beyond the scope of this article, perfection of a lien claim generally requires timely and proper written notice of the unpaid debt, timely recording of a proper lien affidavit in the real property records in the county in which the project is located, and timely giving notice of the filed lien to the owner and general contractor. Be aware that suit must also be filed to enforce/foreclose the lien claim within the limitations period mandated by Chapter 53 (typically one or two years, depending on the type of project) or the lien will be extinguished. Contractors having an agreement directly with the project’s owner may further enforce constitutional lien rights which exist independently of any notice or recording requirements. Rights may alternatively exist under a contract for the improvement of real property. Contractors, subcontractors, or owners and their officers, directors, and agents who receive or control the trust funds are considered to be trustees of these funds. Those who furnish labor or material for the construction of the improvement are the beneficiaries of the trust funds. A trustee who retains, uses, disburse, or otherwise diverts the trust funds without first fully paying all obligations to the beneficiaries, is deemed to have misappropriated the trust funds. While certain exceptions, exclusions, and defenses apply, criminal penalties exist for misappropriation of trust funds, and the courts allow for a civil cause of action.

Prompt Payment Act

Another statutory tool to assist in compelling payment is the Prompt Payment Act pursuant to Chapter 28 of the Texas Property Code. This statute requires payment of contractors and subcontractors within the timeframe specified in the Act and allows for the recovery of interest on unpaid amounts. Notably, the Act also provides for the right to suspend work in certain circumstances following proper written notice.

Attorney’s Fees

With the exception of a trust fund claim, a prevailing party asserting any of the causes of action discussed herein has the ability (in some cases an award of fees is discretionary with the court) to recover reasonable and necessary attorney’s fees. Whether or not a mechanic’s lien has been perfected, you may also assert a cause of action for breach of contract as a result of non-payment. In some instances, such as when there is no express contract, where the work performed is outside the scope of the agreement, or when the work is partially performed, an equitable cause of action may exist for quantum meruit. Typically, suppliers to construction projects will also be able to avail themselves of a suit on sworn account and in instances where they have secured a personal guaranty, suit against the individual guarantors.

Violation of the Texas Construction Trust Fund Statute

Chapter 162 of the Texas Property Code mandates that construction payments and loan receipts are trust funds if they are made to or borrowed by a contractor or subcontractor in connection with a construction contract for the improvement of real property. Contractors, subcontractors, or owners and their officers, directors, and agents who receive or control the trust funds are considered to be trustees of these funds. Those who furnish labor or material for the construction of the improvement are the beneficiaries of the trust funds. A trustee who retains, uses, disburse, or otherwise diverts the trust funds without first fully paying all obligations to the beneficiaries, is deemed to have misappropriated the trust funds. While certain exceptions, exclusions, and defenses apply, criminal penalties exist for misappropriation of these trust funds, and the courts allow for a civil cause of action.

Contract formation through dispute resolution, rescission of a contract, where the work performed is outside the scope of the agreement, or when the work is partially performed, an equitable cause of action may exist for quantum meruit. Typically, suppliers to construction projects will also be able to avail themselves of a suit on sworn account and in instances where they have secured a personal guaranty, suit against the individual guarantors.

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One of the most popular questions I get throughout the year is, “When is the best time to go fishing?” My answer is always the same, “Any time you can.” Second most asked question is, “What do I have to do to catch a trophy trout?” Well the answer to that question can vary a bit. First, you have to ask yourself, “How committed am I to accomplishing such a task?” Trophy trout are similar to trophy whitetail deer. You’re not going to sit in a deer blind and have a 180-class whitetail come out during every hunt, unless you are on one of those high fence ranches that grow monster deer and release them into the wild. It takes countless hours and, in most cases, countless days spent in the field or on the water to see such a trophy much less harvest them.

For the next few months, we will spend many days walking countless miles wading the shallow waters of the Gulf of Mexico. Most anglers know that winning time is when speckled trout are at their peak weight. A 30-inch trout caught in the middle of the summer may only weigh 6-1/2 to 7-1/2 lbs; whereas that same fish may be 9-1/2 to 10 lbs in the winter. These heavier trout make your catch that much more gratifying.

One of the most important tools to have before you venture out for your day on the water is something that can’t be purchased. A GAME PLAN must always be one of the first things you should have before you leave the dock. If you’ve kept logs in the past like most serious anglers do, review them. Think back to previous years or outings that were successful.

What lures did you throw and which ones did you have the most success with? What were the weather conditions like - cold, windy, cloudy, sunny, etc? Try to predict what your day is going to be like and look back to find a similar day in your logs. Don’t be like most routine fishermen who go to the same spots over and over because they caught a good fish there 11 years ago.

Now that you have arrived to your pre-designated fishing spot, your next decision should be which lure to throw. My suggestion to most of my clients is to throw a lure you have confidence in. It always start out with a lure that has been a producer for me in the past. Don’t get caught up in some new item that came in a fancy package and costs a small fortune or a lure that your buddy gave you and said these are what I catch all my fish on. If I have a group of customers, I always try to mix it up. I start everyone off with a different lure. This helps me determine what the fish are wanting on that given day. After we have established what the fish want we can all go to the same type of lure.

If you would like to plan a trophy trout fishing trip in the next month or so, don’t procrastinate it any longer. Now is the time! Also, those of you that are waiting for spring and summer to get your fishing in, my calendar is rapidly filling. I can be reached by phone at (361) 813-3716 or by e-mail at SteveSchultzOutdoors@gmail.com. Good luck and good fishing.
Hiding places

At this writing, we are having a wellcome stretch of warmer weather. The warm days after a cold spell just get me itching to get out and do something! I figure I’m not the only one who feels that way, so let’s get cracking! Spring is coming! Now that we are finished with deer season and have put the rifles away, it’s time to look forward to spring and summer fishing.

You know how you used to say you liked going to Lake So-and-So, but you are getting bored with it and need to go try somewhere else? Well, this year you are in luck. If you are like so many of us and are surrounded by lakes that have below normal water levels, you just got yourself a brand new lake without having to travel somewhere else.

I know you have seen and heard me say this before, but it is still true. Low lakes are lakes that are giving up their secrets! Before they fill up again, you need to get yourself out there with your camera and GPS and in some cases a good pair of hiking shoes. Go find the places you have had good fishing and get an up close look at why it has been productive. Look for points, drop-offs and rock piles, any place for fish to hide or hang around. Take pictures, make notes and get GPS coordinates. Now you are ready to go exploring the lake bed and finding other places that have the same traits, places you haven’t been aware of with the lake full. I can drive across the empty lake bed and see a lot of spots that I have caught fish on for years. Now I can see why those places hold fish. You can know of a place and know how it looks by fish finder, but still be surprised at the way it looks when you actually get to see it with your own eyes.

Make a day trip of it. Stuff the ice chest with good stuff to eat and drink and load up the kids just like you were going fishing, but instead of bringing the boat and all the tackle, let the kids bring their own entertainment. One thing a low lake has to offer is lots of open space to run. They can fly kites, have room to play with the remote control toys they got for Christmas, or just have fun exploring. Meanwhile, you get in some fishing research and get a chance to look for good places to launch your boat and such. That way when you are coming to the lake to fish, you already have the hard part done and can focus on fishing and having a good time.

If you are not comfortable with taking your own boat to a low lake, then seek out a good fishing guide. They are on the lake frequently and familiar with it as it changes, and how the fish have been moved around. Also, don’t forget all the little lake area businesses that support your fishing trips. From the bait shops to the convenience store you used to fuel up at, to the little fishing camp where you used to spend the night and the little café that fed you breakfast, all these folks would be happy to see you too!

If you don’t do this now, you might be kicking yourself when the lakes fill up!

If I had a nickel for every fish I caught here
Submitted to Construction News

Moving dirt

The JE Dunn Construction construction team and architects with PGAL recently attended a ground breaking ceremony for the Public Safety Building project in League City, TX. The facility will provide space for police operations, dispatch, training, evidence, records and a jail. --ab

Submitted to Construction News

Strong as steel

U.S Bellows Inc. employees inspect a custom designed pressure balanced tee expansion joint in the warehouse. It was fabricated from carbon steel with stainless steel bellows, turning vanes and liners. The company designs and manufacturers engineered pipe and duct expansion joints. --ab

Construction News ON LOCATION

It takes a village

Manager Toby Thoresen assists contractors to find tools and hardware at Village Hardware in Galveston, TX. --ab

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U.S Bellows Inc. employees inspect a custom designed pressure balanced tee expansion joint in the warehouse. It was fabricated from carbon steel with stainless steel bellows, turning vanes and liners. The company designs and manufacturers engineered pipe and duct expansion joints. –ab

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With 2013 getting underway, Bartlett Cocke General Contractors is shaking things up. The employee-owner company has made some changes in leadership as the Texas construction forecast promises opportunities for growth.

Randy Pawelek is making the move from president to chairman, but he will retain his position as CEO. He has served the company as president since 2008. As Pawelek steps up, Harry Moeller will take his place as president. Moeller’s new position will require him to oversee daily operations at the company’s local and regional offices.

“This ongoing, planned leadership transition is not about letting go or handing off, but allowing others to step forward,” Pawelek said in a statement. “Since 1959, many have stepped forward to help lead our organization forward. It is the result of vision, planning, hard work, working smart, and most of all, great teamwork.”

As Moeller assumes the role of president, a position that has been held by Bartlett Cocke Jr. and Duane Pozza, he comes with a long history of experience with the company. Starting in 1985 as a field engineer, he worked his way up to project manager, vice president of estimating, and his former position, executive vice president.

Others have been promoted as well. Kevin Byrd is the new vice president of operations for Central Texas. James Anderson has become the new South Texas regional manager. Mark Christiansen is now the East Texas regional manager. And Nathan Olson, who has been serving as interim director of preconstruction, has been officially promoted to the position.

Regarding the many changes in leadership, Moeller commented that the Texas economy is poised for growth and Bartlett Cocke is ready for those emerging economic opportunities.

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Safety matters

Juan Mendoza, Safety Director
Lasco Acoustics & Drywall Inc.
Austin, TX

Juan Mendoza is the safety director at the Lasco Acoustics & Drywall Inc. Austin, TX location but also travels to work in Dallas and San Antonio. He manages all the safety programs for the company.

“I train our guys on how to work safe on a daily basis and I provide bilingual training because I can speak both English and Spanish,” Mendoza said. “I do training on first aid, CPR, boom lift and scissor lift equipment, scaffold and fall protection.”

Looking at the numbers, Mendoza says he has read fatalities have slowly but surely decreased in the past few years.

“I have seen a lot more training in the commercial construction industry lately,” he said. “If you look at the data, the fatalities in 2012 were less than the year before and the previous year.

“I think there has been an improvement this past year because there has been more emphasis on the safety training for the industry.

“It is very important for construction related companies to not just have a good safety program, it is important to implement the program. In addition, there are requirements that workers on the job have to have some level of training. That has been helping companies to step up and provide the required training to their employees.

“Here at Lasco Acoustics & Drywall, we have a safety program in-house. We develop and update the program on a yearly basis.

“We go back and review it and change things as required. Most of the training we do is in-house; however, sometimes when we are required to have a specific training on specific equipment, we call the providers and have them do the training for us.

“For us to actually get employees on the jobsite, we do what is called a new hire safety orientation. The orientation lasts anywhere from four to five hours. We train our employees before they even step foot on the jobsite.”

According to Mendoza, there have been advances in personal protective equipment (PPE) in recent years. “In 2008, there were three changes in the OSHA regulations,” he said. “It is required that employers provide PPE. Since the change in the OSHA regulations, we now provide all the PPE, which include safety glasses, hard hats, gloves, safety harnesses, earplugs and more.

“In the future, I think construction safety will continue to improve. In the past, our industry had a tremendous problem in the Hispanic population because the workers weren’t getting trained before they were sent to the jobsites.

“Thanks to the push on the OSHA regulations and inspections, it has been changing little by little. There are more and more people out there getting together, focusing on goals and making a difference.”

Mendoza says he really enjoys his job as safety director.

“At the end of the day, when I see the workers are going home the same way they left in the morning, it is rewarding to know that they are going to go back to their families and see their children,” he said. “That is my biggest joy.

“It is very important to me that the workers are going to be safe on the job. It is not just a job, it is my passion.”

Lasco Acoustics & Drywall Inc. provides drywall, acoustics and plastering in the commercial construction industry. The company has a corporate office in Dallas and also has offices in Austin and San Antonio.

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Important to have fire safety plan on construction sites

Chris Jelenewicz, P.E.
Society of Fire Protection Engineers
Bethesda, MD

G o to most construction sites these days, and you’ll see a safety-conscious bunch of workers. People are wearing their hard hats, they’re wearing harnesses when they’re going up in lifts, and they comply with safety practices and procedures.

But another important tool for construction companies to keep their workers safe on the job site is a plan in place to prevent and protect against fire emergencies. Chris Jelenewicz, P.E., with the Society of Fire Protection Engineers, says it’s very important to have a fire safety plan on a construction site to make sure that you have a plan so that you know exactly what to do in case of an emergency.

“Make sure fire hydrants are in place as soon as possible before starting the construction process, or make sure there is an alternative way that the fire department can get water,” Jelenewicz says.

Fires do happen. You don’t usually hear about these fires because they aren’t usually the kinds of things that make the news. It’s just something that you need to be aware of.”

Jelenewicz says key steps in implementing a plan to bolster fire safety on your construction site include:

1) Make sure you get your superintendent involved. Make sure he is properly trained to deal with potential problems that might arise.

2) Get with the local fire department involved with the plan to ensure that their needs are properly met, and make sure that there is an established water supply.

Being aware of their water supply is the part that some construction companies overlook, Jelenewicz said.

“It’s the most important thing – the fire department needs to have water if it’s going to put out a fire,” he said. “I think that’s the part that is most often forgotten about. You’ve got to get those hydrants in place as soon as possible, and you’ve got to make sure the fire department has a way to access the site with its ladder trucks.”

3) Technology and the prevalence of cell phones can be used, too. “You can put in place some sort of text messaging system so that people on the site can be notified immediately,” Jelenewicz explains.

4) Make sure everyone knows the escape routes and that it is understood how to exit the building or site in case of an emergency.

5) If it’s a high rise project, two words: standpipe system. “These are simple vertical pipes that allow the fire department to reach each floor. On each floor, there is a connection so that the fire department just has to pump water into the pipe and haul a hose up to the floor where the fire is present.”

“It’s not rocket science, and it doesn’t cost you too much money, but it really does make things safer,” Jelenewicz said.

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2013 Schedule
Jan: Construction Forecast
Feb: Construction Safety
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May: Concrete Industry
Jun: HVAC & Plumbing
July: Electrical Industry
Aug: Service Providers
Sep: Green Building Trends
Oct: Specialty Contractors
Nov: Architecture & Engineering
Dec: Construction Equipment

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"I started in construction as a laborer, office clerk, purchasing agent, superintendent, general superintendent, head of cost department, specializing in workers compensation cost reduction and re-funds, scheduling and organizing multiple projects for most cost effective completion and sale," Blayney said. “Along with the inception of OSHA in 1971, we received a new title of safety director.” Blayney says he has 52 years of active construction experience and 41 years attempting to stay in compliance with the OSHA. He says the major risks in construction are workers misunderstanding instructions and supervision in a constant rush, with incomplete information to perform tasks at hand safely. 

"Additional risks in construction are operators not reading and understanding limitations to heavy equipment and architects and engineers avoiding safe design out of fear of liability. Many owners and managers do not want to give full information to their front line supervision. Supervision needs clear and complete instructions to line management and supervision. Also, a clear company mandate for safe operations, use of experienced safety director, foreman, superintendent, with full authority to identify and eliminate risk and errors. Results of a good safety record gives you a competitive edge over unsafe competitors. Employees would rather work for a company with a corporate culture of being safe. Your insurance rates are lower, because you can reduce costs, because of safe behavior and can under bid your competition. You get more work, and more year end rebates from your insurance company. Of the major construction companies that I worked for, we enjoyed the benefit of ability to be self-insured. Re-funds to a self-insured contractor resulted in excess of production savings on the jobs. We were able to determine cost in detail, able to count on less expenses on overhead and labor costs. On years that we completed $50 million in production, we expected a refund of excess workers compensation premium of more than $650,000 to add back to the bottom line. With a good safety program, and with supervision's blessing, we could count on this year-end treat annually. With clear instruction, and use of experienced management, we always came in under estimates."

Blayney says to increase safety awareness and create a safe working environment, give job supervision a corporate safety culture and ensure executive and supervision must be sold on safe behavior.

He added that personal protective equipment (PPE) has always been there and every construction supplier has had all types of safety equipment on their shelves.

"Organizations such as the AGC, ABC, ASSE, NSC are regularly and frequently holding meetings, open to the public on how to utilize and use safety equipment to the company's greatest benefit, along with saving limbs, fingers, and lives." 

Looking ahead, Blayney thinks the industry will use more and older people, more experienced seniors, people with on the ground experience, knowledge and ability to communicate it.

"The most significant challenge to the safety industry and 40,000 professional safety specialists is the sale of safety benefits to owners and contractors. How much better planning, execution, safety operations, lack of lost time and enhanced production and well planned and budgeted a project can be brought to fruition and good final payday, with no lost-time injuries."

"I still get a thrill out of seeing a good project come together. I love seeing concrete poured starting before daylight. Framing wood, steel, masonry going up at fantastic rates. I like to see two-year projects finishing in 18 months, and experienced crews planning and executing error free jobs."

"Working from the experiences of their grandfathers, dads and now we are in to the third generation of builders, building faster, safer and more productive than ever."

W.C. Bill Blayney & Associates provides loss control services and job site safety inspections. The company specializes in communication towers, excavation, trenching, concrete placement, framing, trim carpentry, electrical, roofing, masonry and drywall safety programs. -ab
The Houston Area Glass Association (HAGA) announced the 2013 officers and board members in January. –ab

Officers: President: DeAnna Wells, NES Rentals; Vice President Elect: Denise Lewis, Spring Glass & Mirror; Past President: Mario Lopez, M.I. Glass; Secretary: Treasurer: Reschel Lawrence, Craftsman; Board Members: John Linhart, Helfterbran & Associates; Lance Hunter, Hunters Window Tinting; Luke Lucas, Admiral Glass; John Alexander, Focus Merchants; Mario Ortiz, Door Control Services; Randy Zeringue, Insuica; Anthony Howard, Heights Glass; Randy Shugart, Alpha Glass; Richard Oribérizoa, Gulf Coast Glass Tinting

continued from Page 1 — A collaborative effort

Thomson says laboratories are continued from Page 1 — A collaborative effort

on the north end of the building, a central equipment corridor forms for his or her unique research requirements. “These are things that give us the ability to maneuver the human DNA chain, houses collaboration space, with floor-to-ceiling glass that offers panoramic views of the city. “I work everywhere. In this business, you have to travel to find work. If you stay in one spot for so long, all the good news, industry jobseekers! Four of Fortune’s 100 Best Companies to Work for are construction companies with locations in Texas. Balfour Beatty Construction and TDIndustries, both headquartered in Dallas, came in at 85 and 86 on the list respectively. TDIndustries has been named to the same list for 16 consecutive years, which gives them a distinction shared by only 12 other companies; they’ve made the list every year since its inception in 1998. Balfour Beatty has made the list four times in a row. DPR Construction, a general contractor with offices in Austin and Houston, achieved position number 15 on the list. PCL Construction Enterprises, a civil engineering design/build firm with offices in Dallas and Houston, came in at 7.

Bob Richards, president of Central Texas operations for TDIndustries, said, “We are committed to providing outstanding career opportunities by exceeding our customers’ expectations through continuous aggressive improvement.” More than 20 percent of the employee-owned company’s partners are still with the firm since it first appeared on the list.

Robert Van Cleave, chairman and CEO of Balfour Beatty, comments, “I’m very proud about what it says about the quality of people we have here. Our company has endured a tough economy and weathered the challenges of being a rapidly growing business; and yet, our employees continue to be positively engaged in our business, their communities, and each other. They are the ones who make this a great place to work, consistently striving to earn the repeat trust of their coworkers, partners, and clients.”

Businesses are ranked based on questions about pay, benefits, hiring practices, internal communication, training, recognition programs, and diversity efforts. –mp

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Casino royale

L ocal contractors and friends recently attended the Hard Hat & Heels Casino Night at the Sheraton Suites Houston Galleria. Hosted by the Women Contractors Association (WCA), the event featured a buffet dinner, casino style gambling and a silent auction. A portion of the proceeds benefited the Houston Food Bank. -ab

L-R:  Kellie Vazquez, Holes Inc.; Sandy Farrell, Hallmark Farrell Roofing and Jennifer Woodruff, Red Light Creative

WCA members and guests play black jack.

L-R:  Darlene East, Holes Inc. and Christina Stone, Gaughan, Stone & Thagranjan.

L-R:  Lianne Lami, Bocci Engineering and Sharon Skievaski, Bocci Engineering

Four's a crowd

L-R:  Luis Medina and Shane Jones show electrical contractors where to find supplies at City Electric Supply in Galveston, TX. -ab

Associated Calendar
Content submitted by Associations to Construction News

ABC
Associaed Builders & Contractors
Feb. 12: Texas Hold’em Poker Tournament
Feb. 13: Proper Compliance with Employment Eligibility Regulations
Feb. 14-15: Advanced Rigging Training
Feb. 22: Signal Person Training
Feb. 27: Basic Rigging Training Class; ABC Member Mixer
For more information call 713-523-6222

AGC
Associated General Contractors
Feb. 4: MIC 101 Management System Design, 8am
Feb. 5-8: OSHA 2045 Machine and Machine Guarding Standards, 8am
Feb. 7: 1st Thursday Monthly Mixer, 4:30pm
Feb. 7-8: OSHA 10 Hour, 7:30am
Feb. 12: Lean Unit 1; Variation in Production Systems, 8am
Feb. 12-15: OSHA 501 Trainer Course for General Industry, 8am
Feb. 13: First Aid/CPR/AED Training, 2:30pm
Feb. 15: Certificate of Management – BIM Creditialising Exam, 8am
Feb. 18: ETI 601: EPA 8-Hour Environmental Hazard Awareness, 8am
Feb. 26: BIM Unit 2: Technology 2nd Edition, 7:30pm
Feb. 27: Complying with Storm Water Regulations
For more information call 713-843-3700

AIA
American Institute of Architects
Feb. 2: Audits, Courts & Axes: Rice University Walking Tour
Feb. 4: COTE Sample Recycling
Feb. 6: RDA Spring Lecture Series
Feb. 7: Eggersmann Houston – Grand Opening
Feb. 13: Historic Resources Committee meeting
Feb. 14: Full Day CE Opportunity
Feb. 16: Montrose Walking Tour
Feb. 19: RDA Spring Lecture Series
Feb. 23: Museum District Walking Tour
Feb. 28: Healthcare Symposium Exhibition & Social
For more information call 713-520-0155

ASA
American Subcontractors Association
Feb. 6: Membership Committee meeting, 8:30am; Schmoeze & mingle, 4pm
Feb. 12: Small Business Peer Group Roundtable, 10am
Feb. 13: Board of Directors meeting, 9am; Marek Brothers Systems; Government Advocacy Committee meeting, 10:30am, Marek Brothers Systems
Feb. 21: BPI Session, 11am; General Lunch meeting, 11:30am

FPA
Foundation Performance Assoc.
For more information go to www.foundationperformance.org

IEC
Independent Electrical Contractors
Feb. 4: Motor Controls Class – PLCs (601) – Mondays
Feb. 5: State Masters Exam Prep Class (401) – Mondays
Feb. 7: State Journeyman Exam Prep Class (301) – Thursdays; Motor Controls Level 1 Class (101) – Thursdays
Feb. 9: Electrical License Renewal Class
For more information call 713-997-2522

NAWIC
Nat’l Assn. of Women in Construction
Feb. 12: General meeting, 5:30pm, The HESS Club, 5430 Westheimer, Guest Speaker: Lorra-Marie Bernard, USGBC, $35, Reservations required, guests welcome, please RSVP
For more info: www.NAWIC-Houston.org

PHCC
Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors
Feb. 13: Member Lunch, 11:30am-1pm, Saltgrass Steakhouse, 1-10 and Shepherd
For more info: www.gulfcoastphcc.org

WCA
Women Contractors Association
Feb. 7: Monthly Luncheon, 2013 Construction Forecast, 11:30am, The Binat Club, 2603 Timmons Lane
For more info: www.womencontractors.org
Ruben Juarez spends his time in the field and his wife, Gloria, works in the showroom. 

Victor Juarez, owner of Chico Tile, began the business in his garage in 1986. Today, the company has a showroom and office on Broadway in Galveston, TX. His son, Ruben and his wife Gloria, are the sales representatives at the company.

“I grew up in the business,” Ruben Juarez said. “I remember going to jobs with my dad as a kid. I was a helper. I started learning all about the tile business. I graduated high school in 1999 and soon after, I began working full-time with my dad in 2000.”

According to Juarez, a year ago the company expanded to also provide marbel, stucco, wood, carpet, granite countertops, decking, carpentry, drywall and painting services.

“One of my uncles worked as a handy man for many years and he recently retired,” he said. “Two of his employees joined Chico Tile.”

Juarez says he and his wife have a daughter and a son. They go to the showroom every day after school. Outside of work, Juarez and his family enjoy playing indoor soccer and other sports.

“In addition, I play poker at the Knights of Columbus once a month after work.”

In the future, Juarez says he plans to continue working with his dad at Chico Tile. He says for many years his father only did work in Galveston because he was so busy on the island.

“Today we do work outside of Galveston,” Juarez said. “In the spring, we will work on a apartment complex project in Seabrook, TX.” Chico Tile is a tile installation and remodeling company. –ab

Before Ken Fairbanks arrives to work at Galveston, TX-based Magliore Construction, he loves walking his Siberian Husky named Nico.

“Nico is a handful these days,” he said. “My wife and I got Nico almost a year ago. We had dogs before but they all passed away. My wife didn’t want another dog, but my daughter and I convinced her we needed to take Nico home. “He is our pride and joy. We walk him in the neighborhood near our home every day. He likes to run fast, so we can’t really let him loose on the beach.”

Fairbanks is a carpenter and works on framing at construction projects in the Galveston area.

He says he has worked in the construction industry for 35 years. He began his career as an apprentice carpenter in Detroit, MI.

“My two brothers lived in Texas at the time, so I decided to move here after the economic downturn in Detroit in the ‘70s. I worked for my oldest brother doing carpentry work for a few years. I eventually met Bob Magliore, owner of Magliore Construction, about 30 years ago when he was a painting contractor. We have been friends ever since.”

Fairbanks says he isn’t planning on retiring anytime soon and wants to continue doing framing work in Galveston in the future. –ab
Carleen and I met in 1990 through mutual friends in Houston. We became instant friends and have been together ever since. We both love traveling and had an amazing time. I always tell her that she was my high school sweetheart, but we just didn’t know it yet.

John Valderama, Virtual Builders Exchange

It’s a remarkable coincidence how my wife Sally and I met so many years after I became acquainted with her father’s law partner, but that’s a long story for another time. Sally and her parents were all born in Mississippi. On our very first date, we talked at length about each other’s history and learned of that “legal connection,” so we were able to begin our relationship with that pleasant surprise of a common background.

Ernie Ross, Tool & Fastener Supplier

I met my wife Peggy at Marshall High School in East Texas. Marshall is about 28 miles from the Louisiana border. It was a good place to grow up.

Ray Bailey, Bailey Architects Inc.

My wife Joyce and I met in Houston more than 20 years ago. We have been married more than 15 years.

Steve Romine, Pavement Services

I met my wife Darlene at a New Year’s Eve party in high school. I moved to Houston and she stayed in New York to finish school. We got married after Darlene finished school and then she moved to Houston. I think we have stayed together all these years because we are both independent, understanding people. She is a great woman.

Kenneth A. Hajduk, Door Pro Systems

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Thinking outside the box

President Ronnie Wills, Aggregate Technologies Inc., and a co-work-er/friend had a conversation back in 2007 trying to think of ways to make pile cutting safer.

“I remember thinking it is not safe to stand in a muddy hole with a concrete saw spinning at up to 5,000 RPMs with a crane rigged up the concrete you’re cutting and hope when you cut through that, the excess piece of concrete doesn’t hit you when it breaks free,” Wills said. “I thought, ‘This just isn’t safe enough for my guys in the field.’”

Wills decided to modify a Gradall to cut piles much like a feller buncher does in the logging industry. He says his patented machine cuts up to 150 piles per 10-hour day and conventional methods would be 25 piles per 10-hour day.

“I bought and modified a Gradall, mounted a concrete saw at the end of the arm, put a water tank on the back of the machine, ran lines to run the saw and filed for the patent,” Wills said. “I received the patent in Oct. 2012. “We are currently building more machines to handle the increase in work load.”

The company was awarded the 2011 Eagle Award and the National Safety Excellence Award by Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC), he said.

When Wills isn’t busy at the office, he says he enjoys offshore fishing and spending time with his family in Sargent, TX.

Aggregate Technologies has operated in Houston since 1997. The company provides precision concrete cutting services and specialized in core drilling, slab sawing, wall sawing, and robotic demolition of concrete, masonry, stone and asphalt.

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