



Brick, Block & Trowel

Masonry Institute Newsletter

Spring 2005 / Issue 6

Directors Corner

HAPPY SPRING EVERYONE!

As we welcome "Spring" to our area of the country, we must acknowledge the monumental beauty of the Washington, DC, Maryland, and Virginia corridors that we all live and work in. We should also admit how very fortunate and blessed we are to be living and working in such a prosperous area of our country. With that being said, let us all be reminded, even though it is no longer top headlines in the news, that other parts of the world, specifically areas devastated by the "Tsunamis", that efforts and funding relief are still desperately needed to rebuild so many lives devastated by this disaster. We as an association are small, but as an industry of manufacturers, suppliers, contractors, architects etc. we are large enough to make a difference.

Vast amounts of materials, equipment, technical expertise, skilled labor and other resources will be needed in the months and even years to come.

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Legislative Conference 2005

As a member of the Executive Director's Council formed 3 years ago by MCAA, Mason Contractor's Association of America, we will be having our meeting in Washington, DC, at Hyatt Regency, Capital Hill. It will be held in conjunction with a Legislative Conference also hosted by MCAA Sunday, June 26 thru Tuesday, June 28, 2005 at noon.

The Masonry Institute has requested permission for our membership to attend some of these sessions and it is strongly encouraged that any and all businesses and their representatives mark your calendars and plan to attend at least part of these sessions.

There will be Senators, Congressman, OSHA, Directorate of Construction, and various Hill Representatives.

Many issues that directly impact our construction industry will be covered and it would be beneficial for many of you to attend.

Issue Briefings to be covered:

- Silica
- Apprenticeship Training Tax Deduction
- Association Health Plan Legislation
- Tax Issues/ Equipment Deductions
- OSHA Reform
- Tort Reform
- Reverse Auction Bidding

We encourage you to arrange your schedules and plan to attend these days of sessions. If you need further information, please contact me at 866-529-7994 or by e-mail at jdgreer@crosslink.net

Welcome To New Members

On behalf of the Masonry Institute and our members, we would like to welcome two new members for 2005. First, welcome to Diverse Masonry, owned and operated by Lance McCauley. Second, is Potomac Cast Stone, owned and operated by Jay Lynham. We look forward to getting to know and interact with them in the very near future. We will be presenting them both with Masonry Institute plaques at our next dinner meeting on Tuesday, May 3, 2005.

We would also like to welcome back a former member, Cinder and Concrete Block. We are pleased to once again have your participation in our association.

Executive Director's Council Meeting

As I mentioned in the article announcing the Legislative Conference, our Executive Director's Council will be meeting on Capital Hill, Washington, DC in conjunction with the conference.

This council has grown and is now represented by 25 states with Directors in the masonry industry. We are a cohesive group and have a wealth of knowledge among us. I

have felt privileged to be a part of this group. The website that has been developed by the group has been up and running since October of 2004. www.masonrysystems.org has been well received and is receiving thousands of hits daily. It is being continually expanded and updated. This undertaking will need funding to place this website to the forefront of the architectural community and

various municipalities, government, state and local counties. It is very important to be able to continue the process and keep "Masonry" a viable, cost effective and environmentally sound material to build with. Our competitors are spending millions of dollars to expand their markets and we must continue to protect what has been a far superior material for the future.

Directors Corner

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I'm proud to state that one of our members in long standing, Alan Richardson, owner of Potomac Valley Brick, made a generous donation of \$10,000.00 himself with matching donations for his employees.

I would like to propose as an association, along with our Architectural community, that we come together to examine how we may combine efforts and resources to offer some relief for those areas of the world.

— One organization that might be considered is USAID. This government organization has a list of scores of relief organizations to meet your needs, including American Red Cross, Habitat for Humanity International, to name just a couple.

You would be able to find one that is doing some good while avoiding scams or well-intended but poorly run "tsunami relief" efforts. Click "Tsunami Relief" link at www.usaid.gov.

— A program to match employee donations may be an option to adopt by your company.

— Volunteer opportunities in disaster settings are extremely rare and usually limited to people with prior disaster experience and technical skills, (such as health, engineering, etc.), but if your company has those skills to offer go to www.cidi.org/datain.htm to register.

Save this for the months ahead, to help remind us that help will be needed for the long-term and you may come up with a great idea on how to contribute.

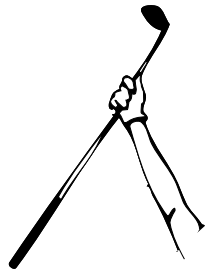
I would welcome anyone interested in exploring this issue further by forming and becoming involved in a roundtable discussion on how we as an industry can make a contribution so please contact me at 866-529-7994 or by e-mail at jdgreer@crosslink.net

We have so much potential as a whole to effect change and make a difference.

Thank you for the opportunity to address this issue.

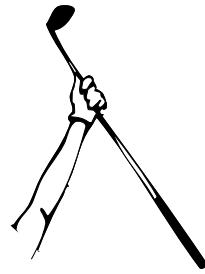
Peace, Health & Happiness,

Joyce Greer



REQUEST FOR SPO

FOR: MI GOLF TOURNAMENT, JUNE 20, 2005
NORBECK COUNTRY CLUB, OLNEY, MD.



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\$300.00 each

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PLEASE SIGN UP FOR THE AREAS YOU CAN ASSIST US IN
AND FAX TO 804-529-5351



BROCHURES FOR THE EVENT WILL BE MAILED IN EARLY MAY

Legislative Issues

Marian Marshall, MCAA Director of Government Affairs has been busy on Capital Hill keeping up with the issues that can impact our industry both positively and negatively. The following represents the information she has presented to us for our attention. Please read carefully and respond as you see fit.

-- -- **Bankruptcy Reform:**

The U.S. Senate is expected to take up the "Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention and Consumer Act of 2005" (S.256). This is a pro-business bill and she urges you to contact your Senators and ask for their support without amendments.

According to information collected by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the number of bankruptcy filings has grown substantially in recent years. When people simply walk from their debts rather than paying them, this type of abuse transfers the debt burden from individuals to businesses like yours.

The protection act, if passed would institute a "Needs-based test" requiring wealthy debtors to work out a repayment plan under Chapter 13 of the Bankruptcy Code. This test should stop the rampant abuse of the bankruptcy system that is harmful to the business community.

-- -- **Social Security Reform** **Write Your Congressman – No New Taxes:**

The debate continues over the financial solvency of the Social Security system.

President Bush has made permanent reform of the system his top priority. The S.S. Trust fund will be broke by 2018 unless Congress acts to shore up the program.

In the 1950's there were approximately 16 workers for every retiree and the payroll tax was just 2%. Today there are only 3.3 workers for every retiree and the payroll tax is 12.4%, half of which is paid by you the employer. It is expected that by the time today's children retire, there will only be 2 workers for every retiree and the payroll tax may be as much as 17%.

The President has assured Americans that he will not reduce Social Security benefits for those born before 1950. But for every year that we fail to address the shortfall and protect the benefits of future retirees, costs the taxpayer \$600 billion. Yes, you read that correctly—\$600 Billion. Mr. Bush wants to allow individuals to invest up to 4% of their payroll taxes in private accounts, accounts that will earn interest and can be transferred to a relative in the event of death.

President Bush is opposed to any new taxes to resolve the Social Security crisis, but he also understands he must negotiate and with less money going into the general Treasury, the pressure to raise taxes may increase exponentially. Payroll tax increases seem to be off the table as far as Mr. Bush is concerned but he has not ruled out increasing the cap on earnings: some have proposed raising the ceiling from \$90,000 to as much as \$200,000.

The Mason Contractors Association of America (MCAA) recently joined the Coalition for the Modernization and Protection of Social Security (CoMPASS), a task Force which will assist the President

in formulation and lobbying for a business-friendly reform package. You are encouraged to write your Congressman and Senators to let them know that you, too, want to reform the system and protect the benefits of the future retirees, but oppose any new taxes to pay for it. Permanent reform is an enormous challenge: MCAA needs your help fighting for an economically viable solution.

-- -- **OSHA Criminal Enforcement:**

Members should be aware that OSHA recently increased its emphasis on the use of criminal prosecutions to address safety and health violations. In remarks prepared for the American Bar Association's OSHA Committee, Acting Assistant Secretary for OSHA, Jonathan Snare, stated: "OSHA is looking to better address cases that might be referred for criminal prosecution in several ways. Most importantly, we are providing specialized training for our compliance officers."

Mr. Snare pointed out that OSHA recently held two-week criminal training investigation courses for its investigators. Additional training sessions are scheduled for later this year.

At the same conference, William Sellers of the Department of Justice criminal division noted that the Government has instituted new policies that will increase the likelihood of criminal prosecutions in OSHA cases. Regional solicitors now have new instructions to contact the Department of Justice to discuss

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Legislative Issues

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the possibility of criminal prosecution when OSHA believes that a fatality has resulted from the willful violation of an OSHA standard.

Mr. Sellers also noted an increased emphasis on utilizing the obstruction of justice laws which can result in felony convictions (think Martha Stewart) when company officials unlawfully modify or destroy documents that should have been maintained. The DOJ attorney said that if employees, supervisors or others engage in these acts, “the Justice department is going to take the case.” Mr. Sellers apparently could not overemphasize the point that if corporate America lies, changes the scene and/or commits perjury, they will be prosecuted. Recent OSHA classes were designed to help “Compliance officers understand how to conduct effective investigations for evidence prosecutors need should the case go to court.” He credited the Justice Department for providing OSHA

with “excellent assistance” to us in these courses.

-- – **Threshold Limit Value (TLV) Portland Cement:**

The American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists (ACGIH) recently published a Draft Notice of Intended Change for the Threshold Limit Value for Portland Cement. The current TLV is 10 milligrams (mg) per cubic meter of “total” particle containing no asbestos and less than 1% crystalline silica. ACGIH proposes to reduce this level to a TLV of 1mg/m³ respirable dust and a short term exposure limit (STEL) of 5mg/m³ respirable dust. In addition, ACGIH proposes to add carcinogenicity classification of A2 “Suspected Human Carcinogen.” Based on a preliminary review of the Notice, we do not believe the scientific studies cited by ACGIH in its Draft Notice support the drastic reduction in the TLV proposed by ACGIH.

ACGIH appears to pick and choose among a series of epidemiology studies, selecting those with some evidence of lung impairment from exposure to

Portland Cement, while ignoring others when no adverse lung effects were found in comparison to control groups.

Regarding the A2 designation, again ACGIH appears to rely on a handful of studies suggesting an increase in colorectal and stomach cancer among certain cement workers, but ignores others showing no increase incidence of similar cancers. More importantly for purposes of inhalation exposure to Portland Cement, ACGIH seems to ignore studies demonstrating no increase incidence of lung cancer in exposed workers. As with the lung impairment studies, smoking histories are absent in some of the mortality studies relied upon by ACGIH.

Needless to say, this is an issue we need to pay close attention to. As with all the legislative issues featured in this newsletter, all of our Contractors and Suppliers should make it a priority to become knowledgeable of the legislatures actions on these matters and take a stand together as warranted.

“Masonry: It Makes A Village”

We should take notice of an event being featured at the Masonry Showcase in Chicago. This two day competition challenges leading contractors and architects from across the country to create a design build project with a predetermined amount of brick, masonry units, glass block and cultured stone. This program showcases the creative energies and work of masonry experts to gain a better understanding of non-traditional uses of masonry and how a one dimensional plan becomes a three dimensional structure.

Please take some time and visit the following website to view the examples of the success of this program across the country. It is as follows:

<http://www.masonryinstitute.com/village.html>

I would really like to explore our options for putting one of these events together in our region. A member of the Executive Council I belong to has offered her services to assist us if we decide to undertake it.

MASONRY INSTITUTE CALENDAR OF EVENTS

TUESDAY, MAY 3, 2005

MASONRY INSTITUTE DINNER MEETING,
MAGGIANO'S, TYSONS II,
6:00 P.M.- 8:30 P.M

MONDAY, JUNE 20, 2005

ANNUAL MASONRY INSTITUTE GOLF TOURNAMENT,
NORBECK COUNTRY CLUB, OLNEY, MD.

MONDAY, JUNE 27 thru TUESDAY, JUNE 28, 2005

LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE, CAPITAL HILL,
HYATT REGENCY

TBA

CRAFTSMANSHIP AWARDS - FALL '05

The Masonry Institute would like to "Thank" our sponsors for this issue of Brick, Block, & Trowel.
They are:

Peter Eberle, President, Heritage Contracting, Chantilly, Va.
David Wright, President, United Masonry, Alexandria, Va.
Charles Tiches, President, Oldcastle APG, Manassas, Va.

We greatly appreciate your sponsorship which facilitates our bringing the BB&T to our members,
architectural community, and other associates in our industry.

Masonry Institute, Inc.

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