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Self-consolidating concrete (SCC) and its benefits are well known to precast concrete producers. This highly flowable concrete can be placed without vibration and segregation. Yet even with its advantages, SCC is still relatively new concept for many ready mixed producers.

Enter the 9-mile tunnel — North America’s largest self-consolidating concrete project — a project that not only required innovative thinking and mix design, but one that, by example, opens up new possibilities for ready mixed producers. The first $61 million construction phase of the massive project will require more than 30,000 cubic yards of concrete and continue through fall 2007, with a second phase of 20,000 cubic yards to follow.
An Unprecedented Challenge

The 9-mile tunnel, known as the Lower North Outfall Sewer, is one of the main waste tunnels for the city of Los Angeles. It runs from downtown L.A. to the Hyperion Treatment Plant in Playa del Rey, where the plant uses advanced technology to ensure Santa Monica Bay is protected from wastewater pollution.

The tunnel, originally built in the 1920s of concrete lined with ceramic tiles and mortar, was corroding like many sewer tunnels of its age. Most of the original ceramic tiles had fallen off and the concrete was deteriorating from sulfuric gases created by the sewage that would literally eat away at the tunnel lining. In fact, closed circuit television inspections revealed extensive decay, which restricted the capacity of the tunnel. And in some areas, structural testing found the original 12- to 14-inch thickness of the tunnel had corroded to just 3 or 4 inches.

After a parallel sewer tunnel was built and put into service, the city set out to repair the aging 12-foot-wide by 10-foot-high semi-elliptical tunnel. Most of the work would take place inside the sewer to lessen the potential impacts of construction, such as noise and dust, on project neighbors.

Led by the City of Los Angeles Bureau of Engineering and a joint venture of contractors Colich & Sons/J.R. Pipeline, the job required excavating the existing concrete and then installing new 12-inch-thick cast-in-place concrete inside the existing tunnel using formwork that left a 1-foot space between the forms and the old tunnel surface.

One of the greatest challenges of the project was simply getting the concrete to the forms. Because of limited access to the tunnel, the highly flowable concrete mix had to be pumped up to 1,900 feet to the tunnel through manholes — an underground distance of more than six football fields — and then the concrete needed to flow into 100 feet of formwork through grout ports.

Going to New Lengths

The City of Los Angeles Bureau of Engineering set out a stringent specification for the concrete — a highly flowable mix design to meet the unique long-distance pumping requirements and still flow within the narrow space of the forms, while meeting all the performance requirements.

While an expansive concrete mix was originally considered, extensive testing by CEMEX, the world’s largest concrete producer, in collaboration with Grace Construction Products, determined that the best overall performance for the 50,000 cubic yards of concrete ultimately needed for the job would be a low shrink, self-consolidating concrete mix. The highly specialized mix needed to meet a shrinkage specification of just 0.030%, or about 100th of an inch — basically the thickness of a single sheet of paper.

Meeting the specification was a team effort. To create a mix that worked and met all of the specs, it took coordinated teamwork from CEMEX, Grace and Colich & Sons/J.R. Pipeline.

In addition, the need for flowability pushed the limits of self-consolidating concrete to new lengths — literally. “Pumping 2,000 feet including inside the form with the placement qualities we achieved is really unheard of,” said Territory Manager Daniel Mitschele of CEMEX. “When creating the mix, we really had to look at what the job would be.”

1. With some of the original wood frame still visible, the tunnel was excavated down to the rough aggregate before installing new 12-inch-thick cast-in-place concrete. 2. CEMEX trucks line up to keep the concrete flowing. Even L.A. traffic hasn’t slowed the 30,000 cubic yards of concrete currently being placed. 3. The finished surface of the tunnel required the installation of a poly-vinyl chloride sheet lining to protect the new sewer pipe from the corrosive effects of sewer gases. 4. Some creativity was needed to reach the underground forms through just three access points. So self-consolidating concrete (SCC) was poured into manholes to waiting pumps, sending the highly flowable concrete as far as 2,000 feet.
After extensive lab testing, trial batches and tests on the job site with starter walls, the city approved the proprietary mix. In addition, the city tests every pour for comprehensive strength and flowability and the mix continues to meet or exceed the design requirements.

A Highly Specialized Mix

The very flowable and low-shrink mix design was achieved using admixtures from Grace Construction Products. The company also provided extensive technical services support led by Corey Wistrom from its Engineering Services Group and Josh Hamilton to help CEMEX fine-tune the highly specialized mix. The mix was designed with a low water/cement ratio to reduce shrinkage and a shrinkage-reducing admixture. To help make the mix highly flowable, a high range water-reducing superplasticizer was introduced and a viscosity modifier was added to help produce the SCC and work as a pumping aide. In addition, a hydration stabilizer was included to keep the mix stable and prevent thickening before the concrete was in place.

“We initially had some concern over the ability of the concrete to flow such great distances,” said Lance Stracner, general superintendent at Colich & Sons/J.R. Pipeline, “but as we worked with the concrete and learned what the pumps could do, we were pleased the performance of the SCC mix — it worked just as planned.”

Keeping the Job Flowing

Pumps of several sizes were used on the job, depending on the pumping distance required. Generally, SCC will pump more easily than conventional concrete due to its flowability and higher viscosity. While pump lines still need to be properly primed before starting, SCC stays more homogeneous inside the pump line due to its thixotropic properties — the property of becoming less viscous when subjected to an applied stress — and SCC doesn’t segregate around 90 degree bends in the pump line.

The addition of the viscosity modifier to the mix also helped reduce the pump pressure. In fact, remarking on the low pump pressure, one pump operator on the job said he was “amazed” at how well the mix pumped.

A smoothly flowing mix was important to enable the SCC to go the distance to the formwork. “The first phase of the project is 31,000 feet long, and we only have three access points, so we’ve had to pump through manholes and wherever we could,” said Project Manager Brad Sims from Colich & Sons/J.R. Pipeline. After traveling such long distances, the mix still had enough viscosity to flow into the formwork and fill the narrow space and all the gaps without needing vibration.

Cost-Saving Construction

The patented steel formwork inside the tunnel took the shape of an arch and was created to move through the tunnel as needed, expanding to within 12 inches of the tunnel perimeter when concrete was poured.
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and contracting as needed to move to the next section of tunnel.

"Because we don’t have to vibrate the concrete when using the SCC mix, that helps with labor costs and wear and tear on the steel formwork that can result in stress cracks," said Sims. "If you consider what it would cost to vibrate forms with regular concrete, including all the added time, labor and equipment versus using SCC, the SCC clearly delivers greater savings and made placing the concrete a much simpler process. The way it flows, the SCC really takes care of itself."

Traditional concrete also restricts the form design and size that can be used — and a specially designed form can add costs. Without any vibration, SCC will change shape under its own weight to self-consolidate and self-level within the formwork. SCC can also pass easily through narrow openings and congested reinforcement without aggregates “blocking” behind obstructions and stopping the flow of the concrete.

In addition to filling the formwork, Stracner noted that in some areas the SCC is put to an even greater test: “The project design does not use reinforcing steel in the annular space,” explained Stracner, “but in one particular area we had to pump the concrete through W6x25 steel beams set at 5-foot intervals that were being used to shore up the tunnel. It was pretty impressive how the SCC was able to flow around the steel behind the formwork and fill in all the voids.”

The finished surface of the tunnel also required the installation of a T-lock protective liner made by Ameron International. The T-lock is a T-ribbed poly-vinyl chloride sheet lining material that protects the new sewer pipe from the corrosive effects of sewer gases. The T-lock was placed over the collapsible forms that run inside the tunnel so that as the concrete flowed in, the T-locks protruding from the liner would bond to the concrete tunnel structure, effectively locking the liner to the concrete surface.

“We didn’t need to finish the concrete because in this particular application we used the T-lock liner,” said Stracner, “but in the few areas where we removed the liner, the concrete had a beautiful smooth finish without any manual labor needed.”

Progress and Prospects

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Fortunately, the collaboration between Colich & Sons/J.R. Pipeline, CEMEX, Grace and the City of L.A., has kept the job progressing well — despite the added challenges of L.A. traffic. The contractor is lining approximately 100 feet of tunnel per day, keeping the job on track to finish phase one as scheduled.

Because it’s so cost-prohibitive to open-cut and install new large-diameter sewers in downtown areas, and because of the extensive amount of utilities that exist under city streets and near sewer lines, many cities are turning to rehabilitating existing sewer tunnels — a much more efficient approach. Using SCC as a method to rehabilitate sewers not only saves the cities taxpayer dollars, it eliminates the large impact on residents because there’s no need to rip up streets — it can all happen underground using SCC and innovative construction techniques.

Whether for tunnels, bridges or civil engineering projects, residential or commercial structures, SCC is providing a cost-effective alternative to traditional concrete mixes — and bringing new opportunities to light for ready mixed producers.

Compiled by Alice Poltorick, marketing communications manager for Grace Construction Products - Americas. Poltorick has an MBA from Boston College and completed graduate work in communications at Boston University. She can be reached at the company’s Cambridge, MA headquarters at alice.m.poltorick@grace.com.

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the National Ready Mixed Concrete Association.

How Do You Measure the Value of SCC?

For the right applications, SCC offers significant benefits:
- Eliminates the need for vibration and manual compaction;
- Reduces equipment requirements and cost;
- Improves labor safety;
- Improves job productivity with faster, easier placement;
- Reduces labor required;
- Improves surface finish and reduces repair costs;
- Reduces noise levels and improves environment for employees and neighbors.

But how do you weigh the economic value of these factors against any additional materials cost? According to Ivana Jovanovic, market manager at Grace Construction Products, the economic value of SCC varies by the type of concrete structure, and an application rating criteria can now be applied to determine the value of using SCC on any particular project with great accuracy. In addition, Grace has developed a tool that can be used by the contractor to determine the value of SCC compared to traditional concrete using specific job criteria such as the size and type of structure, finishing requirements, local labor rates and the quantity of material placed. As a result, contractors can now quantify SCC benefits to accurately calculate savings and determine the most appropriate applications.

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NRMCA Wins Trade Association Environmental Leadership Award

The National Ready Mixed Concrete Association is proud to receive the Trade Association Environmental Leadership Award from the Small Business Ombudsman/Small Business Environmental Assistance Program (SBO/SBEAP). The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Small Business Ombudsman, along with Region IV of the Small Business Environmental Assistance Program, nominated NRMCA for the award. Managers of the program nominated NRMCA because of the extensive interaction of the association and its state partners with the SBO/SBEAP. The program also recognizes NRMCA for its leadership in education and training through its Environmental Course, Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act Workshops, regulatory guidance documents and other tools that promote environmental excellence. NRMCA is also recognized for voluntarily becoming the 10th trade association to join EPA’s Performance Track program and for working actively to promote Green Building with concrete. In addition, NRMCA is recognized for advocacy efforts that allowed RMC producers to comply with regulations and helped them avoid serious enforcement actions.

“None of NRMCA’s outreach efforts are restricted to dues-paying members. Its weekly newsletter, environmental training seminars, and of course, governmental affairs efforts are available for the benefit of everyone in this industry sector,” said Tony Pendola, P.E., director of the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources Small Business Environmental Assistance Program. “[NRMCA] has worked extensively with EPA to procure regulatory burden reductions for small businesses in the TRI arena and to reform EPA’s National Environmental Performance Track program. The association’s work paid off with a proposed rule change that would significantly expand applicability of the easier Form A instead of Form R and make other burden reductions.” NRMCA will continue its efforts to support the industry and foster environmental stewardship in ready mixed concrete production operations.
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From the Top Down

By Edward Herbert, III, NRMCA Director of Environmental Affairs

If someone in your organization is asked, “What is your company doing about environmental issues at the concrete plants?” how would he or she answer? Often the answer is, “Oh, we have a guy who does that” or “I think we have a permit.” If an employee of a ready mixed concrete company isn’t aware of his or her responsibilities for environmental stewardship, it’s likely that the message hasn’t been conveyed appropriately. Some organizations make it a point to make sure that everyone on staff knows the company’s stance on environmental stewardship and expects employees to accept ownership.

One exceptional example is Glacier Northwest, Inc. based in Seattle. Glacier has been a repeat winner in the NRMCA Commitment to Environmental Excellence Awards competition because of dedicated leadership. This year is no exception; the Glacier Hillsboro Oregon plant won the First Place Award for plants producing over 100,000 cubic yards per year. Glacier makes sure that each individual knows the possible causes of environmental impacts from the activities they perform and then manages its activities to prevent pollution. Success of its program is dependent on the company’s managers and their willingness to lead the organization’s commitment to exceptional environmental performance. Also noteworthy is Glacier’s commitment to continuous improvement, operational control procedures and prevention of pollution at its source.

To accomplish its goal of fostering environmental stewardship, Glacier uses an Environmental Management System, or EMS, as a tool to assure compliance and, more importantly, environmental excellence. The EMS process set by Glacier facilitates the development and implementation of training, outlines roles and responsibilities, recordkeeping, monitoring and measuring, corrective action, auditing and management review procedures. Significant environmental impacts are documented by the company’s leadership and included in the EMS. The company’s EMS is actively managed to facilitate continuous improvement with an overall goal of minimizing significant operational and environmental impacts.

Most important to the leaders at Glacier is that each employee understands and accepts ownership for the environmental impacts of his or her job. In other words, what each individual can do to make sure that he or she is not polluting the air, land or water. Each individual must know how to properly manage activities and prevent harm. He or she also has to know that doing the job can make a difference in the surrounding community. Each Glacier ready mixed concrete plant conducts two independent environmental audits monthly to make sure there are no deficiencies. If staff identifies any faults during the audit, immediate action is taken to immediately correct the shortcomings. One inspection is conducted by plant management staff and another is performed by a Glacier environmental manager.

The leadership’s commitment is demonstrated by annual visits to every ready mixed concrete plant by company President and CEO Allen Hamblen. These actions set an example and demonstrate to all employees the importance of measurable environmental performance. More importantly, more and more companies are seeing the benefits of environmental performance in the company’s bottom line. Making the investment is challenging and changing the culture of a company is very difficult. Glacier and other companies are making the investment and it is paying off. The more companies attempt to make this change, the more it will help improve the image of the industry and produce benefits in profits, morale and a positive public image.

For more information, contact Herbert, MS, REM, LEED A.P. at eherbert@nrma.org or 240/485-1154.
When leaders within the concrete industry established the RMC Research Foundation in 1991, even they would not yet know the significant impact their foresight would have on the industry. The first projects supported by the foundation were modest and were selected on an as-needed basis. But in 1999 when the RMC Research Foundation launched its Building a Strong Foundation for the Future fundraising campaign to make the foundation a strong, vital and self-sustaining organization, the future of the concrete industry would be changed forever. As pledges and donations began to pour in and funds became available to support projects to improve and advance the industry, it became clear that the leaders who started the RMC Research Foundation years before had created something very special. Today, as many of the projects funded by the foundation come to fruition, professionals within the concrete, construction, research and academic communities are finding tremendous value in the foundation’s work. While some benefits are highly quantifiable, others are more subtle; but one thing is clear: the concrete industry is not only better for the RMC Research Foundation’s work but will also continue to improve.

Federal, state and local governments establish various regulations in an effort to protect the health and safety of citizens and workers as well as the environment in which we live. However, the data and information used to establish these regulations may become outdated as improvements in technologies and equipment limit any negative impact on people and communities. One example where the work of the RMC Research Foundation is making a difference in this area is an air emissions study demonstrating that air emissions from ready mixed concrete plants are much lower than previously thought. The National Ready Mixed Concrete Association (NRMCA) has used the data collected from the foundation’s AP-42 study to persuade the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and state environmental agencies of these reduced emission rates. North Carolina and Oklahoma have already adopted the new AP-42 standard on a state level and the federal EPA is expected to do so soon. Since permitting fees are based on these rates, ready mixed concrete producers will ultimately save money in...
reduced fees, with savings depending upon each state’s permit fee rates. Both the reduction in fees and the evidence of the industry’s environmentally sound practices are significant advancements for the industry, while also assuring the general public’s interest.

Similarly, when the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) recently proposed regulations related to personal exposure to hexavalent chromium in the workplace, a study funded by the RMC Research Foundation demonstrated the extremely low inhalation exposure to hexavalent chromium by industry personnel. This study assured the safety of our workforce. However, NRMCA, the Portland Cement Association (PCA), and the National Concrete Masonry Association also used the study as the basis for comprehensive comments to OSHA, resulting in the exclusion of cement, and consequently the concrete and concrete products industries, from the new regulations. This victory saved the overall industries more than $63 million and illustrates the critical role the RMC Research Foundation is playing in giving its association partners credibility in advocacy efforts.

The RMC Research Foundation also looks to take a proactive approach to improving the quality of life for everyone through projects related to sustainable development. The U.S. Green Building Council’s (USGBC) Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED®) program is quickly gaining momentum as sustainable building practices take hold nationwide. The RMC Research Foundation, along with partial support from PCA, funded the Ready Mixed Concrete Industry LEED Reference Guide (LEED Guide), which is helping to educate those who may not have been previously acquainted with the positive energy and environmental properties of concrete and how its many uses may increase the number of points for which a LEED-certified project may qualify. In fact, leaders within the USGBC are taking notice of concrete and the contributions it may make in the sustainable development community and have begun suggesting the use of the LEED Guide themselves. This is due in part by both the information contained in the LEED Guide as well as the growing popularity of pervious concrete. This new emphasis on pervious concrete, the use of which is rapidly replacing the use of asphalt, may be attributed to research studies that are actively demonstrating its value. The RMC Research Foundation is currently funding two studies on pervious concrete. The first is aimed at documenting the stormwater management benefits of pervious and will include a long-term maintenance guide for its care. The second study focuses on documenting the long-term field performance of pervious concrete in variable climates. The RMC Research Foundation is also considering support of other pervious research to ensure that the benefits of this environmentally friendly pavement are fully understood by all those who work with it, use it and who stand to benefit from it. Pervious concrete and the stormwater management and environmental benefits it offers is important to the future of concrete pavement and the RMC Research Foundation is providing critical support to ensure it is a high-quality product.

The use of concrete originated centuries ago and has stood the test of time. But even the best building material can become better. That is why the RMC Research Foundation supports initiatives designed to improve concrete’s use and functionality. One of these initiatives is the Prescriptive-to-Performance (P2P) movement, which provides benefits to the public through enhanced quality and performance. By making the switch from prescriptive- to performance-based specifications, the ready mixed concrete industry also stands to reap many benefits, both with cost savings as well as with increased control to producers. It is estimated that a savings of approximately $149 million could be realized in the high-rise structure sector. Similarly, in the areas of parking structures and residential slabs, if P2P specifications were used, the industry could save approximately $1.8 billion. Across all sectors of the industry combined, that savings could climb to almost $3.7 billion. That is why the RMC Research Foundation has chosen to fund three P2P projects in support of this effort. These projects include: a laboratory study demonstrating the advantages of performance-based specifications; a review of performance-based specifications worldwide and creation of model performance specification language; and a quality management system for producers to demonstrate credentials for meeting performance-based specifications. The results of these projects will be used by NRMCA to advocate to specifying agencies such as the American Concrete Institute (ACI) the myriad benefits to be gained by making the switch to performance-based specifications.

As Mother Nature continues to wreak havoc at will in the form of devastating hurricanes, earthquakes and tornadoes, never has it been more important to ensure building codes across the country are strong enough to keep storm-related loss of life to a minimum. Images of the massive destruction caused last fall by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita reinforced the call for building code changes. To that end, the RMC Research Foundation partnered with the
Communities nationwide have been establishing recycling plans with greater frequency over the last few decades. It’s only fitting that the concrete industry follows suit and recycles where possible. One avenue in which the RMC Research Foundation is exploring this possibility is by funding a study on reusing crushed and sized returned concrete as aggregates in fresh concrete. The results of this study will be used by industry associations such as NRMCA to support changes in current industry standards to allow for its use. It is estimated that, were crushed concrete aggregate to become an acceptable aggregate for use in fresh concrete, the industry could save approximately $75 million annually. This study will provide an excellent opportunity to have a positive environmental impact while at the same time providing the industry with significant savings.

In order to ensure that concrete is of high quality, it is imperative that the equipment used to batch it is accurate. As part of the effort to improve concrete batching, the RMC Research Foundation is funding a two-pronged project that will include a guide for the inspection of ready mixed concrete production facilities and an evaluation of concrete batching accuracy. The first part will include the development of a guide for inspection of ready mixed concrete plants in accordance with NRMCA's plant certification program. The current plant certification program only requires that a licensed engineer with concrete knowledge perform the inspection. However, the development of this guide will not only ensure certification consistency but will also clarify intent and will facilitate a better understanding of the inspection requirements on the part of both the inspector and the producer. The second aspect of this program will evaluate whether the current batching accuracy requirements in ASTM C 94 and inspected in the NRMCA plant certification program are reasonable and achievable so that any necessary changes can be advocated effectively by NRMCA and others. Finally, the project will also describe recommended procedures for calibration of measuring devices such as scales and water meters used in concrete production. Ensuring that plant equipment is functioning properly will ensure quality concrete and eliminate waste.

The future of the concrete industry is only as strong as its workforce. To be truly successful, it is vital that the concrete industry recruit, retain and train the best and brightest for it to remain competitive. That is why the RMC Research Foundation has made a strong commitment to enhancing educational opportunities available within the concrete industry. Since its inception, the RMC Research Foundation has been a strong supporter of the Concrete Industry Management (CIM) program. Developed...
specifically to create a degree program combining business skills with concrete industry specific knowledge, the CIM program has been a sensational asset to the concrete industry. Those who graduate from one of the four CIM programs around the country — the flagship program at Middle Tennessee State University or one of the three new program host schools (Arizona State University, California State University-Chico or the New Jersey Institute of Technology) — come into the industry with a terrific head start. Considering the tremendous costs of training new graduates who may have a generic business degree but no experience within the concrete industry, these graduates are able to contribute to the success of a business immediately. It’s no surprise that most CIM graduates are in high demand and the RMC Research Foundation is proud to be associated with this unique and exciting program.

Ensuring that the concrete industry’s current professionals have the skills, tools and knowledge necessary to be successful at their jobs is a priority for the industry. To that end, the educational programs funded by the RMC Research Foundation have focused on the creation of tools and materials that complement industry certifications and training programs offered by NRMCA and other industry organizations. Examples of these tools include: the development of a Plant Operator Certification course, corresponding text book and instructor’s materials; creation of a Pervious Concrete Contractor Certification text; and establishment of the Certified Concrete Sales Professional program and the Sales Manager Training Course. The materials are important not only from an industry educational standpoint, but because many states have chosen to require these certifications and the materials and content developed with the support of the RMC Research Foundation to ensure content quality and consistency. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), companies are increasing training investments in their employees with over 60 percent of all companies indicating they have increased the percentage of employees receiving training. The BLS also reports that more than 66 percent of companies have increased the amount of money spent on formal training for employees. The RMC Research Foundation is leveraging the investments of individual companies for the benefit of all.

Concrete companies across the country have reported driver shortages for years. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the need for additional commercial drivers’ license (CDL) drivers will increase by at least 13 percent over the next decade. It is already evident that many new drivers to the industry are coming from the Hispanic community. Although some of these drivers possess adequate English skills to utilize current industry English-language training materials and must be able to read traffic signs in English in order to have a CDL, the RMC Research Foundation Board of Trustees chose to approve funding for the translation of two important NRMCA driver training tools into Spanish to ensure that these new drivers will fully understand the training materials and will be able to implement what they learn immediately. The Truck Mixer Driver Manual is one of NRMCA’s most popular training manuals and was a logical choice for the translation project. The comprehensive Concrete Delivery Professional Certification Program was also selected to be translated into Spanish. These valuable training tools will be an important part of educating the next influx of new drivers as the industry continues to grow.

Many of the resources provided to the concrete industry through the RMC Research Foundation are readily available for download from our website at www.rmc-foundation.org or through NRMCA. Since the mission of the RMC Research Foundation is to support research and educational programs that will advance and improve the concrete industry, we are always interested in receiving project ideas and proposals. We also look forward to opportunities to partner with other industry organizations and universities on projects that will benefit the industry. Visit our website to learn more about the RMC Research Foundation or to find out how to submit a proposal. Your support and participation with the RMC Research Foundation will help us fulfill our mission and will increase the value we are providing to the concrete industry’s success.

• The goal of the RMC Research Foundation is to build a $20 million endowment, the interest from which will provide $1 million annually in program funding in perpetuity.
• Because the RMC Research Foundation is a 501 (c) 3 organization, all donations are fully tax deductible.
• For more information on donating to the RMC Research Foundation, please visit www.rmc-foundation.org/newsite/contribute.htm.
Keeping More than Your Eyes on the Road

By Gary Mullings, Sr. Director of Operations & Compliance, NRMCA

The biggest liability that a ready mixed concrete company faces occurs nearly every minute of daily operation. It is when a driver leaves the plant and becomes part of the intricate web of vehicles driving on our streets and highway. Even our very best drivers are subject to the everyday hazards of driving. Wouldn’t it be great if we could record every moment of our driving in order to identify bad habits and teach good ones? Well, that day has come for the ready mixed concrete industry. A new technology now is being utilized by the industry that can record erratic movements of the vehicle, thus giving a ready mixed concrete producer a powerful tool to be used for driver training and in litigation involving an accident.

One such proprietary equipment maker is DriveCam. DriveCam produces a palm-sized video recorder that monitors driving activity and records sights and sounds inside and outside a vehicle. When a triggering “event” happens — an accident, hard acceleration, stop or sharp turn — a “TiVo” type device records images and sounds that are saved and can be later analyzed to determine what happened. At the heart of the system is a camera unit, which is mounted inside the ready mixed concrete truck cab in the center of the windshield. A forward-facing lens gives a wide field of vision, scanning the highway ahead, and a microphone picks up sounds inside and outside the vehicle. A second lens with a 120-degree field of vision viewing the vehicle’s interior also can be mounted. This camera gives us images of the driver. The cameras record images and sound into a digital looping memory buffer. It is typically set to record for 10 seconds before resetting itself and repeating the sequence. Once triggered, it saves another 10 seconds following the trigger point, creating and saving a 20-second event that shows not only what happened, but in most cases just why it happened.

These recordings can be analyzed and then used to train better driving behaviors. By changing driving behavior, event recorder users claim they have documented dramatic reductions in collisions. An additional benefit of the technology is that when collisions occur, the recordings provide unbiased evidence to determine fault and expose fraudulent insurance claims. One of the leading ready mixed concrete producers in America currently has plans to equip all its fleet with such a device. The company also sees value in including a recorder on all supervisory vehicles as well as sales and QC vehicles.

The equipment maker markets a driving behavior management systems and services that integrate in-vehicle video technology, driving performance management software and driver counseling to reduce the cost of poor driving. Improved driving performance can be an important factor in controlling insurance losses and reducing expenses for fleets. This technology can directly address this by changing driver behavior to reduce erratic driving and decrease the frequency and severity of collisions and related bodily injuries. At the same time, it may be able to lower liability costs, speed insurance processing and reduce fleet operation and maintenance costs.

For ready mixed concrete producers, it appears that the future is now and there is a technology that can provide unbiased evidence that can enhance positive driving behaviors, and when collisions occur, provide documentation to determine fault and expose fraudulent claims. What’s next for the industry? The technology will be on display this fall. The Operations, Environmental and Safety Committee of NRMCA will assemble ready mixed concrete producers who will provide recorded events and documentation of the technology at this year’s NRMCA OES/BAC combined Fall Forum October 15-17 in Orlando. For further information, link to www.nrmca.org or http://www.drivecam.com.
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Source: CIF
Make Your Customers Say “Wow!”

By Greg Smith

I want to tell you a story about a recent trip to Cedar Rapids, Iowa. I travel a lot and sometimes for fun, my luggage and I have a competition to see which one of us makes it to the destination first.

We had a quick connection in Chicago where I hoped and prayed my luggage would make it on the next plane. The good thing about the Cedar Rapids airport is you don’t have to wait long for luggage. Our airplane was the only one there. Well, guess what? No luggage. I won the race again.

My next move was to rent a car and drive to Iowa City to conduct an executive retreat for a client, my final destination. I presented myself at the Enterprise car rental counter. Now, if you are like me, you have reached a point in your life where you just expect poor service. You expect to be treated like a robot, a sub-human or a clod of dirt. I soon found out this customer experience was going to be different.

The interaction started off as usual...some nameless guy asking for my credit card and driver’s license. Then something unusual happened. The young man stood up, reached over the counter and shook my hand. It wasn’t one of those dead fish kind of handshakes, but a real strong, glad-to-meet-you handshake. I almost fell out of my shoes in shock. Wow!

In my entire life, no car rental agency person has ever shaken my hand. Most people in other car rental places couldn’t care less if I showed up or not. Well, this young man was amazing. He finished all the paperwork and asked me to sign those blank spaces on the contract; all the while I was trying to compose myself from the handshake experience. For all I know, I could have agreed to rent the car for $2000 a day. But at that point I didn’t care. I was beside myself.

Then he did it again. He stood up, walked around the counter and shook my hand one more time. Then he said, “Mr. Smith, we appreciate your business.” I was blown away.

Here is an important fact to remember. A Gallup survey showed a customer who is “emotionally connected” to your place of business is likely to spend 46 percent more money than a customer who is merely “satisfied” but not emotionally bonded.

To get your customers to say “Wow,” you need to follow these four steps of exceptional service.

1. Select the right people. Most businesses do a poor job hiring people. They hire just anyone and then place them on the frontline with customers. This in turn runs them away to the competition. So spend more time recruiting and hiring the right people with good personalities.

2. Set performance standards. Outline specific steps on how employees are to act, speak and respond to customer needs and requests. If you let your employees decide how to act, there is no telling what they will do.

3. Sustain ongoing training and reinforcement. Good customer service skills do not come naturally. Successful businesses make good skills a habit. They reinforce and train their staff on a recurring basis.

4. Specify consequences for good behaviors. You must hold people accountable. Reward those who exceed the standards and develop those who do not.

For a free fact sheet, “How to Hire Exceptional People Each and Every Time,” please call (770) 860-9464 or (800) 821-2487 or visit our website at: www.chartcourse.com/greatservice.html.

Greg Smith helps create high performance organizations that attract, keep and motivate their workforce. As president of Chart Your Course International, he has designed and implemented professional development programs for hundreds of organizations globally. As a business growth consultant, he has helped business owners reduce turnover, increase sales, deliver better customer service and reach long-term prosperity. He is also the author of Here Today, Here Tomorrow; Transforming Your Workforce from High Turnover to High Retention, The New Leader, and several other books. For more information, visit http://www.chartcourse.com or call (800) 821-2487 or (770) 860-9464.
Ready Mixed Concrete Driver Recruiting and Retention

By Dan Osborne, Titan America LLC, and Ken Nehilla, Florida Rock Industries, Inc.

Late last year, under the direction of NRMCA’s Executive Committee, a group participated in the Developing Industry leaders (DIL) program. The assignment was to choose and explore an industry-related issue that needed attention. This issue, if improved upon, would have a positive impact on the industry as a whole, both short and long term. The issue we focused on was ready mixed concrete driver recruitment and retention. Specifically, we wanted to identify the circumstances surrounding the current driver shortage, determine the current and future potential impact on our industry, and finally, initiate strategies to reverse the trend. We felt that the driver shortage, if left unaddressed, had the greatest potential to negatively impact our industry’s performance.

Our group partners are David Bosarge, Bayou Concrete; David Killian, Rinker Materials Corporation; Frank Mathis, Sunroc Corporation; Dan Osborne, Titan America LLC; Ken Nehilla, Florida Rock Industries, Inc.; Steve Wild, Rinker Materials Corporation; and Chris Young, Lafarge North America, Inc. As a very representative cross section of our industry, we work at companies of varying sizes, at locations throughout the country and experiences within the industry. However, as different as our team’s background was, we all faced the same problem: How do we improve our recruitment and retention of the most highly qualified and suitable delivery professionals?

So that we would not duplicate current efforts, the next step was to find out what NRMCA does to help the industry address these challenges. To date, their focus has been to improve retention by increasing the status and professionalism of the position through the Mentor Driver and Certified Concrete Delivery Professional programs. NRMCA also had renewed interest in developing other programs that members could use to produce Class B Commercial Drivers’ Licensed (CDL) drivers. This could be accomplished through partnerships with community colleges, trade schools and trucking schools. NRMCA was also working on a program that involved federal government agencies that would financially support veterans’ training to obtain commercial drivers’ licenses.

Next, we attempted to quantify the annual impact of driver shortages. Based on data in the 2005 NRMCA Fleet Benchmarking and Cost Survey and the 2005 NRMCA Ready Mixed Concrete Industry Data Report, we estimated the negative financial impact of an idle truck. Here are our findings:

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<th>Avg. Member*</th>
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<tr>
<td>Cubic Yards/truck/year</td>
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<td>Lost Profit per truck</td>
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*Data from 2005 NRMCA Fleet Benchmarking and Cost Survey and NRMCA Ready Mixed Concrete Industry Data Report utilizing 2004 data

So many of us fail to notice or take into account that each truck remaining idle at our plant represents lost opportunity for additional volume and profit. In fact, since most of us regularly exceed our break-even...
volume quotas, any additional volume would come at incrementally higher profits!

While our group was quite certain that this was indeed a widespread problem within our industry, we decided it was important to gather information from as many sources as possible. We developed a questionnaire that was distributed through NRMCA and received 109 responses. Here are a few of the results:

The survey results confirmed what our group initially hypothesized, that this was indeed a widespread problem and would continue to get worse unless something was done to reverse the trend. With guidance from our group facilitators, Eileen Dickson and Lionel Lemay, we asked NRMCA’s Educational Activities Committee to hold focus groups with industry representatives to help us develop strategies to address driver recruitment and retention.

Two focus groups met. The first, in Ontario, Calif., on March 16 and 17, consisted of 17 participants and represented over 30 percent of ready mixed concrete production. The second was held in Silver Spring, Md., on March 21 and 22, with 24 participants representing 21 percent of ready mixed production. In total, the two focus groups represented 40 percent of ready mixed concrete production in the United States.

The objective of the focus group meetings was to develop strategies that the industry at large could implement to address driver recruitment and retention. In addition, the focus group developed a strategic roadmap.

Collectively, the focus groups suggested three major recruitment strategies:

1. Improve the image of the industry through marketing communications, including grassroots image campaigns and other channels such as the Internet. NRMCA quickly developed one concept — a generic ready mixed concrete driver recruitment website that would promote the benefits of the profession as well as link potential drivers with member companies;

2. Develop collateral print and video materials that producers could customize to promote the industry to potential drivers. Many recruiters and employment agencies use video presentations to attract prospective employees;

3. Conduct market research to help members gain deeper knowledge about labor pool dynamics in terms of culture, gender, age, etc. Conduct market research to develop an industry-wide formula to calculate hiring and training costs of a driver with and without a Class B CDL. Basically, the focus groups wanted NRMCA’s help to find out who is out there and what it will take to attract good drivers to our industry.

The task group also identified three major strategies to improve driver retention:

1. Conduct market research that would identify comparative compensation statistics across industries (ready mix versus local short haul and delivery drivers). Also, identify those benefits that are most important to drivers as well as an understanding of why drivers leave the industry — whether they continue to drive or change professions. Finally, collect and disseminate best management practices regarding wages and benefits to NRMCA members;

2. Develop a frontline driver supervisors’ training program that includes better communication and managerial tools to work with subordinate drivers;

3. Promote the industry to improve its image. Promote industry, as well as drivers’ accomplishments, to customers, government agencies and the media were two ideas.

Finally, in order to best prepare an individual for the job as a ready mixed delivery professional, it is critical to train them from the start. Treat the position as a career, giving it the credibility it deserves. This will improve both recruitment and retention of ready mixed concrete delivery professionals.

In order to accomplish this, it is vital that we increase the number of programs available for individuals to earn a class B CDL in combination with ready mix training. It will anchor new drivers so they can grow to become ready mixed concrete delivery professionals. Our DIL groups recommend creation of a standardized program that would be incorporated into the curriculum at local community colleges, trade schools and trucking schools. Member companies that wish to complete their own training in-house could utilize the curriculum.

The next steps are to complete a draft roadmap for driver recruitment and retention and continue to work under the Educational Activities Committee (EAC) for implementation. While several group members will continue to work on the task group to help complete this strategy, the task group also will expand to include a wider network of members across the nation.

If you want to participate in the creation of the roadmap, please contact NRMCA’s Eileen Dickson at edickson@rmca.org.
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In recent years, an increasing number of ready mixed concrete producers have been impacted by a shortage of qualified drivers. In fact, NRMCA estimates that the industry is currently experiencing a 10 percent driver shortage. This means that on an average workday, 7,000 of our industry’s 70,000 trucks are sitting idle! However, this shortage is by no means confined to our segment of the trucking industry. The American Trucking Associations (ATA) recently released a report pegging the current driver shortage at 20,000 in the heavy-duty, long-haul trucking industry. ATA expects the shortage to grow to 110,000 by 2014.

NRMCA’s government affairs team has been lobbying innovative legislative proposals designed to ease this chronic shortage. One such initiative is to extend the accelerated Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) educational benefits program to military veterans who desire to obtain their commercial driver’s licenses (CDL). Veterans present a top-notch labor pool that could help bridge the gap between driver supply and demand. In addition to their reputation for discipline, punctuality and hard work, many veterans receive valuable prerequisite experience operating large vehicles or pieces of equipment while in the military. NRMCA’s goal is to use the MGIB as an incentive to make veterans’ transition to civilian employment as a driver more attractive.

Standard MGIB benefits are paid as a monthly stipend capped at just over $1,000 per month. This payment structure does not make driver training, which is short-term and high-cost in nature, appealing to MGIB beneficiaries. On average, truck driver training programs typically last only 4 to 6 weeks but can cost in the range of $4,000 to $6,000. At most, standard MGIB bill benefits would finance about a third of a truck driver training program. That’s not a very compelling financial incentive to become a driver! However, expanding the accelerated MGIB program, which has been available to veterans seeking employment in high-tech industries since 2001, would make driver training much more competitive. In fact, the accelerated MGIB benefit would cover 60 percent of each trainee’s costs in the form of an up-front lump sum payment.

The NRMCA government affairs team is working hard to allow our industry to benefit from the accelerated MGIB program. In the House of Representatives, Reps. Michael Michaud (D-2-ME) and Jeff Miller (R-1-FL) have introduced legislation (H.R. 717) that would expand the accelerated MGIB program specifically to driver training. Senators Conrad Burns (R-MT) and Mark Pryor (D-AR) also embraced the initiative by introducing the Veterans Employment and Training (VET) Act (S. 2416) in early March. The VET Act would the expand the accelerated MGIB program to the 14 industries identified by the Department of Labor (DOL) as likely to add large numbers of new jobs in the coming years. Transportation and construction are both included among the industries targeted by DOL.

NRMCA is aggressively lobbying both of these pieces of legislation.

To write your legislators in support of H.R. 717 and S. 2416, please visit NRMCA’s Grassroots Website at www.nrmca.org/grassroots. For more information about this issue, please contact NRMCA’s Robert Sullivan or Kevin Voelte at 1-888-84-NRMCA or rsullivan@nrmca.org and kvoelte@nrmca.org.
MMC Materials’ Supervisory Skills Certificate Series
2006 Innovation in Training Winner

By Frank Cavaliere, NRMCA Communications Manager

The constant challenge of attracting and keeping well-motivated managers has caused many ready mixed concrete producers to confront the problem head on, with comprehensive in-house programs designed to help managers more effectively lead their employees and positively influence their customers. Translation: This industry is highly competitive and if we don’t make sure our workforce is satisfying the needs of the marketplace — i.e. giving customers what they want when they want it — we’ll all be in trouble.

This year’s spotlight turned to Mississippi, where NRMCA producer member MMC Materials has earned the association’s coveted annual Innovation in Training award for its Supervisory Skills Certificate Series. Judges praised the program for “stepping beyond training paradigms in the ready mixed industry” to develop a program that builds good will and emphasizes “response instead of reaction.” A series of videos, slide presentations, workbook exercises, discussions and applications-based homework exercises were designed to elevate MMC’s general management and front-line supervisors’ leadership skills to a higher level.

MMC Materials and its subsidiary, Gulf Concrete LLC, have operations spanning the Gulf Coast region, operating nine separate business units in Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee and Louisiana. They have approximately 630 employees and 66 plants. Aware that employees affect the bottom line, two years ago senior management created and implemented the supervisory skills program to help managers “in the art of applying management principles to everyday situations.”

This training has four major objectives:
• Equip managers with the necessary tools to effectively lead employees under their authority;
• Assist managers in becoming proactive and not reactive;
• Identify potential managers and begin the process of training to become future managers;
• Equip managers to be leaders in the market they serve.

Development

“Many employees in management positions were promoted to their levels without formal training for the job,” related MMC’s Human Resources Manager Johnny Young. “It’s not intended to be an end-all, but rather start the process of building managers’ confidence and job skills.”

The Supervisor Skills Certificate Series consists of six classes, each about eight hours long. They include required homework assignments based on the material taught that day. The tone for the entire series is set before the first training session, Young said. MMC conducts this training session at an
off-site conference center, located on 400 acres that offers opportunities for outdoor teambuilding activities. Managers meet at the conference center the afternoon before the first training session to enjoy the facilities and complete the challenge course.

“This sets the tone for the remainder of the series and helps remove turf protection,” Young stated.

Social time and dinner follow, then a bonfire is lit and stories shared around the campfire. The first training session begins the following morning. Each training session is held away from any MMC plant site, helping to reinforce the belief that the company seeks the best possible learning environment available. All travel expenses incurred by the manager, including room, board and mileage, are paid by MMC.

The first session is entitled The Super Supervisor, covering the basic functions of the supervisor with an emphasis on relating positively to employees and how to assist them in reaching their full potential. A series of six films are shown to managers. The series chronicles a woman with almost 50 years experience as a subordinate in a shop factory who then translates her tenure into management principles. The session is then summarized into what’s given to the managers in written form: The Super Supervisor’s Seven C’s: Courtesy, Concern, Consideration, Compassion, Consistency, Control & Caring.

The second session, The Manager’s Leadership Style, examines the individual — showing how personality, communication and leadership styles influence effectiveness. MMC managers take a self-scoring assessment tool that provides insight into their strengths and challenges as they relate to and guide their employees.

“A very effective activity is giving managers case studies and asking what they would do in particular situations given their leadership style,” Young related.

Another activity is called “Work Trouble,” where managers are given a work-related problem to fix and have to choose adjectives that describe the type of person needed to solve the problem. Other activities conducted include “Know Your Co-Workers,” “My Strengths and Challenges,” “Know Your Styles,” “Off to Work We Go” and “Supervisory Skills in Step with Your Style.” The latter three activities help managers to identify a required task to a particular leadership style. This helps the manager adapt his or her style to the style of the direct report to ensure a task is accomplished, Young said.

The next session, The Manager as Leader, builds on the course materials contained in the second session by reviewing the traits of being an effective leader within an organization. Young said that this session was developed using a book by John Maxwell entitled The Right to Lead. MMC adapted the book’s content into two major leadership topics: Earning the right to lead and the way to lead.

The session includes four activities to help drive home the major principles. The first activity, “That’s What I Like About You,” drives home the point of building positive relationships, including complimenting others for their characteristics. The second, “Conveying Vision,” helps MMC managers think about their role in promoting the company’s vision by the tasks they perform and then communicating the end results to subordinates. “Slow Successes” then has the managers identify obstacles that famous people in history have overcome to achieve success in their field. Lastly comes “Reality Check,” where managers complete an honest evaluation of their abilities as leaders.

The fourth session in MMC’s Supervisor Skills Certificate Series is Coaching for Development. Young said this course is based on a book written by former NFL coach Don Shula and well known management consultant Ken Blanchard. Their book discusses what the authors describe as the five secrets of effective coaching: conviction-driven leadership; over-learning skill sets; being audible-ready; consistency; and honesty-based supervision.

This session begins with a discussion of the previous sessions’ homework assignments, focusing on reading from the book The One Minute Manager. Managers are separated into small groups and asked to discuss relevant quotes from the book, why they’re true, what is important to remember and how they have seen these examples work effectively. Activities are interspersed throughout the training session to prompt managers to think about their roles as a coach and not just as a manager. One activity requires the manager to develop a self-improvement plan for coaching their subordinates, including a score sheet to identify strengths and needed improvements.

Performance Counts is the fifth MMC training session. This includes utilizing proper hiring techniques, conducting effective performance reviews and administering discipline.

“It’s imperative for managers to take their time and do things right to avoid making wrong decisions that could impact productivity as well as encourage legal problems,” Young noted.
The activity “Playing Detective with the Job Application” uses a sample completed application for managers to review. The application is completed in a manner so the manager can learn to look for common inconsistencies and discrepancies. The trainer reviews the application with the MMC managers to make sure each mistake is covered. The second topic, interviewing, prompts a discussion on appropriate and inappropriate questions that can be asked during an interview. An activity entitled “Trouble, Trouble, All Around” presents a potential interview question in which the manager determines whether it’s appropriate and why.

Conduct performance reviews then comes under scrutiny. Young said trainers emphasize how to gather and retain information throughout the year and how to properly use the data to write a review. “Emphasis is placed on using powerful verbs and giving examples to describe behaviors,” he added.

The last topic within this session is the proper disciplining of employees. The trainer covers topics that include proper documentation of events and how to interview the employee being disciplined. The activity “Disciplinary Meeting Practice” gives managers several opportunities to role play a disciplinary situation, including writing it and sitting down with another manager during the training session.

The final training session, Best Boss Practices, is a recap of the previous five sessions and a look at best practices in managing employees. Extensive case studies and role playing are utilized. The managers are separated into several groups and asked to “mind-map” the previous five classes without using their notebooks. The trainer begins reviewing each class and best practices contained in each. The session concludes with a “Tying It All Together Case Study,” where managers are asked to present three ideas on how they would rectify a certain situation.

Conclusion

Managers who complete the series are asked to complete an in-depth survey on the effectiveness of the series in relation to their daily responsibilities. Young said MMC will measure the success of the Supervisory Skills Certificate Series over a period of time, but that the company expects to see improvement in, among other areas, retaining employees, accident rates, plant and truck maintenance expenses and increased customer satisfaction.

“Even though the series is in its infant stages, we are beginning to see the impact of giving managers the tools they need to have success in their responsibilities,” Young said. “We will begin to see a dramatic shift in company loyalty, commitment to personal growth and development of subordinates.”

For more information about MMC’s training program, contact Johnny Young at (601) 898-4020. For more information about how your company can participate in this award program next year, contact Eileen Dickson at edickson@nrmca.org.
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Long-Term Career Knowledge and Skill Paths for the Ready Mixed Concrete Industry

By Eileen Dickson, Director of Education & Training, NRMCA

At the April San Antonio board meeting, NRMCA directors approved a new encapsulating structure for association educational opportunities. The program’s goal is to build industry-wide standards for consistent training in specific performance areas that not only will enhance business outcomes but also illustrate to employees that they have a device to plan long-term ready mixed concrete careers. Different than a college major’s concrete business program, the career track plan recognizes industry-specific professional development as a retention tool. The structure is projected to launch by early 2007.

Called the Certified Concrete Professional (CCP) Career Track, the program encourages ready mixed concrete industry employees to participate in a broad range of technical, operational and managerial programs to prepare for successful careers in the industry. This is accomplished through coursework and seminar programs in a ready mixed concrete-specific project-based learning environment. There will be extensive collaboration with and input from NRMCA members to ensure the programs’ plans meet the changing performance needs of the industry. Participation requires interaction with peers and experiential learning opportunities that give participants exposure to appropriate best practices, industry examples and networking opportunities. Four career tracks will be available:

- Business Management
- Concrete Technology
- Operations
- Sales and Marketing

The program started development two years ago when NRMCA’s Educational Activities Committee (EAC) discussed its job to help the industry retain its best and brightest for the future. They believed that while our industry encourages all employees, including entry-level employees, to rise...
through the ranks to senior-level managers with help from formal and on-the-job learning, many employees did not systematically plan career paths within their companies by linking the training they received into cohesive tracks for various job niches. In spite of the fact that ready mixed concrete companies have sent thousands of employees to NRMCA, ACI and PCA workshops, employees and companies have not seen a bigger picture beyond gaining immediate skills as an aftermath from a training course.

As a result, EAC developed an industry-wide framework to organize and lay out a body of knowledge that allows employees to plan a career enhancement path. It incorporates the extensive range of seminars currently available from NRMCA as well as a system to include proprietary corporate training when appropriate. To further help members’ human resource departments budget funds and time for training investments, the proposed framework will suggest a body of specific classes to achieve one of the four career track designates. The program also hopes to encourage stronger dialog between RMC state affiliate associations and NRMCA; states will have the opportunity to bring a number of nationally recognized NRMCA programs to their members locally, with dual associations’ members receiving a registration fee discount.

Specifically, the CCP Career Track program provides courses that range from Introduction to Concrete Fundamentals to a Strategic Leadership Capstone. Candidates will receive “Professional Hours” for their NRMCA coursework, which is what distinguishes it from the four concrete management baccalaureate programs. Additionally, candidates can apply individual company and independent training programs toward certification where appropriate. Candidates must successfully complete between 96 and 128 hours of coursework, depending on the CCP Career Track, to qualify for certification.

Candidates will keep records of their progress toward meeting certification requirements. After all coursework is completed, candidates may apply for CCP certification to NRMCA. CCP certificates will be given out every fall, just in time for most human resource departments to plan for the following year’s training budgets and annual performance reviews. When the program launches, it will grandfather all apropos coursework for five years, therefore many industry employees already are close to earning certificates. Every three years, graduates may apply for certification renewal. Renewal requires 24 hours of continuing education and training within that three-year period.

Training related to industry-accepted career paths are a strong trend throughout the entire U.S. business community. A 2006 study released by the American Society for Training and Development shows that more and more of the largest corporations are hiring chief learning officers (CLOs) who specifically work on such initiatives. These are not human resource directors but senior-level executives closely aligned with the other officers at the pinnacle of the corporate ladder. CLOs have a tough job. The function includes working with many masters and partners and tying a corporation’s leadership plans to various business units’ goals through
individual employees gaining appropriate skills. CLOs must understand what the accepted knowledge and skills within their industry are to prepare employees to competitively survive against aggressive sector competitors. Human resources, talent management, organizational effectiveness and performance improvement all fall under a CLO’s purview. The other corporate officers tend to view learning more broadly. They align and integrate business for long- and short-term strategies. They see learning’s value in terms of business outcomes and human capital. On the other hand, CLOs see the learning minutia — they provide strategic value through planned human performance and knowledge enhancement for the enterprise, the various business units, all the way down to plans to develop the capability level of employees. They get down to the operational details. Learning is aligned with business needs for fuller integration, proactivity and responsiveness. The learning function’s efficiency is increased by streamlining, standardizing and selective outsourcing. A key attribute of a CLO is a wealth of intelligence about performance and capability across the organization. This information is leveraged to gain competitive advantage and proactively drive both business strategy and learning investment for future performance.

When surveyed by the ASTD, CLOs were questioned about the most pressing learning issue faced within his or her organization. Establishing a link between learning and organizational performance was ranked first; second and third were developing the skill necessary to drive company initiatives and transform and establish ROI or value for learning. Many cited acceptable industry practices as their guidance mechanism, as deemed by their professional industry body (or association). This kind of framework is exactly what NRMCA’s Board of Directors will launch by early 2007.

For more information about NRMCA’s educational programs, please contact Director of Education Eileen Dickson at edickson@nrmca.org or 240/485-1164.

In planning for your company’s learning budget, here are some general U.S. corporate benchmarking figures recently released from the American Society of Training and Development:

- The average U.S. company spent $995 per employee toward training last year.
- The average expenditure as a percent of payroll was 2.34 percent.
- The percent of expenditure for external services continued to rise (now at 30 percent of a company’s training budget), yet this number is deceivingly low because the largest corporations do a disproportionate amount of internal training.
- The average number of annual hours of formal training per employee per year is 32 hours.
- The key areas of training, in order, are: (1) profession/technical/industry-specific content; (2) managerial/supervisory processes; (3) compliance related-managerial/supervisory training. If (2) managerial/supervisory processes and (3) compliance related training were combined, they would be first. This is the second year where executive and managerial training supersede technical/industry-specific training.

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Once upon a time, there were three little pigs. The first little pig built a house out of straw. The big bad wolf huffed and puffed, and the straws fell in a heap.

The second little pig built his house out of sticks. The big bad wolf huffed and puffed and the sticks cracked in halves.

Frantically, the two little pigs ran from the wreackages. They howled in pain as the burning asphalt under the glaring sun burned sores on the tender skins of their feet, and their noses wrinkled in distaste as the putrid odor of wastes enveloped the air.

Suddenly, the ground under their feet felt cooler and the air fresher. Together, they stood in awe in front of a neat row of colorful houses made of something they had never seen before. The voice of the third little pig snapped them out of their reverie, “Over here! Good to see you two again!”

They two little pigs had almost forgotten the troubles they were in.

They hurriedly told their story. To their astonishment, the third little pig just laughed.

“Why aren’t you scared?” they asked.

“This house is made of concrete and so are a lot of things here,” the third little pig explained matter-of-factly. “Concrete is an extremely steady material and can not be blown away easily. It recycles the wastes that you saw on the road and increases fuel efficiency, thus also reducing the amount of carbon dioxide in the air. That’s why the air is so clean here. The ground is cooler because concrete absorbs less heat during the summer than other materials do. It can also be dyed to produce the colors you saw.”

Suddenly the menacing voice of the big bad wolf sounded, “I will huff and puff and blow your house away!”

The three glanced at each other and giggled to themselves as they watched the big bad wolf huff and puff and stomp in anger and humiliation when the house showed no sign of crumbling.

“If I cannot blow your pretty little house away, then I will burn it down!” he threatened.

The first two little pigs stiffened in fright until the third little pig assured them, “Concrete is highly resistant to fire.”

The three laughed heartily as they watched the big bad wolf try in vain to start a conflagration.

“If I cannot burn it down, I will wash it away with a flood!”

The first two little pigs jumped back in terror, but the third little pig stood his ground defiantly, “Go on and try it, you villain. This concrete is waterproof!”

For the first time, the big bad wolf was out of ideas. He desperately searched for something, “Then…then…I will come back after 20 years! Your house will not protect you then!”

“Too bad! Concrete is an extremely durable material; it doesn’t deteriorate with time!” the third little pig replied.

“So don’t linger, don’t look back, and don’t come back, ‘cause we are hooked on concrete…” sang the first two little pigs as they collapsed into a fit of laughter.

The big bad wolf realized then the power of concrete was too much for him.

“Now,” said the third little pig as the trio’s attention turned away from the dejected figure slowly disappearing on the horizon, “concrete houses are also faster to build because they dry quickly. I just bought two plots of land next to mine, so…”

The first two little pigs squealed with delight.

Well, you can imagine what happened next: the three little pigs lived happily ever after in their magical world of concrete.

Cindy Xiaochan Jia is a student at LaCrosse Central High School in LaCrosse, Wis. The Wisconsin Ready Mixed Concrete Association submitted the winning essay. The winner receives a college scholarship in the amount of $5,000 if she chooses a concrete-related curriculum or $2,000 for a curriculum of her choice. For more information on how your state can participate in NRMCA’s National High School Essay Contest, please contact Nicole Maher at 240/485-1158 or via e-mail at nmaher@nrmca.org.
You gotta love all the choices Terex Ready-Mix trucks and Terex I Johnson-Ross concrete batch plants from Terex Roadbuilding give you. Select mixers, capacities, plant designs and truck models and options to create a match made in heaven for your application.
Not everyone succeeds in the sales environment. The hunter mentality and the ability to close the deal can be taught, but some personalities excel in the selling environment. Branded a lone wolf or viewed as not working very hard, the front-line salesperson encounters a lot of ups and downs never seen by those who have never experienced it first hand. Sales people are, generally speaking, a unique breed. So when a salesperson achieves consistent success at building the company’s revenue stream, it is not uncommon for him to be promoted to sales manager. Portions of this new role are very different from that of a salesperson. In too many cases, the neophyte sales manager receives little or no training. This article is going to look at a number of issues which can help that transition become a success for both the new manager and his employer.

In order to succeed in sales, a person must be self motivated, have a good work ethic, have a process to manage deals in his pipeline, and the attitude to handle the ups and downs of winning and losing deals. To succeed in the long term he or she must be ethical and consistently deliver on his or her commitments.

While there are many differences between the two roles, there are some similarities. A good work ethic, a process to manage deals in the pipeline, ethics and being able to consistently deliver on his or her commitments are all key elements in...
being a superior sales manager. Managing customer relationships, while a slightly different role as a manager, requires the same basic skill set. But a sales manager has a number of other processes to manage and many are new to the recently promoted salesperson. Coaching and mentoring of the sales team is a new set of skills and processes. Motivating the sales team to increase their activity levels is an important new element. The ability to benchmark the sales team both internally and versus best-of-class competitors and other industries is a myriad of new processes. Forecasting the future revenue stream may or may not be a new process, but the importance of it as a sales manager escalates. Looking at all the new skills and processes a new manager has to acquire, it is no wonder many flounder at first.

The common thread in all these new skills is that they can be developed and aided by the foundation of a good process. Processes can be managed a plethora of ways. Some people manage everything in their head. I worked with a very effective manager who used Post-it notes. Literally hundreds of Post-it notes in the office, on the computer, in the car, but with a logical system of organization. Some people like to use the back of business cards. A large percentage of people use paper folder filing systems. The one growing the most quickly is of course computer-based processes. What type of system we use is one of the choices we all make individually or as an organization. We are not going to spend much time in this article talking about the backbone of how you physically manage the records in your process. Just remember that it is an important part of the process and if you have to figure out where something is, the process is probably overly complicated or has significant holes in it.

Does anyone remember the commercial in a Super Bowl a few years ago where a bunch of cowboys were herding cats? Coaching a sales team has been likened to herding cats by some. I think that is a little strong personally but it does make a point. The complexities of human dynamics and social interactions are beyond the scope of this article, but there are some basic tenants that I think can help a new sales manager to ease into this new activity.

Feed the stars. Every sales team has a bell curve of performance. If you are really lucky you can have a team that has just stars and all perform at the front edge of the bell curve. Generally speaking, if you have more than a handful of members on the sales team, the bell curve theory applies. So you have stars who perform at the front of the curve, valuable team members in the middle and those at the back of the curve. The stars need to be fed. They may be fed many ways. Some want to be left alone, some want internal resources to speed their success, some want accolades, some want to become managers and some want bigger incentive compensation. Figure out what they want and give it to them. They drive your bottom line and the happier they are, the more they will grow your business and profits. You do not want to lose these people. You especially do not want to see them working for your competition.

Weed the chaff and motivate the rest. A sales manager’s number one job is to increase profitable sales. The people at the back of the curve generally produce less than they should or can. The team members in the middle of the curve see these folks and they are not only a distracted by them, they distract the management team. Lay out specific metrics and make sure the team knows what is expected of them. Give them a chance to step up and improve, but if they only improve when the heat is on they sap resources away from more productive activities. If people aren’t performing you have to either increase their performance level or get them out of the sales role.

Salespeople do not like process. People who enjoy the front-line selling role generally like the independence and flexibility afforded them by managing the selling cycle. As a rule, the vast majority of them do not like paper or computer processes that take time away from selling and move it to time in the office on “paperwork.” This dilemma is faced by all sales organizations. Just try and implement a computer-based sales force automation or customer relationship management system. Many members of the sales team dig their heels in and do anything possible to defeat its success. A large number of them will “opt out” and choose not to participate. These are the realities a new sales manager has to deal with. He or she may be averse to a strong discipline of process. In order to succeed, the sales team has to have processes that add value to them and not just the management team. They need to see a return on their investment of time in front of the computer or filling out forms. Any process the new manager puts in place or takes over managing needs to fit this bill. As a former salesperson, he or she can recognize the value to the front-line sales team. This affords the new manager the opportunity to be a champion of processes that benefit management and the front-line sales team.
While process is critical to driving repeatable results, there are other areas the new manager must lead. Being an ethical compass to the team goes without saying. Making sure teammates operate equitably with respect to race, gender, religion or any other characteristic needs to be led with actions as well as words. Operating within today’s environment of Sarbanes-Oxley business accountability, pricing law and antitrust regulations must all be black and white principles that new managers should be given guidance on. There are many more items like this that are “tickets to play” today that we sometimes assume everyone is aware of. Don’t assume your new managers know of or understand these principles.

Benchmarking a sales team is an important way to quantify performance and results. Traditional sales numbers by product, representative and market are a valuable starting point. Most companies’ ERP or order entry system contains a treasure trove of this information. Other items that can be measured include levels of sales activity, profitability of customers and opportunities in the sales pipeline. The list is endless! The key is to engage the sales team in the discussion and get alignment between them and management on what is important to measure and how it will be measured. The consensus process can take some time but will improve the odds of success both in implementation as well as having a more meaningful set of metrics. Look for a future article on this important topic in an upcoming issue of Concrete inFOCUS.

Forecasting future revenue streams becomes more and more important the higher a person rises in an organization. As a salesperson, it is not always important or even required to forecast. But sales managers need to know when hiccups in the revenue stream are going to occur. They can be good hiccups or bad. If the sales manager knows enough about the shortfalls, he or she can occasionally manage to reallocate resources and solve the shortfall before it occurs. Also those hiccups can have significant effects on the supply chain. The sooner you can plan for them, the better you can align your customers’ expectations with the realities of your supply and distribution systems.

These are just a few of the processes and skills a new sales manager needs to be successful. Obviously, if they have proven to be successful sales people then we are making the assumption that they know how to close deals and manage the “opportunity” process. The brevity of this article can not do justice to the scale of activities and skills needed in this important role. Hopefully it can point you toward some big issues you need to address to get new sales managers up to speed quickly. This transition is critical to the success of the new manager and important to the business.

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his is a case where ingrained habits die hard. Concrete producers probably still receive orders and project specifications for a 3000 psi — 0.40 w/cm concrete mixture today. A rationale for this can probably be traced to the 1989 (and prior) ACI 318 Building Code that included a table of w/c and strength that really did not match up. It was there as a conservative provision to permit a project to start if field or lab trial batch strength data was not available. Due to its misuse in concrete specifications, the table was removed in the 95 code.

Anyone familiar with concrete understands that a concrete mixture at a w/cm of 0.40 will result in strength much higher than 3000 psi. The mix that complies with the w/cm requirement, being the more critical controlling factor, will cost more than a mix that complies with a specified strength of 3000 psi. It is also important to recognize that w/cm is not necessarily an antidote to all durability aspects and may result in other problems. It should not be included in a specification if it’s not necessary. For example, concrete at a low w/cm for a floor may have an increased paste content rich in cementitious materials that can result in increased cracking and curling due to higher shrinkage and temperature rise.

A specification that has a strength requirement that is not consistent with a specified w/cm poses two problems: In a competitive bidding situation, there could be confusion as to whether the basis of the bid is strength or w/cm. Secondly, since w/cm is not verifiable, the acceptance basis for concrete during the project is on the specified strength set at 3000 psi. So individual strength test results can bounce around anywhere between 2500 psi to 8000 psi (or higher) and the concrete still “meets spec” and no one is worried. However, it does not serve the owner well to have concrete that is highly variable. There is no incentive for the supplier, whose goal is to meet the strength spec, to maintain good quality control. Delivering a product with a high variability does not serve the supplier well because it’s a waste of costly ingredients that are in short supply.

The argument from the design professional writing the concrete specification is — I only need 3000 psi for design loads but I need the low w/cm for durability. The problem here is that the contractor who often orders the concrete is tuned in to a price based on the concrete strength. Frequently, the concrete supplier may not see the project specification to realize that there is a w/cm requirement.

The provisions for durability in the ACI 318 Code emphasize the use of a lower w/cm. The code, however, does not have any “required average w/cm” or acceptance criteria for w/cm, like it does for strength. It relies on strength tests and for that reason includes a minimum specified strength, $f_{c}'$, along with the limit for maximum w/cm. In the commentary the code states:

*Since it is difficult to accurately determine the water-cementitious material ratio of concrete during production, the $f_{c}'$ specified should be reasonably consistent with the water-cementitious material ratio required for durability.*

**The producer that chooses to optimize concrete mixtures and exercise better control is more likely to win the bid and actually make a small profit on the job.**

![Figure 1. Required average strength, $f_{c}'$, of concrete is higher than the specified strength, $f_{c}'$, to ensure a small probability "failing" tests.](image-url)
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Selection of an $f'_{e}$ that is consistent with the water-cementitious material ratio selected for durability will help ensure that the required water-cementitious material ratio is actually obtained in the field. Because the usual emphasis on inspection is for strength, test results substantially higher than the specified strength may lead to a lack of concern for quality and production of concrete that exceeds the maximum water-cementitious material ratio.

Consider the situation where the emphasis for concrete on a project is for a low w/cm for durability and the strength required for designed loads is not consistent with the required w/cm. There is no reliable means of enforcing/verifying the w/cm requirement during construction. One option is to use a minimum specified strength, $f'_{e}$, that is consistent with the w/cm with the local materials, similar to recommendations in the code. Alternatively, one might establish a process in the specification for acceptance of concrete during the project based on strength tests more in line with what the concrete mixture will achieve. This process should assure the owner that he gets what he wants and set acceptance criteria and expectations for concrete are clear to all other parties.

An attempt to do this alternative would be to reverse-engineer the current strength provisions to establish the acceptance criteria, which are tied to a specified strength, $f'_{e}$. As illustrated in Figure 1, ACI provisions establish that the required average strength for the proposed mixture, $f'_{cr}$, should be higher than the specified strength, $f'_{e}$, such that there is less than a 1% probability of failing both of the following strength acceptance criteria:

- Average of 3 consecutive tests should be greater than $f'_{e}$
- Each individual test should be greater than ($f'_{e} - 500$) psi

If the actual average strength (similar to $f'_{cr}$) of a proposed concrete mixture at the w/cm required in the specification can be documented in a submittal, the value of $f'_{e}$ for the above acceptance criteria can be set by back-calculating from the average strength. If the average is derived from laboratory trial batches, use ($0.9 \times 6400$) as the value for $f'_{cr}$.

This illustrates the point that “3000 and 0.40 is not 3000.” There are a few problems with this proposed scenario but none that are not insurmountable. The concept ensures that acceptance provisions are more likely to achieve the desired w/cm and hence durable concrete. The producer that chooses to optimize concrete mixtures and exercise better control is more likely to win the bid and actually make a small profit on the job.
Ready mixed suppliers are challenged with the fixed expenses involved in operating an efficient business. Truck maintenance and operator compensation are unavoidable factors. Material and batch plant operation are simply part of the deal. And customers are constantly at the ready, prepared to negotiate the cost of one yard of concrete. It all adds up to tight margins.

Ready mixed suppliers promote concrete pumping by using a concrete pump means less clean up for the mixers themselves. Because additional chutes are typically unnecessary and no additives or water are incorporated during the dump, wash out time can be cut in half.

So which part of this formula is the variable? How can suppliers maintain an efficient operation and provide quality customer service while increasing that profit margin?
In an increasingly common trend, ready mixed suppliers have turned their attention toward speeding up dumping times and improving efficiency for their customers. If a supplier improves the average rate of delivery and placement, this directly affects the bottom line. One way to speed truck-mixer turnaround is through the use of more efficient placing tools — namely, the concrete pump.

With the ability to dump directly into the hopper of a high-output concrete pump, ready mixed trucks can double the discharge rate. Because pumps can process and place concrete at any slump, adding water to increase manageability becomes completely unnecessary. This saves precious time and maintains the quality of the concrete. This entire scenario means one thing to a ready mixed supplier: more profit.

It seems the moral of the story is black and white: To make more money, ready mixed suppliers should invest in a concrete pump.

But Chris Knipfer, Sport Redi-Mix, Champagne, Ill., disagrees. "Producers shouldn’t pump their own concrete. If a producer purchases a pump, they’re immediately competing with concrete contractors they’ve been servicing for years.”

So what is the alternative? According to Knipfer, the best way to maximize efficiency for customers is through promoting a local pumping contractor to place materials. “It’s more advantageous to use a third party — if there’s a quality pumping firm available, there’s no reason for the producer to invest in the equipment themselves. And by utilizing the contractor’s equipment, producers provide their customers a higher quality product without expanding their own services or fleet.”

Ed Nackers of M & M Concrete Company, Appleton, Wis., agrees that a close supplier-pumper relationship can benefit both parties. “One local pumping service can save thousands of dollars for ready mixed suppliers in their area,” he says.

Joan Andersen, Andersen Concrete Pumping & Equipment Rental, Chicago, Ill., says, “Communication is the key to maintaining solid business relationships with ready mixed suppliers. I call on them regularly.”
Ready mixed producers all over the nation are marketing the use of concrete pumps over truck dumping — even to the extent of discounting materials if the customer elects to use a concrete pump. And vice-versa, charging more if the customer does not utilize a pump on a large job.

“There are huge benefits to both the customer and the producer if the concrete is being pumped,” says Knipfer. “It’s a win-win situation for all parties.”

These benefits are the reason for the growing trend among suppliers adamantly supporting their relationship with local concrete pumpers.

American Concrete Pumping Association (ACPA) member companies provide certified operators to make sure the pump stays in prime working condition throughout the pour. Depending on the pumper, a wide range of boom sizes and specialty booms are available to ensure the project’s needs are met with the most appropriate, cost-efficient equipment.

At the start of every job, Andersen Concrete Pumping supplies the contractor and the ready mixed producer with copies of the ACPA safety booklet published strictly for ready mixed suppliers, Safety Manual for Ready Mix Concrete Truck Drivers Delivering to Concrete Pumps. “It lets them know right away that we’re serious about safety,” says Joan Andersen. “Ready mixed producers will promote a pumping contractor who has the right equipment and is safety minded.”

If a customer orders the ready mixed and pumping, the contractors are typically allowed two days to coordinate for the pour. This supplier-pumper partnership provides both parties with scheduling advantages, sometimes allowing them to lay out dispatch orders and operator rosters a week in advance.

Another advantage to ready mixed operations is the ability to utilize an entire fleet of ready mixed trucks more efficiently when working side by side with a concrete pump. A pump allows delivery of more concrete per day without additional trucks. Mixer turnaround times improve and company productivity skyrockets.

“Ready mixed producers love it when a pump is on the job,” says Andersen. “They have to service customers the whole day. A reliable pump with a good operator makes the job go quicker.”
Front discharge and all-wheel-drive ready mixed trucks are less necessary when a boom can reach up and over rough terrain. A concrete pump goes to work regardless of weather, time of day or job site conditions. The labor savings creates more time in a day to complete multiple projects. With a concrete pump, there is no need for supplementary equipment. Where job site conditions may require bulldozers to create access for ready mixed trucks, a boom pump reaches over inaccessible terrain for pinpoint placement. Excavating time is reduced and backfilling is less complicated.

Along that same track, ready mixed operations can experience reduced fleet maintenance as they avoid mud duty and terrain that make trucks susceptible to getting stuck, or worse, breakdowns.

“It’s great peace of mind to work with a pump,” says Sport Redi-Mix’s Knipfer. “We can send out our oldest truck knowing it will come back in one piece.”

The ability to remain off the messiest part of job site also improves community relations — neighbors or surrounding businesses do not have to experience mud left by trucks maneuvering on and off the job site. In some areas, clean up of residential streets is the responsibility of the ready mixed firm — an expensive proposition.

Using a concrete pump also means less clean up for the mixers themselves. Because additional chutes are typically unnecessary and no additives or water are incorporated during the dump, “wash out time is cut in half,” says Knipfer.

All of these benefits are realized through an amicable relationship between ready mixed supplier and concrete pumper. The suppliers are gradually realizing the benefits of concrete pump accessibility, and concrete pumpers across the nation are capitalizing on the need for pumps in all types of construction.

M & M’s Nackers put it most eloquently: “Some contractors can’t afford to own a pump, but they can’t afford not to pump.”

O’Malley is the director of marketing for Schwing American. For more information, call him at (651) 653-4218 or e-mail tomalley@schwing.com.

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the National Ready Mixed Concrete Association.
What the Final Hex Chrome Rule Means For Ready Mixed Concrete Producers

By Thomas Harman, M.S., CSP, Director of Safety Compliance, NRMCA

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) published its final rule to manage hexavalent chromium in the workplace on February 28, 2006. As expected, the exclusion of portland cement was retained in the construction sector and was expanded further to include both the general industry and maritime sectors. As a result of the exclusion in the general industry sector, ready mixed concrete (RMC) producers do not have to monitor for the presence of hexavalent chromium among their employees who work with Portland cement. The only potential exposure source for hex chrome in RMC manufacturing is from welding fumes, and welding rods do not possess chromium above the one percent *de minimus* concentration, and therefore would not be expected to expose welders to a level that would approach even the action limit of 2.5 µg/m³ as a time-weighted average over eight hours.

The RMC Research Foundation conducted a study in December 2005 of the inhalation exposures of RMC employees. In 50 percent of the survey samples, no hexavalent chromium was detected; in the remaining samples, hex chrome was identified in only trace amounts. In the final standard released for publication on February 28, 2006, OSHA made a clear distinction between inhalation exposures from hex chrome and dermal exposures from the substance. Based on the results of the hex chrome survey, which NRMCA provided to OSHA as part of the association comment, the agency recognized that... “Placing wet cement within the scope of the standard would cost an additional $33 million per year for compliance with such provisions as initial monitoring; those costs would be incurred even if the employer has no airborne exposures.” OSHA furthermore explained in its discussion of the rule that employee safety and health protections already in place in existing regulations, including those for personal protective equipment and hazard communication, protect those who work with cement and concrete. Based on the results of the hex chrome inhalation survey and the industry’s extremely low incidence of skin disorders, OSHA clearly understands that RMC workers have no risk of adverse health effects.

As this article goes to press, several groups have filed challenges to the final rule. Public Citizen, an advocacy group with offices in Washington, D.C., as well as the National Association of Manufacturers dispute the rule, and there may be others. An indication of why these groups filed challenges can be found in the comment filed by each. Others have filed to intervene in the case to protect unique rights or interests. NRMCA provided substantial evidence in comment to OSHA that our employees are already protected, and therefore the exclusion of Portland cement from the scope of the standard must be retained.

For more information, contact Harman at 240/485-1155 or via e-mail at tharman@nrmca.org.
Best Sellers from the NRMCA Bookstore

1. **2P188 - Truck Mixer Driver’s Manual** - This manual educates truck mixer drivers about concrete and customer relations. Completely updated for 2006, it also highlights driver duties, safety precautions, equipment inspection and maintenance procedures, and what the driver should do in case of an accident. This 64-page manual is easy to understand and contains commonsense information every driver should know. ($12 members, $48 non-members); (20 or more copies - $10 members, $40 non-members)

2. **2P170 - ASTM Standards for Concrete Technician Certification** - Includes 12 ASTM practices and test methods related to testing fresh and hardened concrete, including those required for ACI grade 1 field-testing and strength-testing technician certification. • Sampling concrete - ASTM C 172 • Strength testing standards - ASTM C 31, C 39, C 78, C 617 and C 1231 • Air content tests - ASTM C 173, C 231 • Slump - ASTM C 143 • Density - ASTM C 138 • Temperature - ASTM C 1064 • Specification of Ready Mixed Concrete - ASTM C 94. This compilation was reprinted by ASTM in January 2006. ($25 members, $100 non-members)

3. **2PCPE50 - Concrete Parking (Engineer-Focused) Brochure (Pkg. of 50)** - Based on the content of a previously distributed PCA brochure, and updated with the most current information, this attractive and informative 4-page 8.5”x11” promotion brochure is a condensed summary of engineering best practices for concrete parking areas, including very useful illustrations and tabular data. Concrete parking areas’ many attractive features will win converts if they are pointed out. These brochures should be a part of every promotion and sales call! Also sold in bundles of 250 and 500. ($57 members, $57 non-members)

4. **2P159 - Concrete Plant Operator’s Manual** - Jointly prepared by the Concrete Plant Manufacturers Bureau and NRMCA, this manual is a comprehensive guide for the batch plant operator. It includes valuable information on materials, batch tolerance and aggregate moisture, calculations, plant maintenance, safety and more. ($23 members, $92 non-members)

5. **2PLEED - LEED Reference Guide** - Much new public construction, and more and more private sector construction, is now required to be LEED® Certified. This guide will help you educate specifiers about the energy saving and pro-environmental benefits of concrete and how it may fit into projects that are to be LEED Certified. It also supports your profitability with information to help you improve your business’ and concrete’s environmental performance. *LEED, the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design® program, is designed to promote the construction of high-performance, sustainable buildings.* (1-5 copies $48 each; 6-25 copies $30 each; 26-50 copies $20; 51 or more copies $10 each; members and non-members)

6. **2PICF50 - Commercial ICF Promotion Brochure (Pkg. of 50)** - This attractive and informative 4-page 8.5”x11” promotional brochure, designed for commercial building owners, lenders, engineers, specifiers and others, outlines the many economic and "green" benefits of Insulating Concrete Form (ICF) technology. Developed through the NRMCA-sponsored Concrete Collateral Working Group, the brochure covers ICF’s many advantages, with helpful illustrations and appealing photos of complete projects. ICFs are attracting more and more attention every day, winning converts from competing wall systems. Make these brochures a part of every promotion and sales call. Also sold in bundles of 250 and 500. ($57 members, $57 non-members)

7. **2PCIP100 - Concrete In Practice** - Package - Concrete in Practice Sheets are short 1-page discussions on various concrete topics and are written in a “What? Why? And How” scheme and are intended to provide information on a non-technical format. The CIP topics are researched and written by members of NRMCA’s Research
Engineering and Standards Committee. These are a great resource to give to your contractors and customers. **English CIP Full Set 2PCIP100** - contains 20 sets of each CIP topics 1-39. **Spanish CIP Full Set 2PCIP100es** - contains 20 sets of each CIP topics 1-36. ($200 members, $750 non-members); **English Single Set 2PCIPS** & **Spanish Single Set 2PCIPSes** ($25 members, $100 non-members)

8. **2PRD027 - It’s Up to Us Pt. 1** - Since drivers have more potential to pollute than any other RM employee, four environmental topics will be released throughout 2006 to emphasize best management practices from the point of view of delivery professionals executing their job. “It’s Up To Us, Part 1” explains what environmental regulations are, how compliance impacts the industry, and defines the three types of water found around a ready mixed concrete operation. 11:15 min. (Also available in DVD format) ($70 members, $90 non-members)

9. **2187 - Compilation of ASTM Standards Relating to Concrete** - Contains 43 ASTM specifications, practices and test methods relating to cement, fly ash, slag, silica fume, admixtures, aggregates and concrete. Included in the ASTM Manual of Aggregates and Concrete Testing. Reprinted by NRMCA in January 2005, it contains the most recent versions of the ASTM standards at that date. ($45 members, $100 non-members)

10. **2PPB50 - Pervious Concrete: When It Rains, It Drains (Pkg. of 50)** - As customers and influencers in every part of the country are under increasing pressure to move toward increased sustainability, the many “green” and economic advantages of pervious concrete are attracting more and more attention. This promotional brochure, developed through the NRMCA-sponsored Concrete Collateral Working Group and targeted to owners and architects, clearly makes the case for pervious. As interest in pervious continues to grow, these brochures should be left behind on every promotion and sales call. ($57 members, $57 non-member)

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