

THE BI-MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE DISTRIBUTION CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION



DCA NEWS

JULY / AUGUST 2023

DCA Mid Year Meeting

DCA – Lyons' Grant

Fall Meeting



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DCA 2023 Mid Year Meeting Wrap-Up

While heatwaves scorched much of the country in July 2023, DCA members watched closely as repeated rounds of flooding struck the mountains of Vermont, where the 2023 Mid Year Meeting was set to be held. Fortunately, when the time came to board the planes and head north, Mother Nature gave Vermonters some much-needed relief from the rain. The members' destination lay an hour inland from Burlington and the shores of Lake Champlain, past the Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream headquarters and into the breathtaking countryside. Built of the same timber and bedrock that gave the Green Mountains their name, The Lodge at Spruce Peak offered a comforting haven in the upper reaches of Vermont's ski country. Balconied rooms surrounded by high, forested peaks gave everyone a view to remember.

Monday, July 24

The registration desk greeted travelers on Monday by the terrace at the ski lift, offering local snacks like maple-flavored Rice Krispy treats and popcorn, as members — many with young families in tow— signed up for the week's activities. Just an hour into registration, the first important meeting of the weekend got underway as the new Future Leaders Committee convened down the hall.

DCA Executive Vice President Rob Darden kicked off the meeting by introducing Future Leaders co-chairs, Sarah Mahlik of TT Technologies and Elizabeth Michels of Michels Corp. Appropriately enough, both are second and third generation leaders at their own companies and have been attending DCA functions since they were children. The Future Leaders Committee meeting



took the form of a panel discussion as younger members talked about the impact of their involvement with DCA while “the old gray-hairs” mostly listened. Jessica Fox of Wright Traffic Control remembered how effective the red badges were for helping her make contacts at her first convention, which encouraged other members of her company to become active in committees right off the bat. Dennis Springer from Hallen Construction recalled how a surprise nomination by staff member Teri Korson to the DCA-Dale Michels scholarship committee gave him the push he needed to step up. Caleb Scheve from Price Gregory pointed out how DCA events make a real impact on the industry in safety and regulation, beyond the more obvious networking aspects.

Throughout the meeting, the chairs and panelists encouraged members who want to get involved to be persistent, stay positive, and keep trying if at first they don’t succeed. Korson wrapped things up by encouraging everyone to “convince your bosses to let you go” to the 2024 Convention in Hawaii so that DCA’s future leaders can continue their development.

Monday evening, the weather made its single intrusion of the week as the threat of rain forced the “Hello Vermont” welcome dinner indoors. As a live band played folk-style music onstage, members perused the work of

local artists Natasha Bogar and Montalto Ceramics and tasted the many local varieties of beer and cheese. Ben & Jerry’s ice cream was served for dessert, of course, and as the weather calmed, lots of folks and kids gathered to play games set up on the balcony outside in the cool evening air.

Tuesday, July 25

The second day of the Mid Year meeting began with a puzzle—what sort of magic can you do with a Rubik’s Cube? Guest Speaker Stephen Brundage was the man with the answer. Performing magic since he was six years old, Brundage has been featured on “America’s Got Talent” and Penn & Teller’s “Fool Me” for his astounding ability to manipulate a simple child’s toy. Brundage demonstrated numerous ways to solve the famous cube — in a bag, in mid-air, behind his back, blindfolded, and more. He also had some fun with the crowd demonstrating his ability to memorize an entire book, then taught Randy Rupp a little bit of magic using cue cards. Then, of course, in magic’s finest tradition, he performed some dazzling card tricks, including a few learned from his idol, David Blaine, and gave the audience a lesson in sleight of hand.

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Sarah Mahlik, Elizabeth Michels, John Lamerton, Caleb Scheve

Where are all the boomers?

Rob Darden led a relatively brief Town Hall next, reviewing the membership report and the goals of the Strategic Vision Committee before turning the focus to the Future Leaders Committee. He noted that a lot of boomers were missing from this year's event, yet there were still over 250 members in attendance, demonstrating the need to develop those newer faces in the audience as the boomers prepare to retire.

The Membership Committee meeting opened with a reminder to participate in the annual equipment survey that associate members use to determine contractors' needs.

Turning to membership numbers, the committee noted that membership peaked in 2018 and the roughly 2:3 ratio of contractors to associates has held steady for the last several years. Jeri Lamerton of Lamerton Strategic described her efforts to create a standardized exit survey for resigning members. She also discussed the need to attract ex-members back with materials that highlight the association's value. Volunteers were again requested to contact inactive members, with it pointed out that encouragement from other members works better than a call from the staff. Darden encouraged attendees who are their company's only active DCA member to try to involve a colleague. That way, he said, if you leave the company, DCA membership doesn't leave with you. The co-chairs acknowledged that the situation is not dire in terms of membership or finances; they just want to be proactive.

All eyes on electric

The Trenchless Committee meeting started with a brief update on Dr. Sam Ariaratnam's activities on the Gas Pipeline Committee in Washington, D.C., noting that most of the action will happen in November therefore he will have a more thorough update in Hawaii next year. Upcoming events include a Horizontal Directional Drilling Association (HDDA) meeting in Houston in September 2023 and the NASTT No-Dig event in April 2024 in Providence, Rhode Island, which is offering free attendance for public utilities.

Next, Dan Sharpe of Sharp Equipment gave a fascinating presentation on his company's journey to develop and test a prototype for an all-electric hydro vac. The chief benefit of going electric is reducing the noise level of these notoriously loud machines, but it's not the only one: the all-electric hydro vac also offers zero emissions, zero fuel costs, low maintenance, and easier operation.

Sharpe calculated a savings of up to \$8000/year on fuel and \$2000/year on parts and maintenance, and cited a recorded noise level of 74-83 decibels, which is below the 85-decibel threshold that requires hearing protection. Eli Pagel, whose company B&H Construction LLC has been testing Sharpe's prototype continuously over the last seven months, described a good experience with it overall, mentioning the ease of charging it at a public car charger and the ability to work longer hours in restrictive municipalities like Austin, Texas, thanks to the lower noise levels.



On to adventure!

After lunch it was time for the triumphant return of the DCA Adventure Challenge, last seen in 2019 at the Mid Year Meeting in Nemaocolin, Pennsylvania. Attendees divided into teams then each selected a leader, safety officer, GPS officer, map officer, technical officer, fun officer, and storyteller. After designing their own flags, which each team had to always carry, the groups had to find 20 locations around the Spruce Peak property where they would complete trivia questions, puzzles, and challenges for points. The stations were spread out from the ski lift at one end to the nature trails at the other, and challenges included archery, number puzzles, a rope bridge with knot tying, and soccer ball darts on a giant inflatable dart board. Some challenges proved tougher than others (there is no 17!) and the exercise showed the value of different generations working together. A light sweat and a few bug bites later, Team Orange Crushers emerged victorious.

Tuesday evening wrapped up with a pizza party and family game night at the Spruce Lodge Base Camp, a large octagonal timber-framed dining hall with a stone terrace near the ski lifts. Games like cornhole were set up outside, while members inside competed for gift card prizes in an after-dinner Bingo tournament. Gary Lawson of Ditch Witch and his wife Michelle called out the numbers and distributed the prizes.

Wednesday, July 26

Wednesday morning, DCA Washington representative Eben Wyman of Wyman Associates launched the Government Relations Committee meeting. The Protecting Our Infrastructure of Pipeline and Enhancing Safety (PIPES) Act is currently the top priority for the committee's legislative agenda, followed by damage prevention and GIS mapping. The DCA is looking for ways to incentivize GIS use without requiring it, such as a pilot program in Minnesota to provide GIS data on demand, to avoid conflict with the American Gas Association (AGA). Political opposition to GIS is mainly centered around concerns over the security of digitized data, and political issues in Washington have made the subject a bit of a hot potato right now, so DCA is keeping its distance on the subject for the time being.

Wyman also reported on other recent Capitol activity of interest to DCA members. Democrats oppose the Pipeline Sabotage and Accident Prevention Act authored by Rep. Mike Bost (R-Ill.) proposing a 10-year jail sentence for pipeline sabotage while Republicans oppose a bill that would no longer require cost-benefit analysis for pipeline permitting. In addition, the Supreme Court threw out a new Biden administration rule expanding the jurisdiction of the Clean Water Act. In early June, the Government Relations Committee organized a successful D.C. fly-in, and the DCA is interested in possibly forming regional teams for more frequent and targeted

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fly-in opportunities. The committee also highlighted the work of the Infrastructure Protection Coalition, which focuses on damage prevention and locating issues at the state level, recently approved 13 recommendations to promote for state legislation.

The Government Relations Committee meeting concluded with updates on the OQIP pilot program, the Celebration of Construction on the National Mall, and the Pipeline SMS project.

Developing the next generation of leaders

The Workforce Development Committee meeting started with a discussion of the new Leadership Development Program, which includes workshops on "strengths finders", situational leadership, "crucial conversations", emotional intelligence, and other leadership skills. The program will kick off with two two-day sessions this October and November in Grapevine, Texas. The sessions are limited to 25 participants.

With a total of eight booths, DCA and several members made a strong impression at the 2023 SkillsUSA TechSPO. Jeri Lamerton will send out information about the 2024 event so that more companies can register individually without going through the DCA. The committee reviewed DCA's ongoing media campaign, "Success Looks Like This," which includes the BuildWitt videos, as part of its efforts to increase DCA's presence in secondary and post-secondary schools and trade organizations. So far, it appears to be working as DCA is fielding requests for more information from guidance counselors and others. Luke Litteken, Executive Vice President of Mears Group and Vice Chair of the Center for Energy Workforce Development (CEWD), concluded the meeting with a brief presentation on the benefits of CEWD membership.

Working in traffic

The Safety/Risk Management Committee wrapped up the week's business, announcing the recipients of the Safety Director of the Year, Joe Searl of Michels Utility Services Inc.; and Safety Persons of the Year, Marie Boyll of Mears Group Inc. and Jacob Beauchamp of InfraSource Inc.

After reminding everyone to attend the 2024 Safety Congress in Kansas City, Missouri, co-chair Caleb Scheve of Price Gregory Int'l introduced Jason Cramer, Vice President of Wright Traffic Control (WTC), for a presentation on "Working in Congested/High Volume Traffic Areas." WTC provides traffic control services for construction sites that improve safety. Observing that "drivers aren't getting any better," Cramer said that WTC saw 78 site incursions last year at construction sites, and more than 7,000 pedestrians were killed last year in traffic accidents nationwide. Among the most important steps for working in congestion were enforcing a daily pre-job briefing and careful advance planning. Cramer said it is also critical for employees to have the authority to stop work if they see a dangerous situation developing. The remainder of the session was open to questions from the floor about different methods for traffic control.

After scattering to the four winds for the afternoon, members returned to the lodge's central green for a final relaxing dinner in the warm evening air. A local bluegrass band provided entertainment while children played games on the lawn, the bar stayed busy, and the ice cream flowed freely.

The DCA will gather next at the Fairmont Olympic Hotel in Seattle, October 23-25, for the Fall Meeting. ▲



Ray Swerdfeger



Brad Burris



Rob Darden, Vince King, Mark Albert, Andy Miller, Randy Rupp



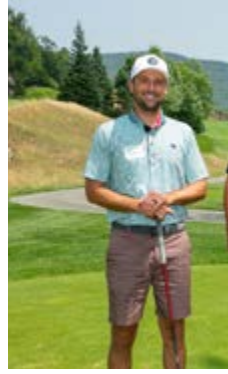
Stephanie Krabbe



Luke Litteken









Committee News

July 24 - 27, 2023 Meetings



2023 Mid Year Meeting

The DCA Board of Directors and the six working committees met July 24-27, 2023, during the DCA Mid Year Meeting at The Lodge at Spruce Peak, in Stowe, Vermont.

2023 Board of Directors

The 2023 DCA Board of Directors met on Monday, July 24, and reviewed updates on:

- **Convention Sponsorship** – Convention sponsorship levels will remain the same as previous years. Though the complimentary registration fees for platinum and gold sponsors are gone, advertising in the DCA News and on the DCA website at www.dcaweb.org will be an increased benefit for platinum sponsors and a new for gold sponsors. These changes will begin for the 2024 convention and beyond.
- **Membership** – A membership sub-committee has formed to focus on recruiting, retaining, and regaining members. The “baby boomer” members are aging out of DCA, but the good news is that younger members are stepping up and getting involved. At the 2023 Mid Year meeting, there was a younger generation

of attendees bringing younger children compared to past Mid Year events. DCA needs to keep the young members engaged through educational programming, future leader initiatives, leadership development, and enhanced marketing of the value of DCA.

- **Future Focus** – Board members had a lively discussion on what to emphasize in the future to strengthen membership. The top suggestions were scholarships, grants, and philanthropy. Marketing efforts should focus on the value of DCA.

Leadership Council

The Leadership Council also met Monday, July 24. The council reviewed actions from the Board of Directors' earlier meeting. In addition, each of the DCA working committee chairs briefly outlined their group's discussion topics.

The Leadership Council is comprised of the chairs of the working committees and the Board of Directors. The purpose of the Leadership Council is to coordinate the strategic direction of the DCA, as directed by the Board of Directors.

Future Leaders Committee

The newly formed Future Leaders committee, an offshoot of the Strategic Vision committee, held its second face-to-face meeting on Monday, July 24, by hosting an informational panel discussion for first-, second-, and third-time attendees of DCA meetings. Committee members presented on the importance of attending conventions and meetings, getting involved with and chairing DCA committees, the steps to being elected to the board of directors, safety programs, the Washington, D.C. fly-in, and getting ready for the DCA 2024 Hawaii convention.

The mission of the Future Leaders Committee is to cultivate and engage a community of emerging leaders within the gas distribution industry. Through networking, outreach, and professional development opportunities, the committee aims to equip members with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in their current roles and advance their careers, and to advance the culture of the DCA. Committee vice-chairs are Elizabeth Michels of Michels Corp. and Sarah Mahlik of TT Technologies.

Membership Committee

The Membership committee met Tuesday, July 25, and reviewed several items:

- **Membership Summary** – Attendees reviewed the membership report presented to the Board of Directors. Since the February meeting, one new contractor member and one new associate member joined DCA. Five contractors and five associate members dropped, resigned, or merged with other members. As of the meeting, current membership was 84 contractor members and 109 associate members.
- **Impact Purchasing Study** – Attendees reviewed the results of the 2022 Impact Purchasing Study. Chairmen emphasized the importance of contractors completing the study. Associate members use the results as a tool for upcoming purchasing and to justify their support of the DCA. The link for the 2023 study will be emailed to contractors in early November.
- **Membership Campaign** – A membership sub-committee met Monday, July 24, to discuss retaining and regaining members and succession planning. The team will focus on DCA contractors who have become inactive or dropped their membership in the past year. Anyone interested in serving on the committee should contact the DCA office or the Membership chairs.

The charge of the Membership committee is to actively solicit and evaluate potential DCA members and make recommendations on member programs

and awards to help recruit and retain members in the association. The vice-chairs are Mike Aydt of MP Technologies and Brad Everett of Caterpillar.

Trenchless Committee

The Trenchless committee received updates on several discussion items at their Tuesday, July 25, meeting.

- **USDOT Gas Pipeline Committee (GPAC)** – Dr. Sam Ariaratnam of Arizona State University (in absentia) updated the Trenchless committee regarding leak detection, gas distribution, hydrogen, and carbon capture, as well as a lawsuit against OSHA over banning pipe wrenches on directional drilling sites. GPAC, which is composed of 15 individuals representing public, industry, and government entities, makes recommendations to stakeholders, giving guidance on the laws and regulations that protect and advance the nation's pipeline infrastructure. Ariaratnam represents the public sector and is serving a three-year term on the committee.
- **NASTT/DCA Collaboration and Events** – The NASTT Gas Distribution Good Practices Course VIRTUAL will be September 21, 11:00 am – 3:00 pm EDT, focusing on HDD, pipe bursting and cured in place liner. Registration is through NASTT.org. The NASTT HDD Good Practices Course in Portland, Oregon, will be announced November 2023. The NASTT No-Dig will be April 14-18, 2024, in Providence, Rhode Island. Registration opens December 1, 2023.

During the Trenchless committee meeting, Dan Sharpe, owner of Sharp Equipment and former DCA member, presented "The World's First Electric Hydro Vac." Sharpe said his company is working to create all electric equipment. The first prototype is a hydro vac that DCA contractor member B&H Construction LLC is testing.

The charge of the Trenchless committee is to support safety, training, technical developments, and voluntary operational guides that sustain professional practices and contractors in the trenchless industry. The vice-chairs are Nate Eastway of Gabe's Construction Co. and Alan Goodman of HammerHead Trenchless.

Government Relations Committee

The Government Relations committee received updates on several pertinent topics at their Wednesday, July 26 meeting. For more details about the following topics, please see the *DCA Insights* section of the *DCA News*.

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- **Pipeline Safety Bill (PIPES ACT)** – The PIPES act remains a top priority for DCA this year, with two important issues remaining: GIS Mapping and Pipeline Sabotage.
 - **GIS mapping** – DCA continues to work with industry allies to include language that would incentivize use of GIS mapping in the next PIPES Act, building on a 2020 mandate for pipeline operators to “update documentation,” including maps and drawings.
 - **Pipeline sabotage** – DCA continues to support inclusion of the Pipeline Sabotage and Accident Prevention Act (HR 1484) as part of the next PIPES Act. There is still a lack of data to demonstrate the enduring problem of physical attacks on pipeline infrastructure, outside of anecdotal evidence.
- **Permitting Reform** – Reforming the permitting process for infrastructure projects remains a priority in Congress. The issue is now bipartisan as renewable energy projects will also benefit from improvements to the permitting process.
- **Infrastructure Protection Coalition Update** – In 2021, DCA joined several other excavation contractor organizations to establish the Infrastructure Protection Coalition (IPC) to conduct a national study investigating and evaluating the effectiveness of state damage prevention programs. The resulting 811 Emergency report, which found that inefficiencies in the damage prevention process cost \$61 billion annually, provides 13 national recommendations to address those inefficiencies.

The IPS reconvened in July of this year and agreed to move forward to develop and implement robust communication plans in states planning to rewrite or adjust their damage prevention statutes.
- **DCA Government Relations Committee, Regional Advocacy Teams** – The committee agreed to set up voluntary regional teams to coordinate advocacy efforts and conduct a range of targeted, regional fly-in events to bolster DCA advocacy.

The charge of the Government Relations committee is to target specific regulatory and legislative items and report their findings through the following publications: *DCA Insights*, *DCA News*, and the DCA website. The vice-chairs are Andy Miller of Alex E. Paris Contracting and Brad Burris of National Equipment Dealers.

Workforce Development Committee

The Wednesday Workforce Development committee meeting updated attendees on efforts since the February meeting.

- **2023 DCA Leadership Development Program** – The two-part DCA Leadership Development Program is scheduled for October 2-5 and November 6-9 in Grapevine, Texas, and will focus on leadership essentials, strengths finding, situational leadership, crucial conversations, emotional intelligence, and leadership legacy. The event is open to 25 participants who are moving up in responsibility at their companies. The registration fee of \$3,000 covers both sections and must be submitted by August 15 so for participants have time to complete the pre-event homework.
- **2023 SkillsUSA TechSPO** – DCA and member companies had eight booths at the annual event in Atlanta, Georgia. The DCA booth promoted the “Success Looks Like This” campaign. The 2024 event will be June 24-28 in Atlanta. Jeri Lamerton of Lamerton Strategic will coordinate booths for the DCA members.
- **Workforce Panel at DCA & AGA Workshop** – The 2024 DCA & AGA Workshop will be March 18-20 at the InterContinental Hotel Kansas, Kansas City, Missouri. At the 2023 event, DCA members, utilities, and outside support presented a panel navigating and applying innovative solutions associated with the challenges of recruiting, developing, retaining, and rewarding a new age workforce. If you have topic ideas for a panel discussion, contact Eben Wyman at Wyman Associates.
- **BuildWitt** – Sponsor companies have received copies of the videos. A “Success Looks Like This” marketing campaign targeting Gen Z and millennials will be ready for distribution soon.
- **Center for Energy Workforce Development (CEWD)** – Luke Litteken, Executive VP of Mears Group and Vice Chair of CEWD, gave a presentation on the benefits of CEWD membership. CEWD will lead a multi-year career awareness initiative to build and enhance understanding of careers in energy using a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion as guiding principles. He also mentioned that the energy industry is behind in attracting new talent.

The charge of the Workforce Development committee is to develop, coordinate, and implement strategies to support the growth of the expanding work force within the industry. The committee accomplishes this through the promotion of the industry as a career by using the vast knowledge and leadership of the DCA membership and promoting coordination with other industry professionals and national organizations. Stephanie Krabbe of InfraSource and Matt Dvorak of Groebner are the vice chairs of the committee.

Safety/Risk Management Committee

Jason Cramer, Vice President of Wright Traffic Control, presented "Working in Congested/High Volume Traffic Areas." He emphasized the importance of planning when working in a high traffic area, daily pre-job briefs, having a traffic congestion website for the jobsite, and working closely with utility partners.

Committee attendees also received updates on:

- **2022 Safety Director and Persons of the Year Awards** – The 2022 Safety Director of the Year was Joe Searl of Michels Utility Services Inc. There was a tie for the Safety Person of the Year between Marie Boyll of Mears Group Inc. and Jacob Beauchamp of InfraSource. The three recipients each received a plaque and a \$1,000 check. The awards were made at the April 2023 Safety Congress in New Orleans, Louisiana.

- **2024 DCA Safety Congress** – The 2024 Safety Congress will be held April 22-24, at the InterContinental Kansas City, Kansas City, Missouri.

The charge of the Safety/Risk Management committee is to review all information concerning safety in the industry and safe jobsite practices. The committee also has oversight for the Arthur T. Everham Safety Award and the Annual Safety Congress. Randy Bunch of Eastern Utilities and Caleb Scheve of Price Gregory Int'l are the vice-chairs.

The next Board of Directors, Leadership Council, and committee meetings will be in conjunction with the 2023 DCA Fall Meeting, October 23-25, at the Fairmont Olympia, Seattle, Washington. ▲

If you are interested in becoming an active member of any of the working committees, please contact the DCA office.

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OCTOBER 25-27



HOUSTON, TX



DCA - Lyons' Grant Committee Makes Donation to Maui Relief Fund



HAWAI'I COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

The DCA – Lyons' Grant committee approved a \$10,000 donation to the Hawaii Community Foundation for Lahaina, Maui relief and rebuilding efforts. In its 62-year history, DCA has held numerous conventions in the state of Hawaii and will be on the Big Island for the DCA 2024 Convention, February 12-17th.

The DCA-Lyons' Family Grant Committee is comprised of the: DCA president, treasurer, junior associate member director, and past president director. Through the years, the grants have been used for a variety of reasons

including when a community emergency or crisis occurs. Serving on the 2023 committee are Ray Swerdfeger, K.R. Swerdfeger Construction; Dan Carson, Carson Corp.; Sarah Mahlik, TT Technologies; Kevin Michels, Michels Corp.

If you or your company would like to make a donation to the Hawaii Community Foundation, please use this link: <https://www.hawaiicommunityfoundation.org/maui-strong>. One hundred percent of the proceeds are being used for those in need in Lahaina, Maui. ▲



**Save the Date for the DCA Fall Meeting
Fairmont Olympic Hotel, Seattle, WA
October 23-25, 2023**



Insights



DCA Fly-In Focuses on Pipeline Safety Measure

Pipeline safety legislation remains a top priority for DCA. In June, several DCA members showed up in the nation's capital to prove it. The legislation would reauthorize the nation's pipeline safety program and the federal agency charged with overseeing it. The Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) is a small but critical agency, and pipeline safety legislation has the potential to influence many issues impacting the gas distribution construction industry, including excavation damage prevention.

DCA members took to Capitol Hill on June 6, where three teams of association members split up to conduct more than 20 visits in the House and Senate. Discussions with leading members of Congress were happening throughout the day, including with Sen. Tom Carper (D-Del.), Chairman of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, and Sen. Joni Ernst (R-Iowa) and staff of the Senate Commerce Committee, which has jurisdiction over pipeline safety legislation. On the

House side, DCA met with several members (and staff) of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, which is currently developing its version of the bill.

DCA expressed concern and strong opposition to rumored proposals that would:

- Eliminate required use of cost-benefit analyses from the pipeline safety regulatory process.
- Establish an official role for EPA in PHMSA's regulatory process.
- Mandate use of safety management systems (SMS) in the pipeline industry.

While nothing is certain until legislative language is available, fly-in participants were happy to hear Republican lawmakers shared their objections to these proposals. This generally made time for more robust discussion of two main DCA pipeline safety priorities, geographic information systems (GIS) mapping and pipeline sabotage.

Geographic information systems (GIS) mapping. DCA's priority in the Protecting Our Infrastructure of Pipeline and Enhancing Safety (PIPES) Act debate is to encourage Congress to provide incentives for increased use of GIS mapping in the pipeline industry.

DCA continues to work with industry allies to include language to incentivize the use of GIS in the next PIPES Act, building on a 2020 mandate for pipeline operators to "update documentation," including maps and drawings. PHMSA has funding programs to improve state safe digging programs, and GIS mapping is all about improving damage prevention through better underground facility maps.

When security issues were raised during Hill visits, there was a clear and legitimate concern about ensuring that sensitive data related to the exact location of a pipeline does not fall into the wrong hands. DCA pointed to a pilot program in Minnesota being monitored by the Common Ground Alliance (CGA) that addresses security and is worth national consideration. All GIS data, housed by the state 811 center, is provided per the operator's discretion only to those parties who need GIS specifics, namely excavators and locators. In addition, parties who receive GIS data only have access to it for the life of an 811 ticket.

DCA's coalition will continue to promote GIS incentives as the pipeline safety bill is developed and proceeds through the legislative process.

Pipeline sabotage: DCA continues to support inclusion of the Pipeline Sabotage and Accident Prevention Act (HR 1484) in the next PIPES Act. Authored by Rep. Mike Bost (R-Ill.), the legislation would increase criminal penalties for physical attacks on pipeline systems, including up to 10 years in prison.

However, there is still a lack of data to confirm that physical attacks on pipeline infrastructure is an enduring problem. Concerns also remain about even the appearance of interfering with the right to free speech afforded to legitimate, peaceful protesting, despite the fact that HR 1484 specifically states that nothing in the bill would interfere with First Amendments rights. That said, strong opposition remains on the Democratic side of the aisle on this provision, with many lawmakers calling for increased penalties for pipeline operators if the PIPES Act increases penalties for criminal protesting.

DCA's fly-in proved to be a very effective and timely event, and participants agreed that progress was made in advancing the Association's pipeline safety priorities.

House Energy and Commerce Committee Republicans Introduce Pipeline Measure

In late July, leaders of the House Energy and Commerce Committee unveiled their draft pipeline safety bill, which also aims to streamline permits for natural gas, oil, and carbon capture pipeline networks.

The Pipeline Safety, Modernization, and Expansion Act of 2023 — authored by committee chair Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-Wash.) and Energy Subcommittee Chairman Jeff Duncan (R-S.C.) — has four priorities: strengthening pipeline safety, lowering energy prices, reducing emissions, and expanding pipeline infrastructure.

Chairs McMorris Rodgers and Duncan released a joint statement upon the bill's introduction, with the leaders agreeing that "pipelines are among the safest and most efficient ways to move the fuels that heat our homes, power our cars, and power our nation's economy. Yet President Biden and Democrats are proactively working to shut down America's pipelines and prevent the necessary maintenance to ensure pipelines are operating safely and efficiently. The administration is also making it more difficult for new infrastructure to be built. This is preventing critical resources from getting to people who need them most."

McMorris Rodgers and Duncan also said the intent of the bill is to "ensure we can build more pipelines, maintain our current critical infrastructure, operate pipelines safely, transport more energy, and lower energy prices."

The legislation would strengthen pipeline safety, lower energy prices and protect fuel choice, reduce emissions, and expand America's pipeline infrastructure by:

- Discouraging attacks on critical pipeline infrastructure by bolstering penalties for "damaging, destroying, or impairing the operation of" pipeline facilities.
- Enhancing federal and state pipeline safety programs by increasing funding to state pipeline safety inspectors and implementing innovative accident prevention initiatives.
- Preserving Americans' freedom to choose which energy resources best meet their needs by prohibiting states and local governments from banning natural gas or other fuels that they rely on.
- Directing PHMSA to implement technology innovation programs that would modernize regulatory processes and unlock America's pipeline potential.

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- Expanding America's transportation capacity, which will minimize risks of disruption and price instabilities.
- Establishing strong safety regulations for carbon dioxide pipeline transportation.
- Encouraging investment in carbon capture and storage technologies to reduce emissions.
- Allowing the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to grant Federal authorizations to modernize existing pipelines and construct new pipelines in compliance with safety regulations.
- Streamlining the permitting process and ensuring that developers are able to secure the permits necessary for pipeline projects without the federal government indefinitely stalling the process.

The legislation contains a specific section aimed at carbon capture pipeline networks. With CO2 deployment growing across a range of industries, the language is vital to enabling the transport, storage, and utilization of CO2. The bill will require PHMSA to finalize safety standards for CO2 transportation pipelines no later than one year from the date of enactment and clarifies the authority of the EPA to identify areas suitable for underground sequestration of carbon dioxide.

Currently, underground CO2 sequestration is subject to well permits predominantly reviewed by the EPA, which many consider to be a bottleneck for the deployment of carbon capture activities. Both McMorris Rodgers and Duncan say they will be working with stakeholders to complete the document's details.

Under the current "discussion draft" of the document, FERC would be tasked with issuing federal permits for the construction, modification, expansion, inspection, repair, or maintenance of a pipeline. It would also reduce the deadline for a final permit decision to one year.

Several topics addressed in this bill are outside the scope of traditional pipeline safety legislation, and many are likely to find issues such as permit reform and fuel choice to be inappropriate for consideration in the pipeline safety debate. That said, because the last PIPES Act expanded PHMSA's purview to include consideration of methane releases and related impacts to pipeline safety, lawmakers on both sides of the aisle are apparently looking to advance a variety of legislative goals in legislation that focused exclusively on safety issues for the past several decades.

White House Requires Agencies to Gauge Financial Damage to Ecosystems

The White House recently issued draft guidance to federal agencies requiring them to account for how their decisions impact key ecosystems that the public depends on. The draft guidance, issued by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the Office of Science and Technology Policy, focuses on public benefits derived from forests, wetlands, and waterways. While ecosystems sometimes appear in the cost-benefit analyses agencies must prepare to justify their rules and policies, this is the first governmentwide directive requiring it.

According to OMB, ecosystem values are not treated as important benefits that are more easily quantified.

"Failing to fully account for nature's bounty has led to undervaluing and erosion of our nation's natural assets," OMB wrote in a statement.

The Biden administration's plans for the regulatory overhaul focuses on how agencies tally the costs and benefits of a broad range of government activities — from setting environmental standards to leasing decisions to project procurement and construction. The draft guidance will undergo a period of public comment and peer review before finalizing it, hopefully within a year.

The guidance focuses on nature's values for human health and the economy. For example, according to Biden's OMB, trees are a salable crop but also offer shade, climate benefits, and wildlife habitat. Wetlands protect against property damage from flooding. In addition, non-economic benefits are considered, such as environmental impacts on physical and mental health and recreation. The guidance sets best practices for agencies to ensure that these social goods are given equal footing with other costs and benefits considered during regulatory review.

In short, the draft guidance directs agencies to broaden the scope of their analyses to fully account for ecosystem services, and calls for a clear description of how the proposed project or action and any related changes to the ecosystem could harm or benefit humans. Wherever possible, OMB is asking agencies to assign a dollar value to a policy's effect on an ecosystem service.

OMB insists the draft guidance doesn't impose any new requirements on federal agencies, and that their cost-benefit guidance set in place for the past 20 years doesn't exclude natural resources or the environmental impacts from consideration. According to OMB's statement, "nature provides crucial services that ought to be considered when making decisions." When those benefits are not considered, "we basically treat natural assets as if they're simply there for the taking."

Under this line of thinking, a tree is considered only valuable when it is harvested as timber and not when it is preserved as a source of shade, natural carbon removal, habitat for a range of wildlife, and scenic beauty. Costs are not assigned to policies or decisions that impact watersheds that some cities depend on for drinking water or the wetlands that guard them against storm surges — even though replacing those natural features with man-made alternatives would be costly.

Permitting Reform Remains a Priority, Fate Remains Uncertain

A tight congressional calendar and competing priorities could thwart another bipartisan attempt to overhaul the federal permitting process when Congress returns in September following a six-week summer recess. Both Republicans and Democrats agree that forging a deal on permitting in the next few months is a heavy lift, but many remain publicly committed to trying.

However, reaching consensus will take significant concessions from both sides. Republicans have to get comfortable with an increased focus on electric transmission, while Democrats will have to compromise on some GOP oil and gas priorities. Talk surrounding permit reform has faded from public view since the debt limit deal was enacted last spring, but lawmakers from both chambers continue to negotiate privately. Key areas of discussion include setting hard deadlines related to litigation of fossil-fuel projects, early and regular consultation with affected communities, cost allocation associated with transmission line buildout, and an update of longstanding environmental laws to help avoid lengthy, expensive project delays.

Project permitting impacts a wide range of industries, and at least four House committees have jurisdiction over the issue, including Energy and Commerce, Judiciary, Natural Resources, and Transportation and Infrastructure. Most DCA members know that permit reform is not a new issue, and efforts to pass legislation to address it heated up in the last Congress and continue to be a top priority. Permitting reform legislation has been introduced in both the House and Senate. With the inclusion of

limited permitting reform provisions in the debt ceiling compromise, the regulated community is questioning whether those reforms will have any real impact on the future of a broader permitting reform effort. Despite continued interest, the fundamental issues keeping permitting reform from happening still remain, and both sides still question if their counterparts are willing to cut the necessary deals to get compromise reform over the finish line.

Some of the more high-profile bills are:

- *Promoting Efficient and Engaged Reviews (PEER) Act*, introduced by Sen. Tom Carper (D-Del.), chair of Environment and Public Works Committee
- *Revitalizing the Economy by Simplifying Timelines and Assuring Regulatory Transparency (RESTART) Act*, introduced by Sen. Shelley Capito (R-W.Va.), ranking member of the Environment and Public Works Committee
- *Building American Energy Security Act of 2023*, introduced by Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.), chair of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee
- *Spur Permitting of Underdeveloped Resources (SPUR) Act*, introduced by Sen. John Barrasso (R-Wyo.), ranking member of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee

Although both Republicans and Democrats are fully aware of the situation, the problem has been finding a compromise to which both sides are amenable. Democrats will have to give up their opposition to permitting reform in general to get broader deployment of renewables and realize the full potential of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). Republicans will likely have to accept they will not get all of the reforms they would like and that the likelihood of revisiting anything that is left on the cutting room floor any time in the near future is highly unlikely. In short, members who have pushed a provision for years will have to accept that if it's not in this package, it may not happen. ▲



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**Save the Date for the DCA Annual Convention
Fairmont Orchid, Kohala Coast, Hawaii
February 12 - 17, 2024**



Calendar

DCA & Industry Events

2023

SEPTEMBER 11-15

IPLOCA 2023 Convention
Hyatt Regency Vancouver
British Columbia, Canada
www.iploca.com

SEPTEMBER 26-28

The Utility Expo
Kentucky Exposition Center
Louisville, Kentucky
www.theutilityexpo.com

OCTOBER 2-4 Session 1

NOVEMBER 6-8 Session 2

DCA Leadership Development Conference
Embassy Suites DFW Airport North
Grapevine, Texas
www.dcaweb.org

OCTOBER 23-25

DCA 2023 Fall Meeting
Fairmont Olympic Hotel
Seattle, Washington
www.dcaweb.org

OCTOBER 25-27

Dirt World Summit
Hyatt Regency Houston
Houston, Texas
<http://bit.ly/3OKOsQS>

2024

JANUARY 30 - FEBRUARY 3

2024 PLCA Convention
Grand Hyatt Baha Mar
Nassau, Bahamas
www.plca.org

FEBRUARY 12-17

DCA 2024 Annual Convention
Fairmont Orchid
Kohala Coast, Hawaii
www.dcaweb.org

MARCH 7-12

PCCA Annual Convention
Turtle Bay Resort
Kakuku, Hawaii
www.pccaweb.org

MARCH 18-20

2024 DCA & AGA Workshop
InterContinental Kansas City at The Plaza
Kansas City, Missouri
www.dcaweb.org

MARCH 19-21

Underground Conference (UCT)
Oklahoma City Convention Center
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
www.uctonline.com

ATTENTION ALL DCA MEMBERS!

So you do not miss out on future meeting and event notices, please have your company's IT representative whitelist all emails from dcaweb.org. If you have any questions, please contact Teri Korson at tkorson@dcaweb.org.

Member News



Vermeer

Vermeer Looks to the Future After 75 Years in Business

Since Gary Vermeer founded the Vermeer Corporation in 1948, the company has centered around impacting people and the world for the better. As the company celebrates its first 75 years, it looks to the future. Third-generation family member and Vermeer President and CEO Jason Andringa says the next 75 years will aim for the same purpose.

"What started as a small machine shop to meet the needs of local farmers in and around our hometown of Pella, Iowa, soon became the ground floor for my grandfather (Gary) to open Vermeer Manufacturing in 1948," said Andringa. "With the guiding principle of treating other people how you'd want to be treated yourself, we've created a culture over the last 75 years of making a real impact on the way work gets done that continues to drive our company forward. Ultimately, it's a commitment that is part of every interaction we have among ourselves, suppliers, dealers, customers, and the communities we live and work in."

Today, Vermeer has expanded from its modest beginnings to an organization of more than 4,000 team members worldwide. Operating eight facilities on six continents and offering service and support in more than 60 countries, the company's iconic yellow iron equipment is distributed through a global network of more than 600 industrial and forage dealers.

Vermeer was recently recognized by *Forbes* magazine as one of America's Best Midsize Employers.

Since Gary Vermeer first invented the wagon hoist, Vermeer has continued to innovate in construction and agricultural equipment. Inventions such as the hydraulic horizontal directional drill, large round baler, and stump cutter highlight Vermeer's commitment to developing high quality equipment that addresses the challenges its customers face. What's next on Vermeer's horizon will include expanded digital product offerings, next-generation machines, and new equipment, helping connect people to the necessities of life, manage natural resources, and feed and fuel communities.

"As we look to the future, we are committed to carrying on the legacy of innovation and continuous improvement to make a lasting impact around the world," Andringa said. "We understand the important work our customers and equipment are doing, and we support them, wherever they are. Together, we are equipped to do more."



The International Union of Operating Engineers

Heavy Equipment Classes Now Available to Washington Online Schoolers

The International Union of Operating Engineers Local 612 and Washington Virtual Academies (WAVA) have partnered with its charter, the Omak School District, and school districts across the state, to offer the new Operating Engineers Career Pathway Program to high school students.

This program gives students the opportunity to enroll in online elective courses that are designed to introduce them to the heavy equipment industry. Students also

may have the opportunity to receive hands-on experience operating equipment at the Local 302/612 Training Center in Ellensburg, WA.

Pathway participants earn high school credit and are also eligible for apprenticeship credit after graduation. Students can remain enrolled in their local school while taking four, one-semester classes that cover topics from equipment fundamentals to grade and construction math. The online classes offer flexibility, and in-person learning events that provide hands-on experience and industry networking opportunities.

The program's success comes as companies report a shortage of skilled labor. And jobs in the trades have gained attention for being meaningful careers with good wages & benefits, without the need for burdensome college debt.

Programs in other states like Minnesota and Wisconsin have been highly successful. Fall enrollment for this program in Washington is available as of today.

"This is an amazing opportunity for students to learn about this life-long career pathway, while still in high school," said Susan Mouracade-Boyer, Executive Director of WAVA. "Students get job skills and a whole new appreciation for what it takes to get these important jobs done."

"The state of Washington will always need people for skilled labor jobs. They are never going to go away. With this Operating Engineers program, we can get some young people excited about their future, provide them with skills, and hopefully move them on to high paying apprenticeships in this important field," said Kevin Tedrick, Assistant Business Manager of IUOE Local 612.

Builders, contractors, and their industry groups have been advocating for this kind of early hands-on learning for high school students as a way to show them the great career pathways available in the building trades.

"This is a great opportunity for students to progress on their pathway to graduation and learn valuable skills to help fill family-wage jobs right here in Washington," said Al Audette, Director of Education and Workforce Development at the Building Industry Association of Washington.



Common Ground Alliance

Common Ground Alliance Opens Call for Proposals for Underground Utilities Conference

Common Ground Alliance (CGA) announced that the Call for Proposals for the 2024 CGA Conference & Expo is open now through Tuesday, Oct. 3. CGA is seeking session proposals from industry professionals and subject

matter experts to help facilitate thoughtful discussions and formulate concrete actions that the industry can implement to dramatically reduce damages to underground utilities.

The 2024 CGA Conference & Expo, set to take place April 14-18, 2024, in Colorado Springs, CO., is the damage prevention industry's premier event, bringing together distinguished experts and decision-makers for a week of focused collaboration and innovation designed to address the industry's most pressing challenges. Educational and action-oriented programming will engage stakeholders in thoughtful roundtable discussions, focused presentations, interactive breakout sessions and networking events. Presenting at the 2024 CGA Conference & Expo provides damage prevention professionals an opportunity to have their voice be a pivotal part of the future of damage prevention.

Sessions will be held in a variety of formats, including outcome focused presentations, moderated debate/roundtable discussions, panels and the CGA engage stage. Key topic areas that are of interest to CGA members and Conference attendees include:

- Eliminating inefficiencies in the damage prevention system
- Enforcement, exemptions and other safe digging law impacts
- Strategies to aid in the 50 in 5 initiative
- Technological advancements, including mapping, GIS and AI
- Outreach and education efforts to drive public awareness among excavators
- Progress and effectiveness measurement tools
- Reducing over-notification to streamline the 811 system
- Exploring new frontiers in stakeholder engagement

"As the industry works to achieve its "50 in 5" goal, aimed at reducing damages to underground utilities by 50% over the next 5 years, the 2024 CGA Conference & Expo offers stakeholders the opportunity to accelerate progress through shared knowledge, innovative strategies, focused engagement and concrete actions," said Sarah K. Magruder Lyle, president and CEO of CGA.

"Uniting diverse expertise and perspectives across the damage prevention industry is a vital step toward identifying strategies that will address the top damage root causes. The 2024 CGA Conference & Expo eagerly invites inventive, outcome-focused proposals from industry professionals and subject matter experts that will foster dynamic discussions and help inspire critical changes to achieve our "50 in 5" industry goal."

(continued on pg. 28)

Price Gregory International Cuts \$10,000 Check for United Way Dancers

Price Gregory International made a \$10,000 donation to the United Way of Southern West Virginia to support its "Dancing With the Stars" campaign.

Price Gregory International, LLC, based in Houston, Texas, is a leading provider of infrastructure services with a focus on pipeline construction. Their operations in Beckley, West Virginia, are involved in several pipeline projects in the southern and western portions of the state. Greg Newcomb, a superintendent with the company, presented the check to United Way.

Trena Dacal, executive director of United Way of Southern West Virginia, said, "We are thrilled for our community that companies like Price Gregory care about the people of southern West Virginia. Their generous contribution will support the agencies who partner with United Way."



Price Gregory International

(continued on pg. 30)

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Caterpillar Named One of America's Best Employers for Women by Forbes

Caterpillar was named as one of America's Best Employers for Women 2023. Winners were identified in an independent survey from a sample of more than 60,000 U.S. employees working for companies employing at least 1,000 people within the United States. The sample included more than 40,000 women.

"Supporting women with programs, role models, mentors and peers are all ways we are working to help attract and retain talent at Caterpillar," said Caterpillar Chief Human Resource Officer Cheryl Johnson. ▲



DCA MEMBERS - SEND US YOUR NEWS!

DCA would like to publish your company news in upcoming issues of the DCA newsletter and on the DCA website. Please send news items, press releases, images or videos to cgreen@dcaweb.org.

Featured DCA Member Websites



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Distribution Contractors Association
101 West Renner Road, Suite 460
Richardson, Texas 75082
972-680-0261
www.dcaweb.org



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