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DCA NEWS

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**2024
Convention
Recap**



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DCA 2024 Annual Convention Wrap-Up

The Big Island of Hawaii was a welcome sight out the airplane window for weary travelers after hours of Pacific blue on the long haul to the DCA 2024 Annual Convention. Super Bowl Sunday played out in the background as the Kansas City Chiefs and the San Francisco 49ers squared off on tiny screens in everyone's laps or, if travelers were lucky enough to have arrived early, a big screen at the hotel bar. DCA's return to the beautiful Fairmont Orchid Hotel was a welcome respite for members coming from chilly February weather on the mainland who were more than ready to enjoy the sun, sand, and waves of the tropics.

Monday, February 12

It was obvious from the get-go that turnout was going to be high at this meeting. The Vacuworx Registration Party on Monday afternoon was crowded before it even started in an open courtyard around a pleasantly burbling fountain. A wide variety of local snacks was laid out on tables, from tropical fruit and sweet rolls to Hawaiian pizza. Servers offered up Mai tais as guests gathered around the prize table for raffle tickets and bracelet fittings for the ladies. The crowd didn't begin to wane until the Future Leaders' Committee opened its meeting down the hall, and even then, folks lingered for hours afterward.

The Future Leaders' meeting, freshly opened to the public, was set up as a roundtable discussion and very well attended. Co-chairs Elizabeth Michels of Michels Corp. and Sarah Mahlik of TT Technologies kicked off

introductions of everyone around the table and reviewed the debut committee meeting held last summer in Vermont. Mahlik and Michels had recently met with a group called Young Pipeline Professionals (YPP) for industry workers under 35 and suggested reaching out to them further by hosting a webinar.

Pointed questions, creative suggestions

After that, one of the liveliest discussions in recent DCA memory began as members around the table shared their stories of joining and coming up through the organization. It started with sensible advice for those interested in leadership — be patient, keep showing up, find your niche, be vocal about what you're interested in — and folks quickly got vocal with tough, pointed questions and creative suggestions. How do we define "new member?" Should there be both contractor and associate mentors assigned to newbies? How do you "get on the list" as a volunteer? Can we use professional education to recruit leaders? Suggestions including creating a "wisdom panel" of older advisers, making people feel like they have some influence on the direction of the group, holding summary meetings to describe committees and how to get involved, and joining the scholarship committees as a good way to get your feet wet. This meeting probably could have easily gone on for another hour, and much discussion continued afterward. The future for this committee looks exciting and likely to bear valuable fruit in years to come.



Rob Darden, Town Hall

Tuesday, February 13

Tuesday's business began by feeding off the energy from that Future Leaders meeting as the Membership Committee got underway. Co-chair Brad Everett of Caterpillar announced that he will be vacating his spot after four-plus years, giving someone new an opportunity to step up. He recognized the need to modify the committee charter to include recruiting younger generations, noting the 44 new members in attendance at this conference despite overall member numbers leveling off in recent months. The role of the Membership Committee had sparked some discussion on Monday, and co-chair Scott Cooper, also of Caterpillar, observed that more committees had been working together in the last couple of years. More ideas began circulating quickly as the group suggested things like rotating mentors each day for better circulation, recognition and possibly rewards for those who bring in new members, publicizing the diversity of company types in the DCA more strongly, and doing more to formalize the onboarding process for both new association members and prospective committee members. As with Monday, the overriding desire from new members seemed to be clarity — they want a clear path to become active participants, seek open positions, and move up within the organization, all of which would motivate them to keep attending and draw in new members with them. The committee made it clear that they were listening, promising that they will be another primary driver of change within the DCA in the near-term future.

The Town Hall and Business session came next, with DCA Executive Vice President Rob Darden introducing reports on membership, future leaders, and the new leadership development program. He reviewed the

DCA's recent value marketing efforts ("Why be a member?") and announced that the DCA websites are being updated and a new directory will be going online soon. The latest BuildWitt video, "Executive," debuted on screen, followed by reports on OQIP and the PSMS Contractor's Guide, board of director updates, and the presentation of the Arthur T. Everham Safety Awards.

Natural gas and 'known unknowns'

Darden then introduced the session's speaker, Lori Traweek, Retired Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of the American Gas Association (AGA), who presented "Navigating Uncertainty — The Future of the Gas Industry." Opening with former U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's famous "known unknowns" quote, she started with what we know we know, illustrating the policy landscape with a map showing gas bans versus fuel choice state-by-state. She pointed out that 189 million Americans use natural gas, and 640,000 more customers were added in the last year, and both supply and demand are currently rising. Conversations are also rising about repurposing some pipelines for hydrogen, CO₂, and other fuels, and some \$630 billion in near-term investment is pending to supply the large capacities needed for mass electrification. Getting into the "known unknowns," Traweek acknowledged the uncertain future of American politics, the fate of liquefied natural gas (LNG) permits and renewable subsidies, America's appetite for increased energy, and the pace of technological development. She believes the public is becoming increasingly aware of the feasibility and implications of electrification as it relates to grid reliability, costs, and concerns. Finally, she highlighted the opportunities available to the industry to

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Lori Traweek, Business Session



Scott Stratten, Opening Breakfast

innovate, constructively engage in dialogue, and offer solutions while pointing out implications, concluding the presentation with answers to questions from the audience.

Leadership development: opportunities and ideas

The Workforce Development Committee followed, beginning with a review of its biggest achievement in 2023, the launch of the Leadership Development Program. They reminded attendees that the program is not just for foremen or contractors, but anyone seeking to move into leadership positions within their company. The March 2024 session was already full, but the fall session remains open. The committee then went through upcoming events, including the DCA & AGA Utility Contractor Workshop, to be held March 18-20 in Kansas City, Missouri; the DEI Forum in May in Washington, D.C.; SkillsUSA events; and a new Bob Westphal Memorial Scholarship for SkillsUSA. This prompted some discussion on engaging with high schools, community colleges, and technical schools; inviting students for tours; and other ideas, as well as reaching out more to local unions.

Insights into the battle for talent

The Safety/Risk Management Committee featured speakers Jim Schauer and James Cross, hosts of the "Coffee with Jim & James" podcast that shares stories from the energy industry. The two long-time utility men started their podcast during the pandemic and are now in their fifth season with over 200 episodes that have featured more than 600 guests. They shared their insights on the battle for talent within the industry as demographics and company cultures change. Studies show that Millennials rank people and culture fit as their No. 1 priority in choosing employers, and 86% will avoid a company with a bad reputation. Upward mobility still matters as well, and the ascendancy of Zoom during the pandemic created opportunities for people who couldn't travel to participate in committee and board work: a

trend Schauer and Cross approved of. If you're trying to brand yourself or your company, focus on sharing your knowledge to gain followers, because you can't take it with you, they said. Their ultimate takeaways for finding and following your passion were:

1. Just start
2. Share a cup of coffee
3. Find your champions
4. Find your why
5. Walk away with *action*

Soaking in Hawaiian vibes

With business done for the day, events moved out to oceanside at Turtle Pointe for the Caterpillar Opening Dinner. The evening weather was as beautiful as you could hope for in Hawaii, and lights strung between palm trees lit up tropical flowers on each table as a Hawaiian band played on a stage decorated with surfboards. Dinner featured the luau-favorite, roast pig, and when it was time for DCA President Ray Swerdfeger of K.R. Swerdfeger Construction and his wife Jill to take the stage for a few remarks, they were escorted up by giant feathered warriors to the pounding of drums. A while later, a blast from a conch shell horn announced the arrival everyone had been waiting for: the fire dancer! The skillful band played up the drama as he showed off his daring and agility, leaving small children in the crowd begging for more when it was over.

Wednesday, February 14

John Deere's Opening Keynote Breakfast on Wednesday was time for the president's year-in-review presentation, and the video department was up to the task. Lacing in generous clips and quips from TV's "Ted Lasso," they treated viewers to highlights from Swerdfeger's many travels and adventures during his tenure at the top, which convention chair Brad Burris, of National Equipment



DCA Auction

Dealers, embellished with even more entertaining tales of how they searched for the convention site.

UnFiltered business insights

Next, it was time for McElroy Manufacturing to introduce keynote speaker Scott Stratten, the unabashedly man-bun-sporting Canadian author of such business books as "UnMarketing: Everything Has Changed and Nothing is Different," "UnSelling: The New Customer Experience," "UnBranding: 100 Branding Lessons for the Age of Disruption," and "UnLeadership: Make Building Relationships Your Business," released in late February. His uniquely self-effacing humor quickly had the crowd on his side. He started with the premise that when we see a logo, we think of our most recent or most extreme experience with that brand, highlighting the Ritz-Carlton logo. He then told the story of "Joshie," a lost child's stuffed animal returned from the hotel in the grandest of style by hotel workers who were low on the totem pole. That one heart-warming story went viral and reached more people than the hotel chain's entire previous five years of paid marketing, illustrating Stratten's point that people are the brand. Moving on to generational conflict, he noted that "every generation hates the younger generation," going as far back as Roman orator Cicero in 50 B.C. Now Gen X and the Boomers are merging to fight the Millennials and Gen Z as it becomes apparent that "the deal," where you pay your dues and get ahead, is basically dead. "Disruption is change without time to resist it," he said, and as technology keeps changing things faster, the friction only increases. Yet young people still want to and must work and risk their standing and even their jobs to disagree with the elders in their company. That rolled into a story about how young, devil-may-care Stratten, working at a movie theater in high school for an older boss he despised, had his life and attitude dramatically turned around when that same boss had his back in a situation that could have easily gotten him fired.

He emphasized that the more human you can be, the better — empathy and self-awareness build bridges, and collective wisdom gets us through disruption. He finished with a tale of one of his failures, when the executives of a large corporation commissioned him to take their employees, who had "no problems," to the "next level," then refused to believe him when he discovered that the employees were terrified of them and hated working there but couldn't afford to lose their jobs. He made this discovery by allowing the employees to make a simple, anonymous list of suggestions for what the company should "stop, start, or continue." He concluded that, "You don't know what it's like to work for you," and CEOs don't really know the company culture because it goes through too many filters on the way up," Stratten said. The best way to keep people, he advised, was to create your own "stop, start, or continue" list and to honor it.

Romance, and bidding, in the air

The rest of the afternoon was free for activities, but February 14, as we all know, is Valentine's Day, and the evening's DCA Annual Auction, sponsored by Ritchie Bros. Auctioneers, provided the perfect opportunity for members to please their loved ones with a lovely diamond necklace, a hunting trip, or a truckload of bentonite. After a buffet in the courtyard at sunset, guests browsed silent auction tables loaded with jewelry, trips, sports packages, business equipment, and the odd portable pizza oven or Ray the Deer wall art while enjoying a bowl of ice cream. When the live auction began, the action heated up quickly and stayed hot all the way to the end, with one custom cowboy hat offering proving so popular that they ended up selling five of them. By the end of the night, the silent and live auctions had raised more than \$673,000 in funds for future DCA scholarships and operations.

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Robbie Sawyer and Sam Stanton, Group Breakfast

Thursday, February 15

At Ditch Witch's Group Breakfast on Thursday, it was time to award some of those scholarships. Winners were announced for the Dale R. Michels Endowed Scholarship and the Curtis Allen Scholarship, which currently totals over \$135,000 for 2024.

The AI revolution

American Augers' introduced Keynote speakers Sam Stanton and Robbie Sawyer from RedButton.ai then took the stage to give us a peek into the fast-developing world of artificial intelligence (AI). They immediately used an AI generator to write their opening remarks, poking fun at the sponsor who introduced them. AI is already being used everywhere, they said, including by giants like Amazon, YouTube, and Tesla. Each technology revolution — agricultural, industrial, computational, and AI — has proceeded faster than the last one. In 1900, over 40% of Americans were farmers, but today it's barely 1%, and 85% of all jobs today didn't even exist in 1900. They then suggested that 85% of jobs in 2030 — just six years from now — might not exist today. Whereas we had from 1990 to 2007 to get used to the internet before social media invaded our lives, AI video has become nearly indistinguishable from reality in less than two years, and it can be created in mere minutes, Stanton and Sawyer said. Machines now understand and generate language, drawing on the entire web and 50 million books in their knowledge base. As scary as it all sounds, Stanton and Sawyer touched on the positive AI can do by sharing an example of how they used the technology to help

an overburdened executive chef reduce his workload dramatically by generating menus, recipes, and shopping lists with the click of a button. Using boggler.ai, they quickly reeled off more examples by generating a travel itinerary, researching a piece of equipment based on a single image, and posing a question about HDD. They posited that AI could boost a company's productivity by as much as 30-90%, finding most use in emails, meetings, generation, and research. They encouraged attendees to put together a pilot group within their companies to try AI and see how it can help, noting that "the more you mess around, the more you learn." However, don't forget common sense, they added, because the best output still comes from the best input. Afterward, Stanton and Sawyer answered questions at their table in the hall and invited attendees to use free trials of boggler.ai and facilitated.ai.

Legislative goals and progress

The Government Relations Committee was up first after breakfast, and Eben Wyman of Wyman Associates quickly launched into the latest on their top priority, the Pipeline Safety Reauthorization Bill (or PIPES Act). He reviewed the House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee's work on Section 18 – Damage Prevention, particularly noting language to "encourage" states to require white lining, training for third-party excavators, locator training, and increased use of geographic information systems (GIS). When an audience member asked if "encourage" now would lead to "require" later, Wyman



Jim Carroll, Closing Breakfast

answered, “Yes, hopefully.” Comparing the output of the T&I committee with that from the House Committee on Energy and Commerce (E&C), he noted similarities including standards for CO₂ and H₂, criminal protest penalties, and cost-benefit analysis, but differences about permit reform and fuel choice versus mandatory electrification. Overall, the committee believes they are starting to achieve legislative goals DCA has been discussing since 2013. Discussion then turned to regional advocacy, with plans to organize fly-in teams for the Northeast, Southeast, Midwest, Southwest, and Western regions. Most state-level efforts will focus on damage prevention, and DCA will be working on a white paper to compare and analyze efforts in each area. Lastly, the committee put a question to the audience: Are we focusing on things you care about? The reaction was positive but also included suggestions to investigate underground electrical, public education, regulations in California, and materials and equipment issues.

Hawaii Gas and hydrogen

Next up, the Trenchless Committee hosted one of the more anticipated speakers of the week. As talk around the country heats up about using hydrogen in pipelines to mitigate the effects of climate change, one gas utility in America has been adding hydrogen to their pipelines for 50 years — Hawaii Gas. Vice President of Operations Kevin Nishimura spoke to a rapt audience about their experience with hydrogen, explaining how hydrogen is normally removed from synthetic natural gas, but due to local manufacturing necessities unique to Hawaii, it

made more sense to leave it in at about 11-15%. Hawaii does not use gas for power generation, and about half of Hawaii Gas’ customers purchase propane or bottled gas. Hawaii’s system includes 22 miles of transmission pipeline on Oahu and 1,100 miles of distribution pipeline, using identical specs to standard gas pipe elsewhere with no modifications for hydrogen. Nishimura noted that while hydrogen can embrittle steel pipe at high concentrations and pressures, Hawaii Gas operates well below those levels and has seen no major problems since 1973. No changes have been necessary to operations and maintenance or safety standards either, or customer appliances like stoves all perform the same without modification for up to 30% hydrogen. Hawaii Gas is looking to increase the percentage of hydrogen to 20 in the future. In response to an audience question, Nishimura observed that there is currently no evidence that hydrogen leaks more than methane due to the smaller molecular size. He also added that, due to hydrogen’s lower BTU rating, removing hydrogen is not equivalent to removing methane regarding decarbonization calculations.

Friday, February 16

The final keynote speaker of the week, sponsored by Century Products, was futurist and author Jim Carroll, who continued the theme of rapid change with his presentation on “The Big, Fast Future” by telling everyone, “My job is to freak you out.” He succeeded. After

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(l to r) 2023 DCA President Ray and Jill Swerdfeger; Kathleen Faria and Mark Albert 2024 DCA President

mentioning that 65% of kids today will work in a job that doesn't exist yet, and half of what you learn in your first year of college is now obsolete before you graduate, he predicted that "the future belongs to those who are fast." His talk focused on "Five Key Themes for Tomorrow." In the first, the "Era of Acceleration," he gave numerous examples of things that were science fiction just a few years ago, like the "Star Trek" medical tricorder, but are becoming real now, often decades sooner than they were predicted. Meanwhile, technologies we've only recently gotten used to are quickly becoming part of "the olden days." Under "Material Science," he showed that the number of known chemical substances doubles every 13 years, resulting in things like new construction materials such as mushroom concrete and solar shingles. Naturally, "AI" was next. Carroll informed the audience that "just yesterday," Open AI had announced text-to-video generation. With search engine mega-wars and startups everywhere, the technology is developing breathtakingly fast, and he predicted the future of skills would be the ability to get "just-in-time knowledge." Point four, about "Autonomous Technology," gave the pipeliners some concrete examples of how self-driving construction equipment, robotics, digital twinning, and other tech could affect their work soon. Under "Methodology Modification," he reviewed how off-site manufacturing, 3-D printing, and AI project management would change the way construction projects are done as well. Speaking on generational disruption, he observed that "kids live in a different world than we do," and playing Farmville and Roblox today is teaching them skills for the future. For the older generations struggling with new technology, he advised that if you keep waiting for "it" to be ready, you'll never be ready when "it" is. He encouraged attendees to invest in experiential capital — deepen your well, waste

time on frivolous things, assess your skillset, and become your own futurist. In short, "Think big, start small, scale fast."

An undersea paradise

Friday evening it was time for Vermeer's President's Dinner, with the ballroom decorated like an undersea paradise with blue lighting and drapery decking the walls, jellyfish hanging from the ceiling, and a Hawaiian sea canoe and a giant tiki idol bookending the room. Even the tablecloths were lit from below, with large tropical flowers above. Members arrived and scattered to the bar or took pictures before a backdrop of moon and palm trees. Meanwhile, a DJ played tropical music on the edge of a lighted dance floor.

After the golf tournament awards were presented by Jon Wagner of InRock Drilling Systems, outgoing president Ray and Jill Swerdfeger and incoming president Mark Albert and Kathleen Faria, of AGI Construction, were each announced with the conch shell horn. Albert promised during his term to focus on giving people a path up and on outreach to small companies like his own. Dinner was served after a Hawaiian song of blessing. Later, members were treated to a special ceremony telling the story in song and dance of the Snow Queen of Mauna Kea, followed by the serving of baked Mauna Kea for dessert. Finally, it was the DJ's turn to charge up the dance floor and take the party deep into the night.

The 63rd DCA Annual Convention had an energy to it that felt fresh, hopeful, and ready to seize a new day. Changes are afoot — some scary, some exciting — but the signs are growing that the future of the DCA is in good hands. DCA looks forward to seeing that energy continue at the Mid Year Meeting at the Fairmont Chateau Whistler in British Columbia, Canada, July 14-17. ▲

2023 DCA Arthur T. Everham Safety Award



The DCA presented the highly coveted Arthur T. Everham Safety Award to several contractor members in recognition of the effectiveness of their safety programs during 2023:

Under 200,000 hours:

- **First Place (tied)**
 - Eastern Utilities Services, Melville, New York
 - Hanging H Companies, Burlington, Washington
 - Michels Pacific Energy Inc., Santa Clara, California
- **Second Place** – Hydro Excavators II LLC, Big Bend, Wisconsin

201,000 hours to 800,000 hours:

- **First Place** – Teichert, Sacramento, California
- **Second Place** – AGI Construction, Smithfield, Rhode Island

801,000 hours to 2 million hours:

- **First Place** – Michels Utility Services Inc., Brownsville, Wisconsin
- **Second Place** – The Hallen Construction Co. Inc., Plainview, New York

Over 2 million hours:

- **First Place (tied)**
 - ARB Inc., Lake Forest, California
 - Q3 Contracting Inc., Little Canada, Minnesota
- **Second Place** – Price Gregory Int'l Inc., Katy, Texas

The DCA established the Arthur T. Everham Safety Award in 1986 to recognize contractors with exceptional safety programs. The revised and updated judging criteria includes: the number of OSHA lost workday cases, number of OSHA restricted duty days, number of fatalities, the presence of a documented safety management system (SMS), the use of a drug-testing program, and the company's root cause analysis (RCA) system. ▲

Rob Darden Recognized for 15 Years of Service



(l to r) Ray Swerdfeger, Rob Darden

DCA 2023 President Ray Swerdfeger took time out during the Annual Convention in Hawaii to recognize Rob Darden's 15th anniversary serving as the Executive Vice President of the DCA.

"Rob, congratulations on 15 years of service with the DCA," Swerdfeger said. "It's hard to believe that it's been that long ago when you flew to the summer meeting in Jackson Hole. You were probably wondering what you got yourself into.

"You have brought a new standard of quality to the DCA and the events, and that is apparent to all who attend. On behalf of the Board of Directors, the staff, and the members, thank you!"

Darden took over the job in July 2009 with big shoes to fill following long-serving Executive VP Dennis Kennedy. Since then, Darden has overseen an era of exceptional growth and expanding influence, steered the DCA through challenging times, and prepared the foundation for a new generation of leaders to come. ▲

Committee News



2024 Convention

The DCA Board of Directors and the working committees met at the 2024 DCA Convention, Feb. 12-16 in Waimela, Hawaii.

2023 Board of Directors

The 2023 DCA Board of Directors met for the final time on Monday, Feb. 12. Board members reviewed the 2024 convention schedule, convention sponsorship, auction, and safety award recipients. The board also reviewed the results of the 2023 Impact Purchasing study that will be published in the 2023 DCA annual report, newly named *Connections*. Board members reviewed the status of the Strategic Vision membership initiative, "Retain, Regain, Recruit and Engage," the upcoming Leadership Development Programs (LDP), and the actions of the Future Leaders' committee.

DCA thanked outgoing board members Kevin Parker, InfraSource LLC; Kevin Michels, Michels Corp.; and Randy Rupp, Ditch Witch, for their time and contributions to the board.

Leadership Council

The Leadership Council also met Monday, Feb. 12. The council reviewed the actions of the Board of Directors at their earlier meeting. Each DCA working committee chairmen briefly outlined the topics their committee would discuss in their individual meetings.

The Leadership Council comprises the elected chairs and co-chairs of each of the committees and the DCA 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 Future Leaders committee had an open meeting on Monday, Feb. 12, with over 30 attendees. During the meeting, the attendees discussed various topics related to the pipeline industry.

- The committee chairs shared their experience with Young Pipeline Professionals (YPP) and highlighted the benefits of YPP membership, including free professional networking opportunities, training, discounts on courses, and possibilities for leadership. YPP membership is open to those under age 35 who are actively seeking employment in the pipeline industry. The age limit is an issue, but the committee may collaborate with YPP on some topics.
- Committee meeting attendees also discussed the LDP, which has sold out spring dates. Fall dates will be announced soon.
- A suggestion was made to have a "wisdom panel" where DCA members who have been attending the convention for years could share their insights.
- The group also discussed mentorship. It was suggested that first and second-time convention attendees should have a mentor to guide them through the events.
- The importance of working committees was highlighted, and attendees were encouraged to join sub-committees. Several suggestions were made to improve attendees' experiences, including creating a post-meeting survey for first-time attendees, having an event for second- and third-time attendees with the Board of Directors, and developing formal processes for chair and board selection.

The charge of the DCA 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, we aim to equip our members with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in their current roles and advance their careers, as well as advance the culture of the DCA.

Co-chairs are Elizabeth Michels of Michels Corp. and Sarah Mahlik of TT Technologies.

Membership Committee

The Membership committee met Tuesday, Feb. 13, and reviewed several items.

- **Membership summary** – Attendees reviewed the membership report presented to the Board of Directors. Since the October meeting, no new contractor members and three new associate members have joined DCA. One contractor and four associate members have been dropped, resigned, or merged with other members. As of the meeting, the current membership was 83 contractor members and 109 associate members.
- **Impact Purchasing Study** – The results of the 2023 Impact Purchasing Study were presented. It was noted that while 50% of contractor members completed the survey, the 50% that did not respond are the least active in the organization. The associate members emphasized the importance of this study and how it determines their level of involvement with meeting attendance, and financial donations through sponsorship and the auction.
- **New member mentorship** – Co-chair Brad Everett emailed all first-time attendees welcoming them to the 2024 convention and encouraging them to meet and ask questions of DCA members and staff.
- **Membership initiative** – Committee attendees reviewed the actions of the membership subcommittee to retain, regain, and actively solicit new members. The team has been focusing on DCA contractors who have become inactive or dropped their membership in the past year.
- **Exiting committee co-chair** – The committee thanks Brad Everett of Caterpillar for his three years of service as committee co-chair.

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. Scott Cooper of Caterpillar will begin a two-year term as co-chair. The other co-chair position is open and will be filled at the 2024 Mid Year membership committee meeting.

Workforce Development Committee

The Workforce Development Committee also met on Tuesday, Feb. 13. The meeting provided updates on various industry events and programs.

- **Leadership Development Programs (LDP)** – Attendees received an update on the 2024 LDP. Attendees were reminded that registrants must attend all dates to benefit fully from the program. Registration for the fall event will open in July.
- **2024 DCA & AGA Workshop** – The 2024 DCA & AGA Workshop, which will be held March 18-20, 2024, in Kansas City, Missouri, will feature a panel on Workforce Development – Leadership Development Training.
- **2024 SkillsUSA TechSPO** – The 2024 SkillsUSA TechSPO will be held June 24-28 in Atlanta. Anyone interested in hosting a booth should contact Julie Dufour of SkillsUSA at jdufour@skillsusa.org. Unlike previous years, DCA will not be reserving a block of booths. The best way to get involved with SkillsUSA and meet the students is through involvement at the state level.
- **CEWD Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DE&I) Forum** – This event, May 9-10 in Washington, D.C., will dive deep into the issues facing DE&I professionals in the energy industry today and bring together top-level practitioners to identify solutions. Workforce Development committee co-chair Stephanie Krabbe said most of InfraSource's customers participate in the conference and have representation there. It is an opportunity for contractors to interact with customer partners to solve workforce issues.

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 co-chair the committee.

Safety/Risk Management Committee

At the Tuesday, Feb. 13, Safety/Risk Management committee meeting, Jim Schauer and James Cross of *Coffee with Jim & James* and Energy WorldNet described how they launched their successful podcast series, which share stories from the energy industry, during the pandemic. The series is in its fifth season, with 200 episodes and 600-plus guests. During the DCA convention, Schauer and Cross interviewed Association members for upcoming episodes.

Registration is now open for the 2024 Safety Congress, April 22-24 at the InterContinental Hotel, in Kansas City, Missouri. The Safety Director and Safety Person of the Year awards will be announced at the Safety Congress.

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Nomination forms have been sent to DCA contractors. Eric Egelhoff of InfraSource and Ileah Henchel of Precision Pipeline WI are co-chairing the 2024 event.

The 2023 Arthur Everham Safety Awards were given out at the DCA Business Session held earlier in the afternoon. A list of the Everham Safety Award recipients is on page 11.

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 oversees the Arthur T. Everham Safety Award and the Annual Safety Congress. Randy Bunch of Eastern Utilities Services and Caleb Scheve of Price Gregory Int'l are co-chairs.

Government Relations Committee

The Government Relations committee received updates on several pertinent topics at their Thursday, Feb. 15, meeting. For more details about government relations topics, see the DCA Insights section of the *DCA News*.

- **PIPES Act** – The Pipeline Safety Reauthorization is a top priority for the DCA this year, with legislation being shared among three committees in the House and Senate. The “PIPES Act” approved by the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee includes numerous provisions aimed at enhancing damage prevention programs, including the marking of lines and laterals, training for excavators, and encouraging the use of GIS. The bill has not moved out of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, which includes additional provisions related to project permit reform and natural gas access.
- **GIS mapping** – DCA is leading a coalition of contractors, engineers, manufacturers, and labor unions in supporting legislation to promote GIS mapping.
- **Regional fly-ins** – The DCA has established five regional teams that will hold Washington “fly-in” events to advocate for PIPES Act provisions for 2024. Fly-in events in the Midwest, Northeast, Southeast, Southwest, and Western regions have been scheduled, and DCA members are lined up to participate.
- **Infrastructure Protection Coalition (IPC)** – The IPC 2021 national study found that inefficiencies in the damage prevention process result in an annual loss of \$61 billion. The group provided 13 national recommendations to address those inefficiencies. DCA will continue to work as an active IPC member to address these inefficiencies.

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 co-chairs are Andy Miller of Alex E. Paris Contracting and Brad Burris of National Equipment Dealers.

Trenchless Committee

The Trenchless committee's Feb. 15 meeting featured a speaker presentation and updates on several items.

- **Hawaii Gas presentation** – Kevin Nishimura, Vice President of Operations for Hawaii Gas, spoke about the state of the natural gas industry in Hawaii, including hydrogen blending. He also discussed trenchless activities at Hawaii Gas.
- **Common Ground Alliance (CGA)/Damage Prevention Institute (DPI) update** – DPI Vice President Sam Hall will discuss CGA's Next Practices Initiative at the DCA & AGA Workshop, March 18-20, in Kansas City, Missouri.
- **NASTT No-Dig** – The NASTT No-Dig Show is the largest trenchless technology conference in North America, where thousands of professionals attend to learn new methods and techniques that will save money and improve infrastructure. The 2024 trade show and conference, April 14-18, in Providence, Rhode Island, will provide an opportunity to learn methods in technical sessions, network with peers and talk to vendors during exhibit hall hours. Registration is open for the event.
- **NASTT HDD Good Practices Guidelines** – The updated HDD Good Practices Guidelines includes many items requested by DCA members. Digital and printed copies are available.

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. Co-chairs are Nate Eastway of Gabe's Construction Co. and Alan Goodman of HammerHead Trenchless.

2024 Board of Directors

The 2024 DCA Board of Directors held their first meeting Friday, Feb. 16. President Mark Albert of AGI Construction welcomed new board members: Director at Large Nate Eastway of Gabe's Construction; Directors Dan Britz, Michels Utility Services; Stephanie Krabbe, InfraSource; and Andy Miller, Alex E. Paris Contracting; Past President Director Mike Hickey, The Hallen Construction Co; and Junior Associate Member Director Mike James of ISCO Industries.

Board members received updates on and discussed the 2024 DCA budget, the 2024 calendar of events, improvements to the DCA convention and committee meeting structures, equipment study and member interaction. The directors also discussed their 2024 goals and objectives, including getting more of the smaller contractors to join given the number of contractors being rolled up, and getting the younger employees of member companies involved with the DCA.

The next board of directors, leadership council, and committee meetings will be in conjunction with the 2024 DCA Mid Year Meeting, July 14-17, Fairmont Chateau Whistler in Whistler, British Columbia, Canada. ▲

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

DCA Changes the Structure of the Working Committees to Engage More Members

Whenever you attend a DCA meeting, one of the first things you notice is that the schedule is divided up mostly by a series of committee meetings. Many new members, along with others who don't often get to attend, have questions about the committees - what are they, what do they do, who can be on them, how much work is involved? Understanding the committees is crucial for becoming a productive member, doing the work of the DCA, and moving up into leadership roles.

Following much discussion at the Hawaii Convention and afterwards, the DCA staff and committee chairs met to review the committees and do some restructuring to help more members get active and engaged in the operations of DCA.

This article is your guide to the committees and how they work.

What are the committees?

DCA uses what is known as the working committee structure to advance the strategic goals of the DCA and solve problems facing the natural gas distribution industry. The working committee structure allows the DCA to provide subject matter expertise, identify issues confronting the industry, and disseminate information to the association membership. The DCA Board of Directors, Leadership Council, or senior staff can propose a committee, provided there is a purpose for its existence and a written charter that includes goals and objectives.

Currently the DCA Board of Directors has seven chartered working committees:

- **Membership & Engagement** – The mission of the Membership & Engagement Committee is to actively solicit and evaluate potential DCA contractor and associate members and make recommendations on member programs and awards. Additionally, it works to ensure new members are integrated into the association and getting value from their membership and attendance at the conferences.
- **Safety & Risk Management** – The mission of this committee is to review safety related information provided by DCA members/associates and hold open discussions at meetings on safe jobsite practices. This committee oversees the Arthur T. Everham Safety Award and assists with the Safety Director and Safety Person of the Year Awards and the annual Safety Congress.

- **Trenchless & HDD** – The purpose of the Trenchless & HDD Committee is to identify, discuss, and work toward resolutions of member issues and needs related to trenchless construction. It also promotes the use of trenchless technology to contractors, customers, and governing agencies through education and sharing safe, environmentally friendly, state of the art technology, and best practices for underground infrastructure installation worldwide.
- **Government Relations** – This committee targets specific regulatory and legislative items and reports their findings through the *Insights* section of the *DCA News* and DCA websites. It presents to the Board of Directors those issues it believes our members would benefit from through advocacy for or against.
- **Workforce Development** – This committee utilizes DCA resources, relationships, and membership to execute multiple initiatives that help promote, recruit, and retain the best possible talent for DCA contractor and associate members.
- **Innovation & Technology** – This new committee is dedicated to fostering the integration and advancement of technology within the distribution contracting industry. The committee aims to explore, evaluate, and implement cutting-edge technologies to enhance efficiency, safety, and sustainability across our member organizations.
- **Future Leaders** – The mission of the DCA 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, it aims to equip members with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in their current roles and advance their careers, as well as to advance the culture of the DCA. Interested members should be young professionals within their company that are committed to moving up in leadership positions within their employer and the DCA.

What do the committees do?

DCA is restructuring its working committees, which are made up of members responsible for overseeing and participating in the activities associated with their specific committee on behalf of the organization. The committees meet regularly to identify and address key

(continued on pg.16)

issues and concerns within their scope of responsibility. At the Mid Year Meeting, Fall Meeting, and at least one virtual meeting, the committees engage in discussions with fellow members, industry speakers and experts to gain insight to help them make informed decisions. The committees will present a report to the general membership at the Annual Convention. The committee works diligently to ensure that all actions proposed align with DCA's vision, mission, and strategic goals.

Each working committee may determine if a sub-committee is required to best address a given topic. Sub-committees may be composed of DCA members and are not restricted by number or company affiliation.

How are the committees organized?

Committee makeup – Each committee should have a broad representation of the DCA membership. Working committees should have a minimum of ten (10) and maximum of twenty (20) committee members. Ideally, each company should have only one representative on each committee, but no more than two are permitted. The committee member's seat is based on the qualifications of the individual, not a representation of a company, i.e., it is John Doe of member company, not member company represented by John Doe.

The goal of each committee is to have an even balance between contractors and associates, with the exception of the Safety (majority of contractors) and Membership (majority of associates) committees.

Committee leadership – Each working committee has a Committee Chair (contractor member) and Co-Chair (associate member nominated and approved by the committee membership). There are two exceptions: the Safety & Risk Management chair and co-chair should both be contractor members, and the Membership & Engagement Committee chair and co-chairs should both be associate members.

All committee chairs serve for a three-year term.

The chairs appoint a secretary from the committee membership who will then be responsible for taking meeting minutes. The secretary can be either a contractor or associate and may be considered for a chair position upon the end of the chair's term.

To broaden leadership opportunities within the DCA, Board members are not eligible to serve as working committee chairs. However, they may serve as a duly appointed member or non-voting advisor to the committees.

Committee leadership will update the Board of Directors during the Leadership Council Meeting at the Annual Convention and Mid-Year Meeting, describing current and future goals; purpose and impact of the goals for DCA, members, and/or the industry; and effectiveness of the goals.

DCA staff support – The DCA Executive Vice President designates a staff liaison for each committee. The staff liaison facilitates committee meetings, allocates DCA resources, and serves as the general business administrator for the committee.

How do you join a committee?

Annually, the chairs and DCA leadership will 1) gauge the interest of each member to renew membership for an additional term and 2) evaluate the participation and contribution quality of each member.

Timing of committee leadership and membership selection:

- **Mid Year** – Request for interest in being on a committee, nominations to serve.
- **Fall Meeting** – Selection to the committee.
- **Convention** – Handoff to new leadership at the end of the committee meeting at the convention. Sitting chairs (not secretaries or elected future chairs) attend the Leadership Council Meeting and Leadership Lunch.

Members of a working committee service a 2-year term. Individuals may renew their membership for up to three (3) terms or six (6) years, including time served as a chair if applicable, after which they shall yield their seat to a new member.

When do the committees meet?

The working committees meet formally for 45 minutes to one hour at least four times per year — three in conjunction with the DCA meetings, plus at least one virtual meeting. A majority of sitting members of the committee, including the chairs, will constitute a quorum to make decisions. Committee members are expected to participate in at least 75% of the scheduled meetings, either in person or virtually.

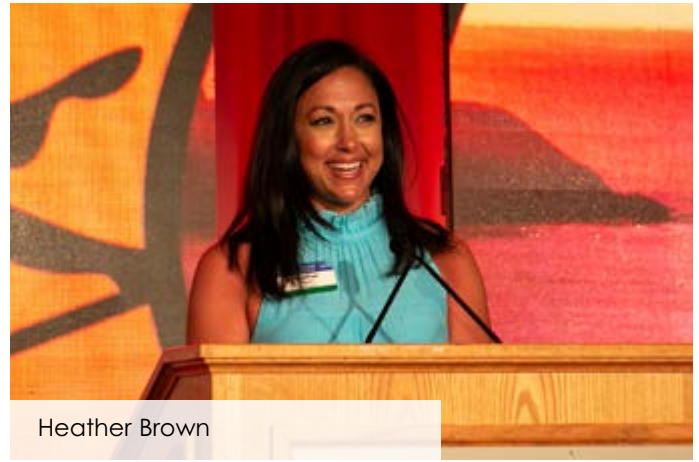
The chairs should attend **all** committee meetings — particularly the Annual Convention — in order to ensure alignment with DCA priorities and attendance at the Leadership Council Meeting (in conjunction with the Board of Directors Meeting).

How much time do members spend working on committees?

In addition to attending the required three out of four annual committee meetings (totaling three to four hours), committee members can typically expect to spend around 10 additional hours per year working on committee projects and assignments such as creating new content/documents, attending events, and other volunteer work. ▲



Elizabeth Michels



Heather Brown

DCA-Dale R. Michels Scholarship Recipients Announced

Eleven students received a financial boost when they were selected by the scholarship committee as recipients of the 2024-25 DCA-Dale R. Michels Endowed Scholarship. The scholarship was founded in 1998 in honor of DCA Honorary Member and Past President Dale R. Michels from the proceeds of the DCA's Annual Auction.

The committee is pleased to announce that with DCA members' generous support of the DCA auctions, \$105,000 in scholarships have been awarded to students starting or returning to college.

The recipients for the 2024-25 academic year are:

- Cameron Adams, National Equipment Dealers
- Ashlyn Clarke, Miller Electric Mfg.
- Colin Everett, Caterpillar, Inc.
- Matthew Finley, K. R. Swerdfeger Construction, LLC
- Alanna Fitzgerald, Hallen Construction Co., Inc.

- Ian Glashagel, Michels Corporation
- Andrew Goodwin, Michels Utility Services Inc.
- Rowan Hayes, Grace Industries LLC
- Britta Pohlman, Mears Group, Inc.
- Shawn Roberts, Miller Pipeline
- Daniella Villalobos, Grace Industries LLC

The 2024 DCA-Dale R. Michels Scholarship committee comprised DCA President Ray Swerdfeger, K.R. Swerdfeger Construction Inc.; DCA Treasurer Dan Carson, Carson Corp.; Past President Director Kevin Michels, Michels Corp.; Associate Member Director Randy Rupp, Ditch Witch; Linda Birkeland, The Hallen Construction Co. Inc.; Remi Coolsaet, R.L. Coolsaet Construction Co.; Mike James, ISCO Industries; Chad Lindsley, United Rentals; Luke Litteken, Mears Group Inc.; and Josh Purrenhage, Otis Minnesota Services LLC. ▲

DCA-Curtis Allen Scholarship Recipients Announced

Eight students received the DCA-Curtis Allen Scholarship. The scholarship was founded in 2010 in honor of Curtis Allen and emphasis is given to students entering a vocational, trade, or technical school. The scholarship receives funding from the DCA auctions and Halliburton.

The recipients for the 2024-25 academic year are:

- Edmund Bentley, Michels Corporation
- Tanner Moles, Ditch Witch

- Blake Nordlund, Michels Utility Services Inc.
- Caden Schwerdfeger, H.L. Chapman Pipeline Construction Inc.
- Carston Sechser, Bentonite Performance Minerals LLC
- Mackenza Spangler, ECI Contracting
- Josiah Vos, Vermeer Corporation
- Lawton Webb, InterCon Construction, Inc. ▲









Insights



In mid-March, during what they referred to as “energy week,” House Republicans pushed legislation to increase access to America’s natural gas and oil resources, strengthen energy infrastructure, and repeal taxes on energy production. This provided ample opportunity to attack President Biden’s “radical, anti-energy agenda” by approving bills intended to make it easier to build energy projects and curb legal challenges from environmental groups.

The sweeping legislative package includes:

- Legislation that would repeal the Inflation Reduction Act’s greenhouse gas reduction fund, which doles out grants for work against climate change.
- The “Protecting American Energy Production Act,” which would prohibit a moratorium on hydraulic fracturing for natural gas and oil.
- The “Restoring American Energy Dominance Act,” which would block any Bureau of Land Management moves to increase royalty rates for oil companies drilling on public lands.

- A House Resolution to denounce “the harmful, anti-American energy policies of the Biden administration.”

Impacts on Clean Water Act

The House also debated the “Creating Confidence in Clean Water Permitting Act,” a package of bills from the Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee. This bill would facilitate the Army Corp of Engineers’ requirements for pipeline construction, restrict EPA’s ability to override permits, shrink timelines for project opponents to challenge them, and shield industrial facilities from certain liabilities not specifically regulated under their existing water permits. The Army Corps would also be able to reissue wetlands permits for energy projects without considering certain impacts under the Endangered Species Act.

The bill incorporates five standalone bills introduced earlier this year in the T&I Committee, which were approved but stiffly opposed by Democrats, who consider the Clean Water Act (CWA) provisions inappropriate for permit negotiations.

"The Clean Water Act and clean water support healthy communities and industries across the United States, from farming to fishing to manufacturing," said T&I Committee Chair Sam Graves (R-Mo.). "Unfortunately, we've seen this law weaponized over the years to delay permits and even prevent critical infrastructure and energy projects from moving forward."

Republicans backing the changes say they are necessary to cut red tape and help clarify the scope of the CWA. Meanwhile, Democrats consider the package a giveaway to industries that pollute the nation's waterways.

While "energy week" provided pro-energy lawmakers the opportunity to highlight the incredible differences between Democratic and Republican approaches to strengthening "America's Energy Future," many of the provisions in the House bill don't stand much of a chance in the Democrat-controlled Senate, especially during an election year like no other in recent memory.

Pipeline Safety Debate Brings Differing Approaches

DCA continues to work with several industry organizations to advance legislation that would reauthorize the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA), which regulates natural gas and liquid energy pipelines across the U.S. While pipeline safety legislation is traditionally bipartisan, disputes related to climate change, project permitting reform, and consumer fuel choice are now polarizing the issue, thereby hindering its progress.

The last pipeline safety reauthorization bill enacted, known as the "PIPES Act of 2020," changed the game by mandating PHMSA to require the development of advanced leak detection programs capable of identifying, locating, and categorizing natural gas leaks from pipeline infrastructure for timely repair. Fierce debate raged over whether and how environmental goals, such as reducing methane emissions, should be part of the pipeline safety conversation. This fight ended up impeding final passage of the PIPES Act of 2020 for almost a year. Lawmakers were at odds on this issue, to say the least.

Enactment of the 2020 PIPES Act resulted in federal guidance, and PHMSA regulatory actions have led to proposed requirements aimed at:

- Strengthening leakage survey and patrolling requirements by increasing the frequency of such surveys and requiring use of advanced leak detection technology.
- Reducing the volume of gas released because of unintentional emissions from leaks and equipment failures.
- Minimizing intentional releases from venting and flaring.

- Establishing explicit criteria and timeframes for the repair of leaks that pose a risk to public safety or the environment.

The fight over emissions reduction as a legitimate pipeline safety issue has now become a main focus of debate. Climate issues are now a required consideration of PHMSA, and Republicans are doing everything possible to redirect the focus from environmental concerns to traditional safety issues.

In March, Republican leaders of the House Energy and Commerce (E&C) Committee marked up and approved their own version of pipeline safety reauthorization legislation. The Pipeline Safety, Modernization, and Expansion Act of 2024 (HR 7655) includes many of the provisions contained in the T&I bill as well as several controversial topics that are considered inappropriate by most Democrats to be included in a pipeline safety bill.

For example, the HR 7655 would prohibit a state or municipality from banning the transportation of any energy source, including natural gas or liquid fuels, using a pipeline regulated by PHMSA. While DCA fully supports any and all efforts to protect consumer fuel choice, this is considered 'dead on arrival' by most Democrats. Similarly, the bill would authorize the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to issue any federal permits required for constructing, repairing, modifying, or maintaining an existing or new pipeline within an existing right-of-way. Both are almost universally supported by the natural gas industry, but energy proponents should not be surprised if these pro-energy provisions do not make it into a final pipeline safety bill.

Moving the Needle on State Damage Prevention

DCA has pushed for improved mapping of underground facilities for a long time, and the Association is now leading the construction industry in lobbying to include language in this pipeline safety reauthorization that would improve state damage prevention programs. Specifically, both House bills under consideration now address the enduring problem associated with damages to underground facilities during excavation.

The excavation construction industry has long advocated for policy that supports shared responsibility in damage prevention, meaning that the responsibilities of both excavators and gas pipeline operators (as well as facility operators in other underground facility markets) are considered equally important. The bottom line is that federal policy should reflect that.

PHMSA offers grant dollars for developing and improving state damage prevention programs, traditionally based on criteria related to public education

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and awareness, training, balanced enforcement, effective benchmarking, and other factors. This language would add to that criterion, requiring states to demonstrate that they have adopted or can show progress toward adoptions of several leading practices in their damage prevention programs as part of the criteria considered when states apply for PHMSA damage prevention grant dollars.

The leading practices include (but are not limited to):

- Examining and limiting exemptions, including municipal exemptions.
- Requiring marking of all lines and laterals, including sewer lines and laterals.
- Encouraging training for locate professionals.
- Applying damage prevention requirements to other underground infrastructure markets.
- Encouraging the use of technologies to locate underground facilities, such as geographic information systems (GIS), which offer the most detailed and prolific pipeline mapping available.

These provisions will undoubtedly improve the damage prevention process. At a time when the Common Ground Alliance (CGA) is taking a hard look at the need for improved underground facility mapping, address overloading facility locators with unrealistic expectations, and eliminate exemptions to the 811 process, this year's pipeline safety debate could considerably improve pipeline safety.

Recognizing the increased attention to the benefits offered by GIS in this pipeline safety reauthorization, DCA called on industry allies to provide a united front, encouraging language that would lean on underground facility operators to move toward superior digital (GIS) mapping. In letters of support for both House bills just prior to consideration by the full T&I Committee, an ad hoc coalition of construction organizations stated that "[p]roviding excavators with well-contrived designs that avoid or mitigate utility conflicts along with standardized digital data on utility infrastructure enables better construction planning and execution by leveraging virtual design and construction technologies that eliminate potential for damages. A fundamental need is to document utilities properly and in a standardized fashion at the time of installation."

The letter was signed onto by associations representing excavation contractors, operators, engineers, manufacturers, service providers, and labor unions. Specifically, organizations signing on these letters included:

- Association of Equipment Manufacturers
- American Society of Civil Engineers
- Distribution Contractors Association
- Laborers' International Union of North America
- Pipeline Open Data Standard Association
- Plastics Pipe Institute
- United Association of Union Plumbers and Pipefitters

In other words, national groups representing all key damage prevention stakeholders are interested in improving excavation damage prevention through movement toward superior GIS mapping of underground facilities.

Pipeline operators, and those who operate any underground facility for that matter, need to "up their game" when it comes to mapping, locating, and marking their facilities. While there is a long way to go before reaching any consensus on most pipeline safety issues, it has been encouraging to see stakeholders in many industries support future mapping of subsurface infrastructure.

Other beneficial, pro-energy issues like "fuel choice" policy and infrastructure project permit reform are not likely to survive in a final pipeline safety bill, but this pipeline safety debate is providing ample opportunity to bring them up. Industry should be vocal about all these issues, while understanding the need to keep our eye on the prize and support a final pipeline safety bill that improves legitimate pipeline safety issues, especially related to underground facility damage prevention.

DCA and our allies are pushing to get a final bill to the House floor, while encouraging the Senate to introduce and advance its own pipeline safety legislation. The bottom line is that considerable work remains to be done to get a pipeline safety bill across the finish line in what is turning out to be contentious debate during a hostile presidential election year. ▲



Eben M. Wyman

Principal

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Calendar

2024 & 2025 DCA & Industry Events

2024

APRIL 29 - MAY 2

AGA 2024 Operations Conference
Hyatt Regency Seattle
Seattle, Washington
www.aga.org

MAY 12-16

Pipe Line Contractors Association of Canada
(PLCAC) Convention
Sheraton Fallsview
Niagara Falls, Ontario
Canada
www.pipeline.ca

JUNE 24-28

SkillsUSA TechSPO
Georgia World Congress Center
Atlanta, Georgia
www.nlsc.skillsusa.org

JULY 14-17 (NEW DATES)

DCA Mid Year Meeting
Fairmont Chateau Whistler
Whistler, British Columbia
www.dcaweb.org

SEPTEMBER 9-13

IPLOCA 2024 Convention
TBA
Sorrento, Italy

SEPTEMBER 30 - OCTOBER 2

DCA Leadership Development Conference -
Session 1
Hyatt Regency DFW International Airport
Dallas, Texas
www.dcaweb.org

2024 (cont.)

SEPTEMBER 30 - OCTOBER 2

DCA Leadership Development Conference -
Session 1
Hyatt Regency DFW International Airport
Dallas, Texas
www.dcaweb.org

OCTOBER 23-25

DCA Fall Meeting
Hilton Park Plaza
Boston, Massachusetts
www.dcaweb.org

OCTOBER 28-30

DCA Leadership Development Conference -
Session 2
Hyatt Regency DFW International Airport
Dallas, Texas
www.dcaweb.org

2025

FEBRUARY 4-8

2025 PLCA Convention
Marriott Marco Island
Marco Island, Florida
www.plca.org

FEBRUARY 24 - MARCH 1

DCA 2025 Annual Convention
Fairmont Scottsdale Princess
Scottsdale,, Arizona
www.dcaweb.org

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



United Rentals

United Rentals Recognized for Achievements in Veteran Career Development

United Rentals, Inc. is the recipient of three awards for veteran career development: the 2023 HIRE Vets Medallion Award, 2024 Military Friendly Employer, Gold, and 2023 Military Times Best for Vets.

The U.S. Department of Labor's 2023 HIRE Vets Medallion Award honors United Rentals' initiatives in recruiting, employing, and retaining veterans. United Rentals met award criteria and "demonstrated both patriotism and recognition of values veterans bring to the workplace," according to the Department of Labor.

2024 Military Friendly Employer, Gold, is designated for employers setting an example with military and veteran programs and initiatives. Companies are assessed on various criteria such as veteran hiring, retention and career advancement. The Military Friendly program, operated by VIQTORY, creates civilian opportunities for veterans.

2023 Military Times Best for Vets highlights efforts to recruit, retain and develop current and former service members and support military spouses and caregivers. To determine award winners, *Military Times* evaluates companies in the areas of most significant importance.

United Rentals has a long-standing commitment to supporting veterans in their transition into the workforce. A significant number of the United Rentals team has a military background, and the company remains focused on hiring, retaining and advancing the careers of veterans.

"United Rentals has a strong focus on veterans because we believe individuals with military backgrounds align with our company's values of strong leadership, teamwork, discipline, diversity and work ethic," said Craig Pintoff, executive vice president and chief administrative officer, United Rentals. "These awards reflect our ongoing commitment to helping veterans make their careers at United Rentals and to joining us in working with our customers to build a better future."



Caterpillar

Caterpillar Named to Barron's List Of 100 Most Sustainable U.S. Companies

Caterpillar was recently named to *Barron's* 100 Most Sustainable U.S. Companies list for the first time.

Caterpillar debuted on the list at number 74. *Barron's* worked with Calvert Research and Management to look at 230 ESG (environmental, social, and governance) metrics of the 1,000 largest publicly traded U.S. companies by market cap. This is *Barron's* sixth year creating the list.

Among other reasons, Caterpillar was added to the list for its contribution to the circular economy – keeping more products and materials in use to reduce waste and emissions – led by the company's Cat Reman team.

Cat Reman focuses on remanufacturing, which takes components that would otherwise be scrapped and turns them into like-new condition. The process decreases the need for raw materials, water, and energy associated with producing new parts, ultimately reducing the company's environmental impact and helping customers meet their sustainability-related goals.



Vermeer Midwest Celebrates Its Pinnacle Award Win for 2023

Vermeer Midwest has received the Vermeer Pinnacle designation in recognition of providing a superior experience for customers.

Vermeer Corporation presents its Pinnacle awards annually for performance in sales and marketing, providing excellent aftermarket support, and training employees.

"As a Vermeer dealer, to win the Pinnacle award truly means that you are among the best of what's an already fantastic network of global dealers," said Nathan Guess, vice president of global distribution. "Providing an exceptional customer experience and operating a progressive and expanding business are hallmarks achieved by Pinnacle award-winning dealers."



Volvo CE Celebrates DD25 Electric Compactor and New Training Facility

Volvo Construction Equipment, in partnership with the Association of Equipment Manufacturers, recently hosted U.S. Representative John Joyce to celebrate the company's first electric asphalt compactor, which was designed and is produced at its Shippensburg, Pennsylvania, facility.

The DD25 electric compactor highlights the equipment manufacturing industry's ongoing commitment to sustainability.

Rep. Joyce noted the positive impact it will have on the local economy in bringing more high-paying jobs to the area.

As part of the event, Volvo CE held a ribbon-cutting for the company's new technical training center. Located at the Shippensburg campus, the facility will expand the company's capacity and offerings for hands-on training and continuing education through virtual platforms.



Deere Joins AI Safety Consortium

Deere has joined the newly established U.S. Artificial Intelligence Safety Institute Consortium (AISIC). The consortium's primary goal will be to ensure that safe and trustworthy AI systems are developed effectively. The National Institute of Standards and Technology, known for its history of practical measurement and standards-oriented solutions, created this consortium to bring numerous public and private sectors to work together to build and mature a measurement science for trustworthy and responsible AI.

"We're looking forward to helping shape the development of standards, test methods, and safe practices of AI systems," said Jahmy Hindman, Senior Vice President and Chief Technology Officer at John Deere. "Since our customers utilize technology on their farms and jobsites, we remain committed to ensuring that AI systems will continue to improve their livelihoods."

Deere along with other members of the consortium will be contributing their technical expertise to a series of working groups that will develop new guidelines, tools, methods, protocols, and best practices to facilitate the evolution of industry standards for developing or deploying AI in safe, secure, and trustworthy ways.

(continued on pg. 28)



"GTS and GROEBNER have many synergies that make this purchase a natural fit for our organization," says Carissa Skorzewski, President & CEO of GROEBNER. "Our team focuses every day on providing safe, reliable products, training, and services. This service expansion will allow us to best support our customers with their ever-changing needs."

GTS specializes in many key areas that support GROEBNER's work, including the maintenance, inspection, calibration, and repair of PE fusion equipment and tools, as well as OQ training on PE fusion equipment. This purchase will now allow GROEBNER to offer these services in-house at its four locations as well as onsite with the customer.

GROEBNER Announces Purchase of GTS

GROEBNER has announced its purchase of GTS, a Division of DUSA. The two companies have been working together for years with GTS as the service provider supporting GROEBNER with many of their customers' service needs.

(continued on pg. 30)

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Reed City, MI 49677
(800) 832-2297
www.uscco.com

Drew Wheatlake, Chairman & CEO
Evan Hamilton, Director of Natural Gas Operations;
evan_hamilton@uscco.com

Precision Pipeline LLC - OH

10 Whiley Rd.
Lancaster, OH 43130
(440) 290-4907
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Matt Coyne, Vice President of Operations;
mcoyne@precisionpipelineco.com

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

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(877) 322-3437
www.badgerinc.com

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Christopher Declue, National Accounts Manager;
cdeclue@badgerinc.com

National Center for Construction Education & Research (NCCER)

13614 Progress Blvd.
Alachua, FL 32615
(386) 518-6902
www.nccer.org

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Jennifer Wilkerson, Vice President
Lisa Strite, Chief Learning Officer
Justin Saylor, Chief Marketing Officer
Mandy Beaulieu, Senior Product Manager – Pipeline;
mbeaulieu@nccer.org



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Ring-O-Matic

Ring-O-Matic CEO Named 2025 Utility Expo Chair

The Utility Expo announced that Brian Metcalf, CEO of Ring-O-Matic, has been named show chair for the 2025 show. He will lead the exhibitions management committee, a volunteer group of utility construction industry executives for overall show planning.

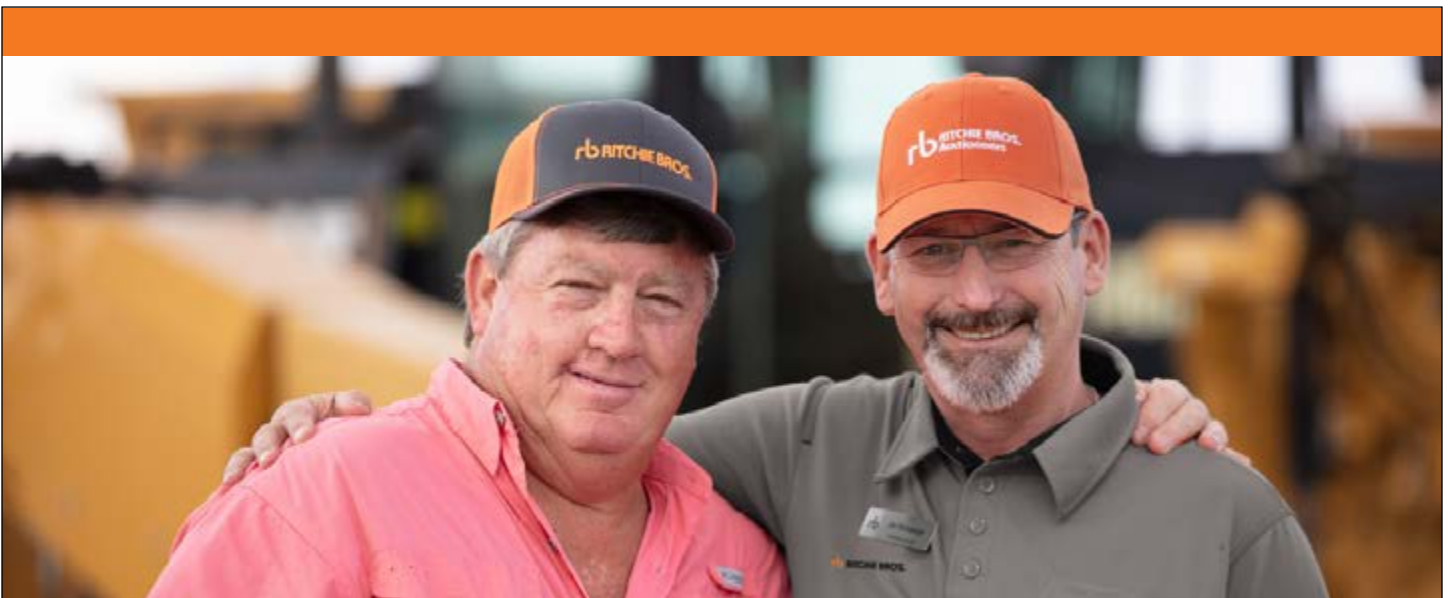
The Utility Expo, named the #1 trade show in the utility industry, returned in 2023 with record-setting attendance. Over 21,000 utility construction professionals from all 50 states, as well as 60 counties, attended the show in

Louisville, Kentucky. Utility Expo returns to the Kentucky Exposition Center in October 2025.

"AEM is delighted to have Brian as the new chair for the 2025 Utility Expo," said Utility Show Director Brianne Somers. "His experience and leadership will play a key role in our team executing the vision we have for our next show. We look forward to seeing what Brian and the rest of the management committee achieve."

Brian started his career in central Iowa farming and is a 1989 graduate of Drake University with a bachelor's degree in accounting and finance. He joined Ring-O-Matic in 2015 and purchased the business in December of 2017. Over the last 8 years, he has grown the company into a major supplier and manufacturer of vacuum excavation equipment, serving the underground utility contractor market segments, soft excavation contractors and the general needs of safe digging practices. Ring-O-Matic sells through over 85 dealership locations between North America and service centers internationally.

The Utility Expo returns to Louisville and the Kentucky Exposition Center Oct. 7-9, 2025. Keep up to date on the show and the latest on the utility construction industry at TheUtilityExpo.com. ▲



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