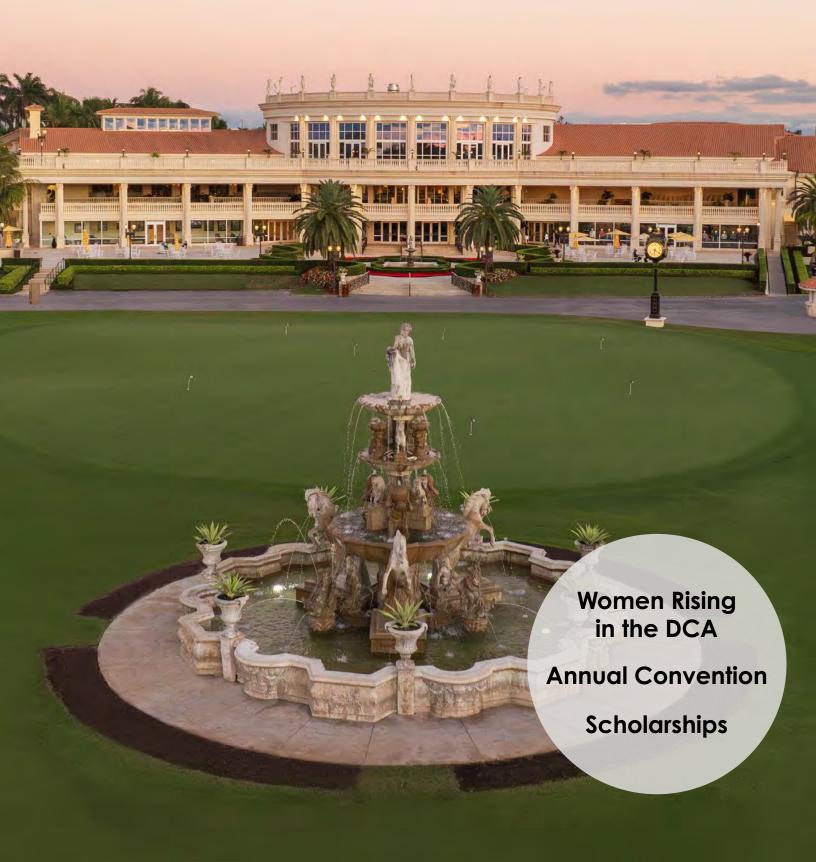
THE BI-MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE DISTRIBUTION CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION



SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2025





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Industry News

Women Rising in the DCA - Part II



Last summer, we interviewed four women who were making waves in DCA leadership, recognizing the first time in the organization's history that two women served on the Board of Directors together.

These women, who represented the vanguard of a changing era in the construction industry, described their pathways to authority in the long male-dominated field.

We couldn't interview all our newsmakers then, and in the year since, we've seen even more women stepping to the fore in their respective companies and the DCA. As their presence continues to grow, the DCA is proud to present five more women who are flourishing in the industry:

 Anna Hillebrandt – President and part-owner of InterCon Construction



- Elizabeth Michels Risk manager at Michels Corp., third-generation DCA member
- Jessica Fox Business manager at Wright Traffic Control (WTC)
- Michelle Keeler General manager for Aecon Utilities
- Tracy Lipinski Safety director at MP Technologies, winner of the DCA 2024 Safety Director of the Year award (first woman to receive this recognition)

What stands out most as we interview more women in leadership roles is the emergence of encouraging patterns in the industry and across the continent: Barriers to entry for women in construction aren't just falling right now but have been for some time. In an industry looking to bring new blood into the workforce, this trend points to significant opportunity for women in careers they once might have ruled out.

Stepping Through the Door

In our previous installment, we found that the women we interviewed came into the construction industry in one of two primary ways. Either they were born into it, or they got their starts in completely different professions. The same held true for this group.

Michels is part of the third generation of her family to work at Michels Corp.

"I started working here in my summers when I was about 12-13 years old," she said. "Child labor laws are a little loose when you're family. I spent a lot of my summers working in clerical office-type positions. As I got into more of an internship-type role, I was actually working with our marketing group."

When we asked what made her stick with the family business when she had the chance to explore other opportunities, Michels had a ready answer.

"We'd go out on job site visits and get to see the work that was being performed — like, boots on the ground out there for a week at a time — and that really resonated with me. Before that, it was kind of more abstract and hypothetical, but seeing the work performed, it got me excited about what we do, got me a little bit nerdy about it as well. I got to enjoy and understand the importance of the company. There are a lot of family members who have chosen not to join the company, which is fine, but I decided for myself that I've enjoyed construction; I've enjoyed the people. I enjoy the general can-do attitude of, 'we'll figure it out' and 'it is what it is.' So I decided that that was the path I wanted to go."

Hillebrandt's path to becoming part-owner of InterCon was slightly less direct. Her father had worked for the

(continued on pg. 06)





company since its founding in 1984, steadily working his way up the career ladder. Her mother was an entrepreneur who built and managed rental properties that Hillebrandt and her brothers often worked at while growing up. Hillebrandt began working part-time for InterCon during college and became full-time soon after, as did her brothers. Working around family was as natural as breathing. When the company was put up for sale in 2011, she was well-prepared to find the right partners and make a bid. One partner's wife was the daughter of the original owners, bringing the business back full circle.

Keeler's entry into construction started as more of a sideways move. She had already made a career in sales and sales management when the chance to join Aecon's team came knocking. Keeler was familiar with the company through friends who worked there, and she was excited about the opportunity. It turned out to be the right move. During the last 12 years, Keeler worked her way up from customer service to project coordinator, assistant superintendent, superintendent, operations manager, and her current role: general manager.

Fox and Lipinski, on the other hand, came from very different worlds. Fox, who has a degree in psychology, started her career working with children with disabilities. Finding herself at odds with some of the requirements of that work, she turned to the administrative side and found it much more fulfilling to her nature as an organizer. She gained more administrative experience working in senior care before becoming business manager for start-up Wright Traffic Control, where her organizational talents were truly given a chance to thrive.

Lipinski spent five years as a dietitian before deciding that healthcare just wasn't where she wanted to be. Following her interest in construction, she joined a small plumbing and heating contractor, where she received her first exposure to promoting safety as a job. After taking several years off to start a family, she joined MP Technologies in payroll, then transitioned to human resources before beginning her current position as a safety professional.

Working Up the Ladder

Even as these women described the challenges they faced as females in construction, encouraging signs began to emerge. Whereas the women we initially featured had all experienced some form of sexist assumptions or dismissal earlier in their careers, several in this group said they were treated equitably from early on. That is not to say, however, that they weren't aware of the potential for bias.

"I won't say that I've had any major struggles," Fox told us. "I think that, today, men appreciate the knowledge that I have, at least in the construction world. And I made sure to educate myself so that was always the case. I think that's the key component to being a female in construction; you have to educate yourself on industry knowledge and then at the task that you're given."

Lipinski felt similarly. "I don't think I can say I've been treated as one of the guys, but I don't ever feel I've been treated at a disadvantage. I've always felt very respected here at MP by the leadership team that we have all the way up to our president, who was the one who offered me the position. And so just to have his confidence in my ability to lead and being an overall support to me, that's really helped my growth."

In our first feature about women leaders in the industry, we pointed out that each interviewee had been assumed to be "the wife" of a DCA member, rather than a company representative in their own right. Hillebrandt said she empathizes with that. "I think a lot of people





would just turn to look at either one of my business partners or somebody else rather than talking to me."

However, she noted, "that does not happen at all anymore."

Michels emphasized that her commitment to taking on a leadership role in the family business did not guarantee an easy path to the top. "Being a family member got me a job at the company, but nobody was going to promote me because of who I was. I knew I needed to do the work and earn it, just like everybody else. I took every job and every task as an opportunity to do well and earn respect so I would get offered more opportunities. I'm pretty type A, so it was easy for me to want to succeed and do well. I wouldn't necessarily say that I've had challenges being a woman in the industry, but there are no free rides. You have to prove yourself to be trusted."

Keeping it Balanced

The women in this group varied widely in their family situations, from newly married with no kids to having grown children working at the same company. All had something positive to say about their companies' family-friendly policies, flexibility, and willingness to have team members' backs. Michels makes a point of modeling those practices herself. She has frequently stepped in for a coworker with a young child when home duties called the coworker away.

Most of the women we interviewed agreed that even in what is still a very male-centric profession, the men are coming around to the value of work-life balance, possibly due to the influence of the younger generations who want to work to live, not live to work.

The COVID-19 crisis, social-distancing polices, and the resulting rise in remote work may have helped with that perspective change, Lipinski said. "Obviously that was a

big challenge for everyone, but I think it helped us diversify the way we can perform our jobs. Before, it was, 'You have to be in the office to get your job done,' and now we have the ability to work remotely and still be productive. I think you can still achieve greatness that way and be more efficient with your time management to be able to be there for your family as well when need be."

What it Takes to Make it

On the subject of essential qualities for women to succeed in construction, this group came armed with some strong opinions.

Hillebrandt was blunt: "I think you have to have a thick skin, and you have to be committed and flexible. You have to be able to learn to roll with punches, right? I mean, you can't take everything so personally. People either aren't used to seeing females in the industry, or they don't understand your situation.

"Be confident in your role, show up and represent and keep moving forward, and that's how you get your place. You just keep showing up and doing the work that needs to get done."

Michels expressed a belief in responsibility and action reminiscent of the military. "I think that you have to hold yourself to a high degree of personal accountability. No one's going to force you to do the job well and right, but they will not forget if you don't, so you have to make sure that you are putting your best foot forward and giving it your all.

"I also think that you have to be a problem solver. One thing that was really instilled in me was, don't go to somebody and say, 'I've got a problem, what should I do?' You should always come with a solution. What do you think should happen? How do you think we should

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do it? And then actually be driven to do it right. I think that you have to really push yourself to make a decision, even if you're not 100% sure that's the right decision. 'Any action is better than inaction' is kind of a motto that we have around here. If you feel like you're doing something, and it might be right, go forward and trust your gut on it."

Fox and Keeler feel strongly that education and an open mind are key to building confidence. "I think that intellectual curiosity is huge," said Fox. "If you cannot speak up in a scenario or cannot ask questions right, you should always want to know the why."

Having a questioning attitude is essential, Keeler added, especially in a well-established industry like construction, where new technologies that could improve safety, quality, and efficiency are not always welcomed.

"As a woman, your biggest trait, I would say, is curiosity; asking those questions around, 'We've always done it this way, but is there a better way of doing it in the future?'"

Keeler recalled spending long days in the field learning to correlate real-world practices with what she sees on her computer screen back in the office.

Both Fox and Keeler also spoke of being open and honest when you don't know the answer to a question and being diligent about going out and finding that answer. "It's not an industry where you can fake it till you make it." Keeler said.

In the field of safety, Lipinski noted that she has been recognized for her tenacity in making sure the job is done right. She believes that refusal to give up is a product of the strong family atmosphere at MP Technologies. "I want to ensure that all of our employees go home safe and that we are doing the best for the public," she said. "To

lead with care... I think that has been probably the biggest quality that I bring to this position — that I truly care for every employee, and I want to make sure they know that I see them, and I care about them."

Her recent DCA award surely came as no surprise then for those who work around her.

Passing it On

With all the positive experiences they have had in their construction careers, these women are eager to encourage more like them to come on board.

"I would say, don't knock it till you try it," Michels said. "It's a really cool industry. I've found that there is actually a pretty large collection of women who work in the industry, and it's growing every day.

"I've brought a lot of women in on my team— people who had previously never worked in construction or energy construction before — including them into that world and mentoring them."

Her ongoing message to those women is to learn the industry lingo and get out there.

"Get in the field. Ask the questions and do the job right. Don't be afraid to get dirty and learn what's going on out there."

Keeler echoed Michels' advice and example. "Find a mentor if you can. It always helps, especially if it's the right fit, somebody that you can click with. Be curious. Raise your hand. Don't be afraid because you are potentially the minority in the room—don't let that hold you back. Be confident in your questions, and if you have the answers, be confident in your answers."

Fox also focused on the importance of learning. "If I was talking to my daughter coming up in the construction world, I'd say become as educated as you can





about everything with the company. And then become really good and expert at whatever tasks they give you."

Michels gave us some details on how she approaches her role as a mentor. "I don't necessarily look for women who have construction experience previously. I look for women who have the right skill set, or people in general who have the right skillset. I'm looking for somebody who can be a self-starter, problem solve, and have accountability to really get the job done. I'll teach the construction side of things. Once they're in the industry and they're hired into our organization, I make sure I give them a little bit of a boot camp. And I find that within three or four weeks, they've got the job figured out, but it takes almost a year or two to figure out the actual company and the industry itself. There's a lot to learn, so I'm always pushing them to Google it, look at videos, just figure it out. I'm an open-door person too, so I encourage people to come to me. I try to be visible at different meetings and to be that female figure within the family that is a little more approachable."

Lipinski and Hillebrandt emphasized the variety of opportunities now available to women in construction. "I think it's a great opportunity for women to be in construction," Lipinski said. "There are a lot of untapped resources for women and a lot of untapped positions for them to get into construction, whether you're in the field or if you're in more of a management setting or even just an office setting."

Hillebrandt agreed. "I think there are a lot more opportunities than there used to be, and I think even if you're starting out, depending on if you want to do engineering or design or project management, or even the support side with human resources or accounting, depending on the company you get into, I think there's always oppor-

tunities to learn how the company operates as a whole and how things work out in the field.

"And if it's really something you're passionate about, you'll have those opportunities to learn and to grow and step into new roles as you keep going. Make sure that you have that support system, the networking, the mentoring so if you have questions, you can reach out and ask advice from other people who've gone through it."

As others encouraged women to speak up, Lipinski also reminded us of the incalculable value of simply paying attention. "We all bring our core values and our core experiences, and when you sit down and actively listen, you gain so much more insight and knowledge. You can learn from each other."

Keeping Up to Date

Varying strategies surfaced when we asked the women how they stay up to date on industry trends and technologies. Everyone touched on attending events and conventions presented by the DCA, the American Gas Association (AGA), the Canadian Gas Association (CGA), and others as a great way to be exposed to new ideas.

Lipinski finds peer-to-peer groups especially useful in the safety field, while Michels combines regular check-ins with her own mentors with both formal and informal continuing education (and lots of Googling).

Keeler emphasized the value of keeping in touch with partner companies like United Rentals, while Hillebrandt keeps an eye on government regulations and projects that are being approved for permits to help her forecast industry trends.

Fox gave some keen insight into what the traffic control business needs to know to help keep their clients safe.

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In addition to consequential technologies like AI and smart flaggers, or government regulations over traffic and vehicles, she pointed out how vital it is to keep tabs on what equipment clients are using. For instance, if someone is using a larger or smaller hydrovac truck than the year before or a boom with a greater swing radius, that affects the size of the work zones and number of traffic lanes they have to cordon off. Like Hillebrandt, Fox also keeps track of pipeline projects and utility bids to predict where work might come from in the future. Certain utilities in specific regions may also require specific equipment her company would need to purchase to operate there, which could heavily affect its bottom line.

Preparing for the Future

In a world where everything seems to be moving too quickly all the time, the challenges for established industries like gas distribution are many. Fox expressed concern about the speed of technology change. Although she believes new technology will ultimately increase safety, the tough part will be weaning older workers off "the way we've always done it." She used the time her company switched from paper timesheets to digital as an example, noting how workers wanted a carbon copy of their timesheets when they turned them in. The workers were eventually won over when a feature was added to email them a copy of the digital timesheets automatically on submission.

Michels identified government red tape in the permitting process as an additional obstacle to address. Keeler singled out the ever-present issue of recruiting a new workforce, especially as the industry faces a wave of retirements from experienced workers who need someone to pass their knowledge on to. Michels believes this situation is tied to the industry's larger image problem: the challenge of supporting fossil fuels in a political environment that favors climate change prevention and green energy. She believes the public needs better education about how the industry really works and how in both the short and long term, gas contractors are actually supporting a greener future by replacing and updating infrastructure.

Hillebrandt and Lipinski generally agreed that the political landscape is the largest challenge on the horizon, but that maintaining high-quality, reliable work was the best way to stay upright through the storms ahead.

The Future is Now

In our first article, we spoke with women who had experienced the discomfort of encroaching on the old guard's territory in a male-dominated industry and showing that they belonged. Interviewing this group has shown us that there is already a generation of women who have felt accepted and welcomed into the industry from the beginning. Their experiences reflect an industry that is up to the challenge of changing with the times while maintaining the high standards of service that the DCA has fought for over six decades.

These women are leading by example, and more than likely, more women will soon be following. ▲

^{**} Interview responses have been edited and consolidated in some places for clarity and flow.



DCA Deep Dive Webinar Series – On-Demand Recordings Available on the Website

Launched by the Future Leaders Committee, the DCA Deep Dive webinar series explores timely and relevant industry topics, aligning closely with the work of DCA's dedicated committees to drive innovation, safety, and develop future leaders of the distribution construction industry.

The Deep Dive series reflects DCA's commitment to deliver value and support members' needs through engaging formats to dig into the issues that matter most.

The Deep Dive webinars are recorded and made available to DCA members.

To access the webinar archive visit: https://dcaweb.org/events/deep-dive-webinars.

Note: You'll need to be logged into the DCA website to access the archived recordings.

To access our webinars from the DCA homepage, navigate to the top toolbar and click 'Events,' then click 'DCA Deep Dive Webinars'.

Do you have a topic you'd like to present for a future Deep Dive webinar? Please contact DCA's Director of Membership, Jacob Adams Mireles (jadams@dcaweb.org).

We look forward to your participation in these sessions designed to bring industry insights directly to you — wherever you are.

Have a question regarding DCA's Deep Dive Webinars? Please reach out to **Jacob Adams Mireles** at **jadams@dcaweb.org**. ▲





Save the Date for the DCA Convention

Trump National Doral Miami, Florida February 23 – 27, 2026



DCA Convention Keynote Speaker DAVID FEHERTY



DCA is happy to announce David Feherty will be a keynote speaker at the DCA 2026 Annual Convention at the Trump National Doral in Miami, Florida.

David Feherty's life has been anything but ordinary. A former professional golfer turned beloved broadcaster, he's known for his sharp wit, Irish charm, and unfiltered honesty. Feherty has experienced the highs of PGA Tour victories and international acclaim, but also the lows of personal struggle, including battles with addiction, mental health, and devastating loss. Through it all, his resilience and humor have made him one of the most captivating voices in sports. Audiences connect with his ability to find light in darkness, reminding us that even in life's toughest moments, laughter and perseverance carry us forward.

Registration Will Open in December

For the most up-to-date information, check the DCA Convention website at dcaweb.org/events/convention



Convention Sponsorship

The DCA Annual Convention holds a prominent position in the association's yearly agenda. DCA takes great pride in marking its 65th year as a leading industry conference, bringing together influential leaders in gas distribution, HDD, and utility construction.

The association acknowledges and values the steadfast support from member companies over the years and sees this convention as a distinct opportunity to cultivate closer bonds with equipment and service suppliers. DCA's budget for construction equipment and services is expected to reach millions of dollars, presenting an excellent opening for your organization to help. The convention serves as a vital platform for the association to stay updated on the latest advancements in member products and services and develop a more robust professional network. Associate members are a critical part of DCA's growth and success, and the organization hopes to continue to count on your unwavering financial backing.

DCA recognizes the significant efforts that members go through to secure funding and is committed to providing networking opportunities to build fruitful relationships that benefit the community. Sponsors will receive optimal acknowledgment at the conference based on their support level.

2026 Sponsor Recognition Levels:*

Platinum: \$25,000 and above
Gold: \$10,000 - \$24,999
Silver: \$5,000 - \$9,999
Bronze \$1,000 - \$4,999

*equals a combination of the 2025 Auction Donations as determined by the winning bid and 2026 Cash Pledge.

To enable DCA to finalize its financial arrangements for the occasion, access our website at https://dcaweb. org/events/sponsorship to complete the online form by Wednesday, November 14, 2025.

If you require any clarification, please contact Director of Membership, Jacob Adams Mireles at jadams@ dcaweb.org or phone at (972) 200-2707. ▲













Annual Auction: How to Get in on the Action!

DCA is gearing up for the annual fundraiser auction, set to take place on the evening of Tuesday, February 24, 2026, during the convention at the Trump National Doral in Miami, Florida. DCA contractor and associate members come together each year for an exciting and spirited event that raises crucial funds for the association. These funds support DCA's educational initiatives and scholarships for deserving students who will promote and enhance the industry. With a special emphasis on Workforce Development, the 2026 auction aims to make a significant impact.

Since 1991, the DCA auction has raised over \$13 million for grants, scholarships, and educational programming, thanks to the generous donations from DCA members. A full-color catalog will be available online a few weeks before the auction, building excitement and energy from the start of the silent online bidding to the closing gavel of the live auction. The highest bidders of auction items can

also achieve Silver, Gold, and Platinum sponsorship levels for next year's convention.

DCA is now accepting items for the 2026 auction. Members are invited to donate one or two highly soughtafter pieces of equipment, trips, sporting events or even cash.

Visit: https://dcaweb.org/events/annual-auction for more information and to complete the online donor form. Along with the donor form, please include a 50-word description along with a 300-dpi high resolution photo in JPG format.

Donations must be received **no later than Friday**, **November 14**, **2025**. Donations made after this date will be accepted on a space available basis.

If you have any questions or need donation ideas, please contact Director of Member Services, Donna Reed at dreed@dcaweb.org or (469) 399-5588.





DCA Scholarship Applications Now Being Accepted

The application process for the 2026-27 DCA-Dale R. Michels Scholarship and Curtis Allen Scholarship is now open on the DCA website at: https://dcaweb.org/page/Scholarship. All applications will be completed online.

Students should click on the link above, scroll down the page to find the scholarship they are interested in, click the button, and follow the instructions, including how to upload a transcript in PDF format.

Basic guidelines:

- The DCA Dale R. Michels Scholarship encourages students planning to pursue a four-year bachelor, or postgraduate degree to apply.
- The Curtis H. Allen Scholarship focuses on those planning to attend a trade, technical or vocational school.
- Applications must include an unofficial or official copy of a transcript. See the specific scholarship for the correct transcript that should be uploaded.
- All applications and supporting documents must be completed no later than Wednesday, January 7, 2026.
- If DCA receives more than three applications from a member company for either scholarship, the member company will be asked to review and select three for inclusion in the application pool.
- The winning applicants will be awarded an unspecified amount of financial aid for the 2026-27 academic year.
 This amount could be renewable for up to four years with proof of academic success for the Michels scholarship and two years for the Allen scholarship.
- Financial need, academic major, and community service will be considered by the scholarship committees.

The DCA-Dale R. Michels Scholarship Committee is comprised of the DCA President, Treasurer, Past President Director, Associate Member Director, and up to five members appointed by the DCA President.

The Curtis H. Allen Scholarship Committee is comprised of the DCA Vice President, DCA Director at Large, DCA Alternate Associate Member Director, two Halliburton Representatives, and one member appointed by the DCA President.

If you have any questions, please contact Director of Administration, Taylor Harvey at tharvey@dcaweb.org or (469)399-5587.

Calendar

2026 & 2027 DCA and Industry Events

2026

JANUARY 27-29

Underground Infrastructure Conference (UIC) Henry B. González Convention Center San Antonio, Texas ui-conference.com

FEBRUARY 11-15

2025 PLCA Convention Arizona Biltmore Phoenix, Arizona www.plca.org

FEBRUARY 23-27

DCA Annual Convention Trump National Doral Miami, Florida dcaweb.org

MARCH 3 - 7

Con-Expo Las Vegas Convention Center Las Vegas, Nevada www.conexpoconag.com

APRIL 8 - 10

Safety Congress The Kimpton Brice Hotel Savannah, Georgia dcaweb.org

2026 (cont.)

APRIL 20-24

Pipe Line Contractors Association of Canada (PLCAC) Convention Hyatt Regency Maui Resort & Spa Maui, Hawaii www.pipeline.ca

JUNE 22 - 26

SkillsUSA TechSPO Georgia World Congress Center Atlanta, Georgia info@skillsusa.org

JULY 20 - 23

DCA Mid Year Meeting Everline Resort & Spa Olympic Valley (Lake Tahoe), California dcaweb.org

2027

FEBRUARY 22-27

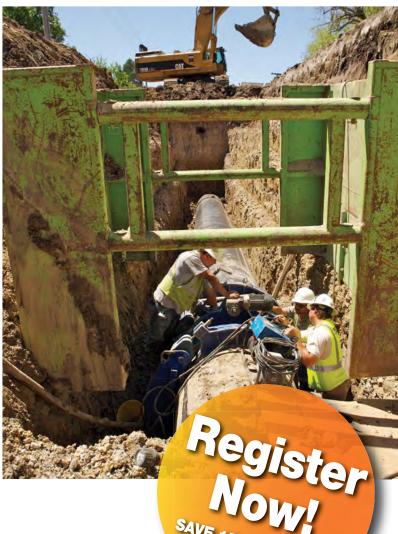
DCA Annual Convention Terranea Resort Rancho Palos Verdes, California dcaweb.org

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 Jacob Adams Mireles at jadams@dcaweb.org.







Contractors, This One's For You!

UIC 2026 is faster, smarter and heading to San Antonio

Two powerful days. Zero wasted time. Get the skills, connections, and tools that set you apart for the year ahead. UIC delivers real-world takeaways from jobsite lessons learned in just two high-impact days.

The Exhibit hall features more networking with the addition of technical theaters and the center stage. Critical infrastructure conversations start at UIC, don't miss out.

See the program and register today at UI-Conference.com.

Thank You 2026 Sponsors























JANUARY 27 – 28, 2026 Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center San Antonio, Texas

Insights



House Panel Committee Approves New Pipeline Safety Reauthorization Measure

Pipeline safety reauthorization has been a topic of discussion in four hearings in three congressional committees this year, and the measure is now showing measurable progress as it moves through the legislative process. DCA members may recall the pipeline safety bill in the previous congress died a slow death, mainly because of disputes over climate change issues that are now part of the pipeline safety discussion.

On Wednesday, Sept. 17, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee approved the Promoting Innovation in Pipeline Efficiency and Safety Act of 2025 (HR 5301), otherwise known as the "PIPES Act of 2025." DCA helped develop and garner support for language

that would improve state damage prevention programs by setting additional criteria for states to consider when applying for PHMSA damage prevention grants. Specifically, states that implement or can show they are moving toward implementation of several recommended practices as part of their programs would stand a better chance of securing PHMSA damage prevention dollars.

These practices include identifying and eliminating exemptions to their 811 laws, requiring locating and marking of all lines and laterals (including municipal service lines), and encouraging widespread use of state-of-the-art technologies to locate underground facilities, such as geographic information systems (GIS).

The PIPES Act would also extend existing criminal penalties to those who knowingly and willfully damage a pipe, pump, compressor, or valve under construction, or disrupt the operation of a pipeline by the unauthorized turning of a valve. This has been a longtime priority at DCA, and we were encouraged to see the language included in the new bill.

Other noteworthy provisions in the PIPES Act include:

- Encouraging PHMSA to engage with pipeline stakeholder groups, including state pipeline safety programs certified by PHMSA, during the pre-drafting stages of rulemaking activities.
- Requiring PHMSA to review and update as necessary, or every four years, incorporated industry safety standards that "have been partially or fully adopted as part of the Federal pipeline safety regulatory program."
- Mandating adopted industry standards to be made publicly available, as well as a list of standards considered and PHMSA's reasoning for not adopting a standard.
- Requiring PHMSA to hold two meetings annually of the Gas Pipeline Advisory Committee (GPAC) and the Liquid Pipeline Advisory Committee (LPAC).
- Calling for a study by the General Accountability
 Office (GAO) to evaluate existing natural gas pipeline
 systems in the U.S. and overseas that are blending
 hydrogen into gas pipeline systems. Such a study
 could inform a future rulemaking related to hydrogen natural gas blending.
- Requiring PHMSA to complete a rulemaking to establish minimum safety standards for transportation and temporary storage incidental to transportation of carbon dioxide in a gaseous state.

The ball is now in the court of the House Energy and Commerce (E&C) Committee, which shares jurisdiction over pipeline safety. If the E&C Committee introduces and advances its own legislation, a single bill will have to be developed before being considered by the full House of Representatives. DCA is also encouraging the Senate to introduce its own bill sooner rather than later.

"Pipelines are the vital link that deliver America's oil, gas, and hazardous materials to the market safely and efficiently," said Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials Subcommittee Chairman Daniel Webster, who co-authored the legislation. "The PIPES Act of 2025 helps restore American energy independence by reauthorizing PHMSA's pipeline safety program for the next four

years, ensuring this critical infrastructure remains secure and dependable. Safety is improved through proven industry standards, tougher penalties on those who seek to damage our energy infrastructure, and streamlining regulations so energy can move to markets without unnecessary delays."

FERC Continues to Face Quorum Issues

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) is an independent agency responsible for regulating the interstate transmission of natural gas, oil, and electricity. FERC's primary role is to oversee and approve rates, terms, and conditions for energy transactions and transmission services. FERC reviews and authorizes proposals for energy infrastructure projects such as pipelines, liquefied natural gas terminals, and hydropower facilities. The commission is also charged with enforcing energy market rules and investigating potential violations, helping to maintain fair and transparent operations within the energy sector. FERC's decisions have significant implications for energy policy, infrastructure development, and the transition to new energy resources across the United States.

Problems associated with maintaining a quorum at FERC continue to plague the agency. As of September 2025, FERC is facing a potential deadlock, even though the agency currently has enough members to function.

FERC currently has three sitting commissioners — two Democrats and one Republican. This is enough to maintain a quorum, which requires at least three of the five authorized members. There are two empty seats on the commission, and President Trump nominated two Republican candidates to fill them. On Sept. 11, the nominations of Laura Swett and David LaCerte to FERC were advanced by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, but partisan issues could complicate approval by the full Senate. Some worry that the nominees are not experienced or independent enough and are aligned with conservative agendas, which potentially could disrupt FERC's historical independence.

Of course, timing is always part of the problem. The Senate's busy schedule and partisan dynamics mean the nominees' final confirmation timeline is unclear, which could delay their seating. If the nominations are not confirmed by the end of a given Congress, they will expire and need to be re-nominated.

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If the two Republican nominees are confirmed, FERC would shift to a 3-2 Republican majority. However, recusals in that scenario could occasionally create a 2–2 split.

This could paralyze decisions on complex or controversial issues, a problem seen in the past when the commission was evenly divided.

SPEED Act Update

The issue of permit reform to expedite the process of getting important infrastructure projects off the ground remains a hot topic. The Standardizing Permitting and Expediting Economic Development (SPEED) Act (HR 4776) proposes significant changes to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to streamline and accelerate the federal permitting process for infrastructure and energy projects. Specifically, the bill establishes strict deadlines for courts to handle legal challenges to agency decisions. Importantly, the SPEED Act also creates requirements for courts to include specific instructions and a deadline for correction when remanding an agency decision.

In addition, the legislation introduces provisions to enhance interagency coordination, reduce unnecessary duplication of environmental reviews, and establish clear timelines for federal agencies to make permitting decisions. These measures are intended to provide greater predictability and efficiency for project developers while maintaining important environmental safeguards.

Finally, the SPEED Act would exempt certain actions from NEPA review if already covered by state, tribal, or other federal laws.

While most of the provisions included in the SPEED Act have been debated over the past several years, the latest bill is in the early stages of the legislative process and is considered by analysts to be a major bipartisan permitting reform proposal in the 119th Congress.

Key provisions in the bill include:

- Setting new deadlines for environmental reviews, aiming for two years for Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) and one year for Environmental Assessments (EA).
- Narrowing the scope of review, restricting agencies to evaluating only environmental impacts that have a "reasonably close causal relationship" to the proposed project. It excludes speculative or distantly related effects.

- Reducing duplication by allowing federal agencies to accept environmental reviews already conducted under similar state, tribal, or other federal laws.
- Expanding categorical exclusions, providing new categories of projects that are exempt from the NEPA review process entirely.
- Codifying judicial restrictions based on Supreme Court decisions that limit courts from overturning agency decisions on environmental impacts.

OSHA Heat Exposure Standard Still in Play

As previously reported, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) issued a proposed rule last summer that would require employers to develop a detailed "Heat Injury and Illness Prevention Plan (HIIPP) to mitigate heat-related hazards in the workplace." The proposed rule would require employers to monitor heat risks on job sites and provide drinking water, rest breaks, and shade or other temperature controls once the temperature reaches certain thresholds. It also would require plans for safely acclimatizing workers to high-heat environments.

The proposed standard also includes acclimatization requirements for workers not accustomed to heat because they are new to the job or have been away from the job for more than 14 days. On top of that, the proposed rule calls for gradually increasing new employees' exposure to heat over a period of time, starting with no more than 20% of normal shift exposure on the first day and ramping up to 80% by the fourth day

The proposed rule would also require employers to allow and "encourage employees to take paid rest breaks," which adds more uncertainty. Other questions about how the new rule might apply to temporary workers who are already accustomed to hot working conditions from a previous job, such as in the construction industry, are only increasing.

Public hearings on the proposal were conducted in June and July of this year, and OSHA is now considering a multitude of comments submitted after those hearings.

The fact that the heat exposure rule was subject to President Trump's "Regulatory Freeze Pending Review" memo issued in January doesn't mean the rule is dead - just that it is being reviewed and may be modified or delayed. OSHA continues to accept comments on the rule. DCA has signed on to several letters and comments to OSHA and Congress and submitted its own set of comments on the proposal earlier this year. As a member of two industry coalitions opposed to OSHA's proposal, DCA is concerned that the heat exposure rule is still in play.

There are several reasons why this proposed rule hasn't been withdrawn completely. Pressure from states, labor organizations, and others continue to use anecdotal evidence to support their demands for a heat exposure rule. Additionally, several states already have their own heat protection standards. Several stakeholders, including those representing industry, believe that allowing a rule having a federal standard that is significantly modified could provide the administration with the opportunity to claim it has appropriately addressed heat exposure in the workplace.

Canceling the proposed rule completely will certainly draw sharp criticism from worker safety and

labor organizations. Moving ahead to a watered-down rule would likely mitigate backlash, although history has shown that there are many stakeholders and organizations that will never be satisfied with an alternative to the proposed heat standard as issued in 2024.

As an active member of both the Coalition for Workplace Safety (CWS) and the Construction Industry Safety Coalition (CISC), DCA will continue to oppose the OSHA heat exposure standard in its current form. The hope is that common sense will prevail, and industry efforts to protect workers from heat exposure at the workplace. Unfortunately, common sense can be elusive in Washington, which is why the industry must remain vigilant to ensure our voice is heard. Otherwise, others will speak for us.



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Member News



Caterpillar Foundation

Caterpillar Foundation Surpasses \$1 Billion in Global Giving

Founded in 1952, the Caterpillar Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Caterpillar Inc., began with a humble gift to an East Peoria, Illinois, firehouse. Since then, investments have grown to support more than 11,000 community organizations in 110 countries across six continents. Its mission is to build thriving communities by investing in workforce development and the natural and vital infrastructure people rely on.

This summer, the Caterpillar Foundation has reached a historic milestone — donating more than \$1 billion globally to improve lives and build stronger, more resilient, and sustainable communities around the world.

"This milestone is a powerful reminder of what's possible when purpose meets passion," said Asha Varghese, president of the Caterpillar Foundation. "For 73 years, the foundation has collaborated with organizations around the world to create opportunity, resilience, and hope. This moment is more than a milestone; it's a testament to the dedication with the grantees we support, the passion of Caterpillar employees and retirees, and leadership from the foundation's board of directors."

Over the years, the foundation's strategic focus has evolved. Early grants supported helping improve and expand hospitals and workforce training facilities for people with disabilities. Later, the foundation refined and expanded its grants to technical schools and community colleges to help strengthen their curriculum for students

and teachers – a cause the foundation still champions today. In addition to ensuring individuals are ready to enter the workforce, the foundation supports programs in STEM education, sustainable natural infrastructure, access to basic services, and disaster preparedness, mitigation, and recovery.

As the foundation celebrates this historic moment, it remains committed to driving lasting impact through strategic partnerships, community investments, and amplifying Caterpillar employees' and retirees' charitable contributions. With a rich legacy rooted in compassion, innovation, and collaboration, the foundation will continue to empower people and strengthen communities, laying the groundwork for a stronger, more sustainable, and more resilient future for generations to come.



Enhanced Vermeer D20x22 \$3 Horizontal Directional Drill Delivers Improved Reliability for Utility Contractors

Vermeer has enhanced its D20x22 S3 horizontal directional drill (HDD) with model year updates featuring improved hydraulic circuit protection, redesigned component routing and enhanced hood design to further boost reliability for utility contractors. These enhancements come as utility contractors seek to maximize productivity while working in congested urban environments.

The updated D20x22 S3 builds on its proven track record in the field, with engineering improvements designed to help further optimize performance and extend equipment life.

"Utility contractors depend on equipment that delivers consistent performance, day after day," said Clint Recker, HDD product manager at Vermeer. "The D20x22 S3 has proven itself as a reliable workhorse, and these enhancements make it even better. We've listened to contractors about what would help them be most productive and engineered improvements that deliver exactly that."

Targeted improvements address contractor needs

The updated hood design offers convenient maintenance access while providing enhanced protection for internal components. A new rotation circuit accumulator helps protect the hydraulic system from pressure spikes, while redesigned hose and harness routing better shield critical components from damage and help reduce service interruptions. These improvements build on the drill's existing strengths, including a 167 fpm (50.9 m/min) carriage speed, a 257 rpm rotational speed and a compact 48-in (122-cm) width that excels in tight urban jobsites.

"Equipment reliability directly supports contractor productivity and project efficiency," Recker said.
"These enhancements build on the D20x22 S3's already strong foundation to help contractors maintain peak performance and keep projects moving forward smoothly."

Proven performance, enhanced reliability

The D20x22 S3 remains the ideal solution for contractors installing fiber, gas lines and other small-diameter utilities in urban environments. The drill delivers 19,500 lb (86.7 kN) of thrust/pullback with 2,250 ft-lb (3,050 Nm) of rotational torque, powered by a 74-hp (55-kW) Deutz Tier 4 Final engine.

Advanced features like AutoDrill allow operators to set rotation and thrust/pullback pressure while drilling in changing soil conditions, with the patented Auto Resume function allowing slurry and cuttings to mix before thrust/pullback resumes. The drill's narrow footprint and 3.3-mph (5.3-km/h) tracking speed make it particularly well-suited for the fiber-to-the-home installations and urban utility work that drive demand in this market segment.

The VermeerOne[™] digital platform enhances fleet management with free real-time machine tracking, status updates, and fault code reporting. For contractors with multiple machines, the optional Premium Fleet subscription offers comprehensive analytics and performance insights that help optimize equipment use and drive productivity through data-informed decisions.

For more information about the updated D20x22 \$3 HDD, contact your local Vermeer dealer or visit vermeer. com.



KOBELCO Construction Machinery

KOBELCO and Trimble Announce Expanded Collaboration

KOBELCO Construction Machinery U.S.A. and Trimble® have announced an expanded collaboration that makes the Trimble Earthworks grade control platform 2D guidance and control systems available directly through select KOBELCO dealers in North America.

This new offering, launched as KOBELCO's certified Trimble Earthworks 2D grade control program, is now available at KOBELCO dealers across North America, enhancing machine productivity and jobsite precision.

While KOBELCO has offered a Trimble Ready® option from the factory on multiple machine models since 2017, the expanded collaboration makes it easy for customers to acquire excavators pre-equipped with Trimble Earthworks and receive training, service, and support directly from their KOBELCO dealer.

This program enables certified KOBELCO dealers to offer and install Trimble 2D machine guidance and control systems, giving customers a pathway to all the benefits of grade control technology, including 3D grade control. KOBELCO provides solutions to meet evolving contractor needs, whether customers are seeking consistent grade accuracy with full manual control or semi-autonomous excavation with automated boom and bucket movement.

"We are committed to providing our customers with the tools they need to succeed on modern jobsites," said Dan Collins, director of product development & marketing at KOBELCO USA. "This collaboration allows KOBELCO dealers to offer proven technology that enhances productivity, reduces overcut, and shortens project timelines."

This program was developed with customer needs in mind, said Scott Crozier, vice president, civil construction field systems at Trimble.

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"We are committed to making Trimble technology as easy as possible for all customers to purchase, regardless of equipment type," Crozier said. "We expect today's announcement will make it easier for KOBELCO customers to take advantage of seamless integration into the Trimble technology ecosystem."



Ditch Witch

New Ditch Witch Directional Drill Delivers More Power and Speed

HDD contractors can complete fiber and other underground utility jobs more efficiently with the new JT21 directional drill from Ditch Witch. An upgraded replacement for the JT20, the JT21 delivers up to 40 percent more downhole horsepower than its predecessor and 35 percent faster carriage speed than any drill in its class, the company said.

Unveiled at The Utility Expo 2025, the JT21 features 21,000 pounds of pullback, 20,000 pounds of thrust, and 2,250 foot-pounds of torque, allowing crews to complete installations at a faster pace in a variety of soil conditions. A new design with a lower center of gravity increases stability.

The JT21 also incorporates enhancements to simplify operations and extend equipment life. Virtually assisted make-up technology helps protect pipe threads, while a horizontal-style pipe-loading system improves uptime and efficiency. A larger displacement pump runs at lower RPM to reduce wear, and improved hydraulics with a direct-drive rotation motor provide more horsepower where it matters.

With a familiar interface shared across other Ditch Witch HDD platforms and multi-mode joysticks, the JT21 reduces training time and boosts crew efficiency.

Orange Intel

Ditch Witch also announced the launch of Orange Intel, an improved telematics platform designed to give underground construction contractors a clearer view of their equipment, operations, and bottom line.

Contractors can personalize dashboards and alerts to match their fleet needs. The data explorer tool makes it simple to track fuel usage, idle time, and equipment productivity across multiple sites. With built-in preventative maintenance scheduling, Orange Intel helps extend machine life and prevent downtime. In addition, GPS tracking and geofence alerts help protect equipment investments.



Underground Infrastructure

UIC 2026 to feature new technical sessions, awards and HDD reunion in San Antonio

The industry is moving fast. New pressures on aging systems, changing regulatory expectations and advances in construction and rehabilitation technology mean the work we do is different today than it was last year. The 2026 Underground Infrastructure Conference (UIC) is built for that reality: focused, practical and directly applicable to the people who run and repair buried systems.

Join the infrastructure industry Jan. 27-28, 2026, at the Henry B. González Convention Center, San Antonio, Texas, for two powerful days of concentrated education, hands-on experiences, targeted connections and zero wasted time. Registration is open! Secure your place now and shape how your team approaches the year ahead.

UIC attracts qualified professionals, including engineers, contractors, senior management and utility operators. These are the individuals who control billions

Welcome New Members

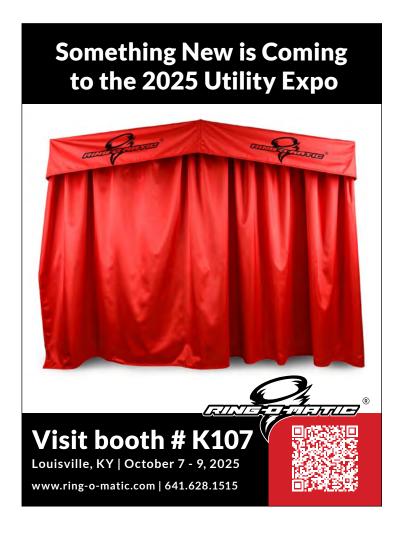
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in purchasing decisions. Buyer attention is concentrated into two high-impact days, putting solutions in front of people who make purchasing decisions.

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Breakdown of attendees:

- 22 percent engineers
- 20 percent senior management, vice presidents
- 25 percent business operations
- 18 percent owners, presidents and directors

In just two days, you can achieve what might otherwise take months of meetings and travel.

All exhibitors receive recognition in Underground Infrastructure magazine, the event app, and email campaigns, plus full-conference passes for your team. Contact Josh@UndergroundInfrastructure.com or Peter.Royall@GulfEnergyInfo.com to secure your space today.



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Established in 2003, Appalachian Pipeline Contractors, LLP has a leadership team with extensive experience in the gas pipeline industry. They have worked in a majority of the United States, Canada, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Ecuador, and the Far East.

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Wyo-Ben was founded in 1951 and remains a privately held company headquartered in Billings, Montana, USA.

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Wyo-Ben employees are focused on quality and continually look for new and innovative solutions to customers' needs in the global market.





Midwestern Manufacturing www.sidebooms.com

For more than 60 years, Midwestern has served the pipeline industry with innovative pipeline equipment and products.

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