

# Contractor

Service & Industry

# Bulletin

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## Problem Solving Skills

In our June 2004 Contractor Bulletin we discussed the importance of having an effective Customer Problem Solving Plan. Problems eventually come to everyone, no matter how careful or lucky you are, and they don't have to be a reason to lose a customer because of them.

Problem solving can be an opportunity to show the true strength of your organization and just how sincere your intention is in caring for your customer. Someone with understanding, compassion and concern for themselves and their customer wrote the following "Six Commandments of Customer Complaints" which is worthy of a revisit

### Problem Solving Suggestions

1. Always do what you say you are going to do. Initiate immediate action after you have made a complete review of the problem.
2. Build credibility with timely follow ups, prompt returns of phone calls, keeping your customers informed. Be sure commitments are accomplished either by yourself or your staff. Take responsibility.
3. Show sincere interest. Do it with a smile. Don't be defensive. Never let the customer think that their concern, problem or question is interfering with your routine.
4. Problems often can be solved by a compromise. Be flexible. Most customers are not unreasonable.
5. Listen to your customer. Allow them to vent their frustrations and discuss a mutually accepted plan that will solve the problem.
6. Learn from each complaint by fixing the problem to eliminate the situation from re-occurring. Give the customer a good reason to recommend you to their friends and contacts.

## Builders Lunch Program

### Future Program List



July 28 Form-A-Drain & Platon Waterproof Membrane  
Bill Marshall

Wood Trusses / LVL / I-Beams / Framing  
Kevin Kerr w/ Universal Forest

August 11 Bostitch Tools  
Shawn Wade w/ Numax

Smart Side Siding / Inspire Roofing / TimberTech  
John Conlin w/ Huttig

August 25 Vinyl Window Products  
Mark Empie / Kasson Keller

Not only can you enjoy Larry's Hot Dogs & Burgers on the grill, but you get a chance to update yourself on new products and product changes.

We normally have 2-3 material exhibitors who are more than please to explain the advantages of their products, while not taking much of your time. Be sure to stop by, have some lunch and take a minute to review their products. Hope you have a great summer!



## Feather in your cap

*Meaning:* An Achievement

*Background:* Dates back to 1346, when according to scholars, "the English Black Prince was awarded the crest of John, King of Bohemia—3 ostrich feathers—after distinguishing himself at the Battle of Crecy." It started a tradition; thereafter, any knight who fought well was allowed to wear a feather in his helmet.



# Operation Safeguard

New York State law enforcement is reaching out to a wide spectrum of businesses and industries throughout the NYS to observe and monitor any acts that appear to be suspicious in nature. There is a concern by the Division of Homeland Security Office of Terrorism that individuals seeking to commit acts of terrorism, while portraying themselves as legitimate customers, may look to purchase or lease certain materials or equipment, or to undergo formalized training to acquire certain skills or licenses. There is also a concern that such individuals may simply steal certain types of vehicles, equipment or materials from the inventory of legitimate businesses. Whatever the method, once appropriated, these items and /or skills could then be used to facilitate an act of terrorism.

The following is a part list of some key areas of concern:

- Physical surveillance which may include note taking or the use of binoculars, cameras or maps near key facilities.
- Attempts to gain sensitive information regarding key facilities or personnel through personal contact or by telephone, mail or e-mail.
- Attempts to penetrate or test physical security and response procedures at key facilities.
- Attempts to improperly acquire explosives, weapons, chemicals or other materials which could be used in a terrorist attack.
- Stockpiling suspicious materials.
- Request to rent or buy heavy duty construction tools by individuals who appear to be unrelated to the industry
- Theft of any equipment or materials that could be considered capable of producing an explosive device, or causing damage to a facility.

We highlighted a few of the items contained in "Operation Safeguard" and the original letter can be made available by contacting the NYS Police or NYS Tips Line at 1-866-SAFE-NYS. We also have a copy on file for your easy reference. If you have observed unusual acts or requests, record the details and promptly report them to NYS tips line.

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## Tool Box Safety Talks

### Heat Survival

Hot day, hot job, high humidity and BINGO . . . another heat victim. No one is immune, and construction workers are prime candidates for heat related illnesses.

- HEAT EXHAUSTION**— **Symptoms** are heavy sweating, nausea, headache, weakness, vomiting, tiredness and a fast pulse.  
**First Aid** Move to a cooler area, cool by wetting towels and wiping down the forehead. Remove any wet or sweat soaked clothing. Fan the victim. Do not give any fluids to a victim unless fully conscious. Follow up with a medical checkup.
- HEAT CRAMPS**— **Symptoms** are severe muscle spasms in the back, stomach, arms and legs. Usually caused by drinking large amounts of water without replacing salt during periods of heavy perspiration.  
**First Aid** Move to a cooler area. Make sure that no water is given unless fully conscious. When you do give water, make sure that the victim takes only small sips. Get medical attention as soon as possible.
- HEAT STROKE**— **Symptoms** are a high temperature and dry skin, rapid breathing and pulse. Victims may appear disorganized and confused with headache, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, seizures and the possibility of coma.  
**First Aid** This is serious, so move fast to a cooler area and call an ambulance. Remove the outer clothing of the victim and apply cool water to the entire body. Fan the victim until professional medical helps arrives.

To avoid heat illness, dress in cool clothing, wear your hard hat, don't over-exert your body during high temperature periods and get plenty of fluids. Remember that Heat related illnesses MUST have medical attention. If you are experiencing any of these heat related illnesses, go and get the medical attention you need. Heat illnesses should never be taken lightly.

# On the lighter side . . .

Two old Maine farmers went on vacation to Florida and decided to take a walk into the Everglades. They hadn't walked far when one yelled out "Gollee! An alligator just bit off one of my legs!" The other farmer was startled, but responded "My God! Which one?" The one-legged farmer now answered, "I don't know! All these alligators look the same to me".



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## How to Fold a Band Saw Blade

Folding a band saw blade is either an injury-defying task or a magic trick. It seems there are less band saws out there than there used to be, but for those who have band saws, folding a blade for storage is a must.



1. Grasp the blade in one hand with the teeth facing away from your body. Your arm is twisted in toward your body 270° from its natural resting position. Place your foot on the lower portion of the blade, holding it against the floor.

2. Rotate your hand 180° so the blade forms a figure 8.

3. Rotate your hand another 180° in the same direction as the first time, collapsing the blade straight down toward the floor.

4. As the circles meet, use your other hand to adjust the three hoops. Grasp the folded blade for storage.



# Otsego Ready Mix, Inc.

## Some things about the strength of concrete

### Rules of Thumb

Back about 50 years ago there were some common “rules of thumb” about concrete. One was that 3-day strengths were about two-thirds of 7-day strengths, and 7-day strengths were about two-thirds of 28-day strengths.

Things are different today. Most portland cements are much finer than they were then, and they now contain much more gypsum. Concrete made today without supplementary cementitious materials (fly ash, ground granulated blast-furnace slag, silica fume) gains strength more quickly—the two-thirds might well be replaced by nine-tenths.

### Supplementary Cementitious Materials

The strength is more difficult to assess when supplementary cementitious materials are used. For example, with fly ash, strength gain will usually be slower over a much longer period because of the slower reaction of the fly ash—so 60-day strength gains are used to gauge what was determined in 28 days. When ground granulated blast-furnace slag is used, temperature plays an influencing role in strength gain because of its effect on the speed of the chemical reactions that provide the strength. During warm summer temperatures, 3-day strengths may be equivalent to 7-day strengths, and 14-day strengths equal to or exceed what would be expected for 28-day strengths. At winter temperatures, 7-day strengths may be equivalent to 3-day strengths because of the sluggish chemical reactions.

### Advantages of Fly Ash

Although Type F fly ashes slow strength development, they also do many good things, including lowering concrete costs, increasing resistance to water penetration (decreased permeability),

increasing resistance to aggressive chemicals, and slowing and reducing heat development in mass concrete. Fly ash is a “patriotic” material because it extends the use of portland cement, which consumes a lot of energy in the making, and making use of this major waste product improves the environment.

Ground granulated blast-furnace slag is also a patriotic material for the same reasons as fly ash. Nowadays, concrete mixtures are often designed with two (ternary) or three (tertiary) supplementary cementitious materials. How patriotic can you get?

### Effects of winter temperatures

We recall a concrete foundation placed decades ago during low winter temperatures using a 25 percent fly ash replacement of the portland cement. This same mixture had worked well at summer temperatures, but when placed at winter temperatures, the concrete crumbled and fell away when forms were removed after a week. Why? A straight portland cement mixture would have developed enough heat during hydration to warm the concrete sufficiently to allow hydration to continue. But the portland cement diluted by the fly ash greatly curtailed heat development. A lesson learned the hard way shouldn't let you forget—but it still happens.

### Following existing specifications

Although 28-day strength requirements are usually the controlling specification, unexpected things can sometimes happen. For example, unacceptable 28-day strengths can result because of cold days, excessive air contents, badly handled test specimens, poor testing procedures, and “accidental” overdosages of admixtures. In many cases, petrographic studies and chemical analyses permit reasonable edge beam

that someone called about because the concrete failed to harden. We found an overdose of a water reducer, which acts as a retarder when used in excessive amounts—more isn't always better. The soft concrete was well put together except for its non-strength. We told the contractor that if he kept the concrete curing, it would not only reach the intended strength but probably would be even stronger than it might have been under more normal circumstances. He did and it was. That edge beam now serves at the entrance to a major public building in Washington, D.C.

Strength “requirements,” of course, is a subject to itself. House foundation concrete, for example, may have a code requirement of 2000 psi (at 28 days). But the foundation will never carry a load greater than a few hundred psi. That looks like a significant strength safety factor; however, there are other things to consider so that 2000 psi may be adequate in strength but inadequate when environmental requirements enter into the picture. In fact, requirements other than strength usually do dictate.

Written by:



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