



The Voice

June 2021

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INDUSTRY CALENDAR

ASCC Concrete Executive Leadership Forum

July 15-18, 2021

Fairmont Orchid, Waimea, Hawaii

[Registration](#)

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ASCC Annual Conference

September 23-26, 2021

St. Louis, MO

[Hotel Information](#)

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[Certification Registration](#)

ASCC MIX Group Orientation

November 4-6, 2021

Phoenix, AZ

[Registration](#)

Welcome New Members

- Botello Builders Corp., Houston, TX
- JW Enterprises, Concord, NC
- Queens Concrete Corp., Medford, NY

Gaining Strength Award Presented by the Emerging Leaders Committee

Individuals 40 and under, employed by ASCC member companies, who set themselves apart from their colleagues by involvement in local and national industry organizations, as well as day to day performance within their company, are eligible to be nominated. This award acknowledges up and coming individuals who go above and beyond to promote and professionally represent the concrete industry, through their actions in their company and industry organizations. **Submittal deadline is June 30, 2021.**

The Terry Fricks Floor Excellence Awards

The first awards program to recognize outstanding floor installations around the world. First and second place winners may be selected in each of ten categories and one Best of Show will be awarded. **Submittal deadline is July 1, 2021.** Awards will be presented at the Annual Conference in September.

Message from the Executive Committee

Things Are Looking Up **Bill Bramschreiber, President**

Things are looking up as we move towards reopening our economy from these unprecedented times. Vaccines are available to all adults and President Biden has set a national goal of shots in the arms of at least 70 percent of adults by July 4th. Current CDC guidance is that fully vaccinated people are not required to wear face coverings or to practice social distancing in nearly all situations. In my state of California, Governor Newsom plans to fully reopen the state's economy on June 15th, with no face covering or social distancing requirements, except for restrictions on indoor "mega events" of more than 5,000 people. This being California though, the governor plans to keep his state of emergency powers in place. To further confuse matters, to date Cal-OSHA does not plan to follow suit, with their workplace rules being face coverings required unless everyone in the room is fully vaccinated. With businesses presumed responsible if their employees get the coronavirus and with HIPAA privacy concerns on how to determine who is vaccinated, most California employers will have no choice but to continue to have their employees wear face coverings. This governmental confusion will get sorted out in the coming weeks and the pandemic situation will continue to trend positive in our country.

In most regions we were fortunate that construction was considered an essential business and for the most part we were able to creatively keep projects moving towards completion and hundreds of thousands of construction workers employed. Now, for many of us, our backlog has been drawn down, and uncertainty about the future remains. We are officially in a recession, which many believe will last two to four years. When will the tightened financial markets get past their fear of the unknown and loosen up again? When will the material supply chain catch back up with the current demand surge? Even pre-pandemic there was a shortage of construction workers. As stimulus payments end, how many of our workers will come back? Fortunately, favorite ASCC economist Anirban Basu will be a featured speaker at next month's Concrete Executive Leadership Forum (CELf) to offer his answers to these questions and more.

Yes, our CELf is back after a one-year hiatus at the Fairmont Orchid in Waimea, on the beautiful Big Island of Hawaii, July 15 to 18. Helped by their island isolation, the State of Hawaii has had by far the lowest coronavirus metrics of any state throughout the pandemic.

The CELf always features inspirational and educational speakers and this year is no exception;

- Anirban Basu / Chairman & CEO, Sage Policy Group / The Return of the Economist / Current data and forecasting on the performance of financial, material, labor, real estate, and construction markets.
- Jim McBrayer / McBrayer & Associates / Breaking Bad News / Maintaining trusting relationships when delivering bad news.
- Brad Hartmann / President, Red Angle, Inc / Good to Excelente – How Excellent Companies Embrace Hispanic Cultural Differences to Improve Productivity, Safety and Retention.
- As well as a distinguished Contractor Workforce Development Panel / Discussing their programs and methods for employee recruitment, training, and retention.

I have always found the CELF to be a great opportunity to learn, reconnect, network and to get excited about the possibilities. Please support ASCC and join us.

Executive Director's Message

What I've Been Reading Bev Garnant

I know, the column you all can't wait to read.... Sorry, not sorry. Occasionally I like to share my favorite books with you, and hope you will reciprocate.

A couple of years ago I bought a scratch-off poster at the Salt Lake City Library, 100 Essential Books. Nice to know that as construction is essential, so are some books. Turned out I had only read 33 of the 100 so I set out to grow that number. Most recently I've been reading *The Shipping News*, a novel by E. Annie Proulx, and winner of a Pulitzer and a National Book Award. It's about a newspaper reporter from NY, who, following a few tragedies in his life, moves with his two young daughters and his aunt to the family home in Newfoundland. He finds work at the local newspaper in the small town of Killick-Claw where he covers car accidents (he's required to write about one a day, whether recent or from the archives), and – you guessed it – the shipping news. Proulx's writing style is brilliant and it's a funny and sad and wonderful story about making a new life. Next on my 100 Essentials list – *Fahrenheit 451*, Ray Bradbury.

As we slogged our way through the pandemic and other national and international firestorms of the last several months, I decided I wanted to understand some of them on a deeper level. Please know I don't think one book on a subject accomplishes that, but it's a start. *American Dirt*, a novel by Jeanine Cummins, is about a Mexican woman living a normal life with her husband, a journalist, and their young son, in Acapulco. After her husband writes a no-holds barred profile on the jefe of the local drug cartel, he and several other family members are murdered at a niece's birthday party, and the mother and little boy must flee to the U.S. as undocumented immigrants. The story is more complicated, but the bulk of it, their journey to the U.S., lays out in grim and real detail the risk these migrants are willing to take; when the risk of staying home is much worse.

Next I read *This Is the Fire/What I Say to My Friends About Racism*, by Don Lemon, host of Don Lemon Tonight on CNN, our only Black prime-time anchor. I enjoy Lemon's program and so decided to take a chance on his book as well. His question – "How do we end racism in America in our lifetime?": The "fire" Lemon speaks of is a reference to James Baldwin's 1963 book *The Fire Next Time*. Baldwin wrote: "If we do not now dare everything, the fulfillment of that prophecy, recreated from the Bible in song by a slave, is upon us: God gave Noah the rainbow sign, no more water, the fire next time." "This is the fire," says Lemon. The author shares personal experiences and conversations in attempting to answer his question. I found this an easy and compelling read. And while I understand there are many books on this topic I found it to be a good start.

As I've wanted for years to better understand the history of the Palestinian – Israeli conflict, after hearing an interview with Rashid Khalidi, I ordered his take on things – *The Hundred Years' War on Palestine*. Khalidi is Palestinian so the book tells that side of the story. I couldn't stop reading this book and it provides an engrossing account of complicated events, to say the least. Another book I have my eye on is Thomas Friedman's *From Beirut to Jerusalem*. Friedman is Foreign Affairs columnist for the NY Times.

Not wanting to leave a false impression that I'm only reading serious stuff, I work in as many mysteries and thrillers as possible (a lot). Some favorite authors in that genre: Tana French, Daniel Silva, Tami Hoag, MC Beaton, Greg Isles, Stephen King, a long list.

And not reading, but always at hand – *1,200 Words You Should Know to Sound Smart*.

One of the 1,200 – luciferous. Do many of you, as I did, think this must mean “like, resembling, having to do with the devil??” Which, of course, should be the meaning. True meaning: providing insight or enlightenment. Go figure.

Concrete Construction Specialist

A Quick Saturday Spin of Biblical Proportions, or Why We Don't Allow the Technical Department to Answer the Safety Hotline **Jim Klinger**

About a month ago I purchased one of those so-called “Ebikes” from our local big-box store. This particular model features 14-inch wheels and fold-down handlebars. A rechargeable battery-powered motor can be used to supplement the traditional foot pedals. Gears, shock absorbers and a comfortable seat were not available options on this model. The purchase was motivated by domestic pressure provoked by post-retirement weight gain to the tune of about 50 pounds above normal.

The general idea was to ride the Ebike, using the foot pedals, up and down the neighborhood streets. The electric motor assist would only be used sparingly. My last bike ride was on a banana-seat Stingray down the side streets of Tucson in 1966. The raised handlebars made popping wheelies a breeze. Although some 55 years have passed, I still remember cruising on the easily-controlled Stingray along gently rolling, off-road desert trails for hours on end.

It took a few days to get used to the Ebike's controls. I found the steering and handling to be quite difficult. This was definitely not the classic 1966 Stingray. On a Saturday morning, I was elected to drive my wife to the local grocery. After opening the garage door, I figured I could make a quick Ebike run to the local park and back before the wife finished her morning constitutional and nobody would be the wiser. The electric motor could be brought to bear if needed. The sleepy neighborhood streets were quiet, so off I went for a quick spin. I was not wearing a helmet, nor did I even consider it.

What happened next hangs in my memory in a vivid, slow-motion blur. I can remember trying out the electric motor, misjudging the turn radius into the park, and losing control of the Ebike when the wheels crossed the transition between asphalt street, concrete gutter and trench drain. I remember sailing face-first into a chain-link fence, and coming to rest in a tangled mess at the base of the fence. Once the wheels stopped turning, I knew I was bleeding and could not feel anything below my waist and only part of each arm. One of the neighbors witnessed the spectacle, called 911, and made sure I did not move. Once the ambulance arrived, the medics boarded me up for a 40-minute ride to the closest local hospital with trauma facilities.

I spent the next six days in the ICU. The first night was sleepless, despite being heavily medicated. It was bad enough being paralyzed from the waist down. But the sounds coming from the adjacent rooms in the trauma center were enough to fuel any dreams with a touch of terror. My family was devastated.

By the second day, and after many MRI and CT scans, I was diagnosed with a spinal cord injury (SCI), aggravated by an age-related indignity of spinal arthritis. But I also started to regain feeling in my hands, toes and legs. After a few more days, I felt like I might even be able to get out of bed.

By the eighth day, I was able to walk, and convinced the doctors to let me go home to convalesce. Prior to release, I received several complimentary fashion items, including mandatory neck braces (one for casual wear, the other for use in the shower). I also received a few days' supply of catheters, which are self-inflicted tubes that are used to manually drain one's water plug every six hours or so. As it turns out, SCI injuries can negatively affect the manly hydraulic system. I have since regained full control of those particular bodily functions.

As of today, I cannot feel the tips of my toes, but I can walk. My right arm has numb spots, but I can make a fist and write with a pencil. My left arm has a few numb spots as well, but the nerves in my wrist and hand alternate between burning pain and sharp electrical shock. It feels like the bone marrow itches, but any attempt to scratch is extremely painful.

Today I am a very humble man. I may not regain 100 percent of my health, but it'll be close. It could have been a lot worse.

I have attended many presentations given by Bruce Suprenant. Bruce typically starts out by telling the audience that one of the best ways to learn something is via mistakes, hopefully mistakes made by others. I am telling you this so you can learn from my mistakes.

I can't say whether or not you should be driving one of these Ebikes. But you really need to wear a helmet (it's the law in California), make sure to read the safety literature from the manufacturer, and take any training that might be required. It has been said that certain things are "just like riding a bike". Whether or not that always applies is borderline questionable.

It finally dawned on me (after having my face dragged along a chain-link fence) that the ASCC stresses safety in everything we do. Even at the ASCC Technical Committee meetings, the very first item on our agenda is always safety. In the ACI/ASCC "Contractor's Guide to Quality Concrete Construction" the very first chapter is devoted to safety. The key takeaway here is that safety is a 24-7 concern that applies equally to the jobsite and to quick spins at home on a Saturday morning.

And speaking of specifications...when you get laid up in the hospital, it gives you time to prepare a presentation for a World of Concrete luncheon regarding the many difficulties that surround project specifications. In a 1981 edition of *Concrete International*, Raymond Huen explored specifications and how they might be improved. Huen points out that the first known written specification can be found in the Book of Genesis, Chapter 6.

In Chapter 6, the Owner does, in fact, direct the contractor to build a boat out of wood approximately 450 feet long by 75 feet wide. But there had to have been a verbal concrete specification issued by the Owner to the contractor beforehand saying: "You must place an 8-inch thick concrete working slab 500 feet long and 100 feet wide for use by the follow-on boat builder. Do not worry about slope to drain or birdbaths. Those parts can be discussed later".

In similar fashion, Henry Reid's classic 1877 textbook titled "The Science and Art of the Manufacture of Portland Cement" contains a running commentary of a beef that Reid had with another researcher, John Grant, regarding who first invented a tension test mold. In a fit of pedantic silliness, one of the participants claimed his ancestors were part of the crew on Noah's ark. "That's nothing", said the other, "back then, my ancestors had their own boat".

Stay safe, everybody.



For Sale: Slightly-to-moderately mangled Ebike. Low mileage. Only one ride; from home to chain link fence. Helmet not included.

Concrete Polishing Council

A Plus from COVID
Scott Metzger, council director

All eyes are on this week's World of Concrete 2021 in Las Vegas, the first major trade show held in the United States since the Covid pandemic put a halt to big and small gatherings for most of 2020. While we don't yet know attendance figures-or really just what the show will look like-it's a positive sign that as an industry we are moving back towards in-person events and meetings after more than a year living virtually.

While I suspect many of you would be happy to never be on Zoom again, the need to meet virtually has certainly led to a higher comfort level with teleconferencing technology, and I am hopeful that future virtual communication tools will enhance, rather than replace, in-person communication. Some unexpected benefits and flexibility may be born from our forced marriage to telecommunications. As I write this, my son is in school virtually, not because of COVID, but because our school lacks air conditioning and it's expected to be 95° today. Two years ago, he would have just had to show up and sweat it out. There's no reason the same model can't save kids from missing school for snow days. Then maybe they can be out of school before we encounter 90° days...

I also believe the cost effectiveness of virtual meetings has allowed the ASCC/CPC great opportunities to meet more regularly, rather than focused around the few in-person events we hold each year. While meeting virtually will never be a great replacement for in-person, it certainly beats the old "conference call," where no one could see anyone else. It brought me great joy to see our fellow board members' faces during our monthly board meetings this past year. And just because we were not in the same room, it did not stop us from sharing stories of how COVID was affecting our communities and businesses, or commiserating about being "locked down" or "safer at home."

Thanks to the flexibility of virtual tools, CPC plans to launch a quarterly new member roundtable to better familiarize new members with the tools and resources available to them, and to introduce

them to staff and fellow CPC members. This idea was spawned from our recent strategic planning meeting (held virtually of course!) and is in line with our overarching goal to bring value to membership and increase member engagement. We look forward to meeting new members at these virtual events, and to hearing from current members, as they share what CPC has meant to them and their businesses.

We have all lost something during this pandemic, but hopefully we come out stronger than we went in, and more grateful for opportunities where we can enjoy the company and camaraderie of others. I am very much looking forward to the Annual Conference this fall, and to seeing so many of you for the first time in many, many months. I hope you all enjoy a great summer not being “safer at home.”

Decorative Concrete Council

Avoid Blisters and Bubbles in Sealers and Coatings This Summer

Chris Sullivan, decorative concrete specialist

The combination of the first hot weather of the year, along with recent changes in VOC limits in some areas, got me thinking it is probably a good time to review hot weather sealer application. One of the most common questions on the DCC hotline deals with decorative sealers, specifically blisters and bubbles. This issue is seasonal, and shows up as the temperature increases. As a good friend told me, sealer manufacturers do not package bubbles or blisters in the pail. While a bit sarcastic, it's true. Bubbling is not inherent to sealers and is created by outside factors impacting the coating film. Except for a few rare cases, bubbling and blisters are caused by the sealer film skinning over, which traps the liquid solvent or gas (mostly air) trying to escape as the sealer dries or cures. The two most common causes are over application and or displaced air from the substrate. While the issue can occur any time of year, warm weather speeds surface drying and intensifies the issue. New VOC limits in certain states have led to faster drying solvents in sealers which only makes the problem worse. The best way to avoid blisters and bubbles is to apply the product at the recommended coverage rate using the recommended application method. Think “thin to win” and “multiple thin coats” when applying one part acrylic sealers. With thicker build coatings, using the proper primer system to lock out any trapped air in the substrate to avoid displacing air into the coating, is important. Also, avoid the heat of the day when applying exterior in warm or windy weather. Paying attention to these guidelines when the temperatures rise can go a long way to avoiding costly call backs. If you are interested in learning more, or have questions on this or any other technical issue, drop me an email or call the hot line.

Summer Time

Jeff Eiswerth, DCC council director

As I write this school in Northeast Ohio is wrapping up. In the time-honored tradition, the kids are really looking forward to summer. My hope is that not only our children, but people of all ages can enjoy Summer 2021. I see signs all over that we're emerging from COVID into the new normal. Parks are full of kids playing, people are out walking, jogging or biking. I'm not seeing people wearing masks unless they choose to. It's nice to see smiling faces.

We're signing the kids up for summer sports and activities, as well as hunting for a beach vacation. We're late to the game as far as the vacation, but that is just part of the old normal. We're thinking about the upper peninsula in Michigan or maybe a town or island off the coast of North or South Carolina. In other words, we still don't know. I guess it doesn't matter, so long as we're together. It's more about unplugging from the daily grind and spending quality time together.

For us, Michigan is about a seven-hour drive, the Carolinas are about 12. Either way we'll get great car time to and from wherever we go. Some of my greatest childhood memories are when all seven of us piled in the van and drove off for vacation.

My hope is that you and your family can enjoy your summer, have an opportunity to unplug and get away. If you're not able to travel, hopefully you can take a few days off to enjoy whatever it is you like to do; read a book, take a hike or dive into a home improvement project. My best to you, your family, friends and coworkers. Enjoy summer. I know I will!

Safety & Risk Management Council

Employee Independent Action - What Is It?

Joe Whiteman, director of safety services

A great question was raised during last month's Safety Roundtable on Root Cause Analysis.

"What do you do after you have performed a root cause analysis and identified the cause was an employee knowing better, but simply choosing to cut a corner or do the wrong thing"? The follow up question was "What if an employee suffered an injury from that choice and OSHA had to get involved?" This situation is known as an employee independent action. Not many on the call were familiar with the Employee Independent Action Defense (EIAD).

Employers may only use EIAD if the cause of the injury to the employee was an independent act of that employee, and the employer, in this instance should not be held liable. Employers may utilize this defense only after they have been cited during the appeals process. Before you decide this is your course of action, companies should ask themselves - was everything the law required implemented and complete, and was it the employee alone who did not follow company policies and procedures? There are five to the EIAD that must be met. If you are missing just one of the five you will not be successful at applying this defense and should not pursue it.

Five elements of the Employer Independent Action Defense:

1. The employee had the experience and was trained on the job.
2. The employer has a well-defined safety program in place.
3. The employer has a policy of sanctions against employees who violate the safety program.
4. The employer must have an effective enforcement program in place.
5. The employee caused the incident or safety violation which he or she knew went against the employer's safety requirements.

It's not an easy feat for an employer to meet all five elements. As you can see, documentation is key and having a well written safety, training, and discipline policy, along with meticulous recordkeeping, is crucial. It is good to know that this is a potential defense when a legitimate situation presents itself. Focus, however, should be on the front end; being proactive with employees, ensuring they are fit for the task, present with a safety mindset each day, and have the proper training and tools for the task at hand.

ASCC Webinar Series

Wednesday
July 14th
3:00pm CDT

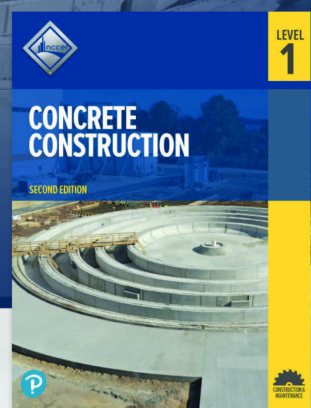
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