



Photo: PCI

Make a New Year's Resolution: "Stay in Touch with Suppliers"

William Nickas, *Editor-in-Chief*

Every New Year brings resolutions and promises of change. Sixteen years ago, software vendors were scrambling to be compliant with Y2K. And thank goodness, when the clocks rolled over at midnight, it was without any noticeable interruptions to information work flow. The Y2K-scare had garnered much attention and caused everyone to reengage with their computer vendors. But it shouldn't take a scare to keep us in touch with our suppliers.

Recently, I was in Texas visiting five precast, prestressed concrete plants and two suppliers to the concrete industry. These plants hosted tours to 150 professionals who were looking to share information about the latest products and improvement opportunities in the industry. Key to those product and improvement opportunities were the relationships between the plants and their suppliers.

Company culture at Commercial Metal Corporation (CMC) in Seguin, Tex., embraces sustainability, from recycling scrap from cars and appliances, to sending only plastic and upholstery to the landfill. Our young guide at CMC was knowledgeable and passionate about his part in the company that cleans our communities and builds America, by supplying steel reinforcement and other building materials. It was obvious all employees were proud of the plant's history. The established work culture is to remain alert for safety first, but also quality. They even personalize the need for remaining safe and watching out for each other with family photos on the lockers, and in the hallways and gathering areas.

At the Capital Aggregates (CA) cement plant in West Lake Hills, Tex., two innovations were revealed. CA has

started producing special Type III cements with either fly ash or slag (supplementary cementitious materials or SCMs) blended into the cement. The chief chemist shared that the blending process at the cement mill allows fly ash resellers and depots to open more of the supply due to their ability to carefully monitor the SCMs into the cement. This also saves storage and handling costs at the batch plant. In addition to normal quality control samples, CA is putting up trial batches and creating test pucks for research and development, but also as a client service.

The next innovation at CA was the diversion of carbon dioxide from the cement calcination process to a new startup factory to mineralize these emissions to make baking soda and bleach. The CA plant personnel introduced us to an executive with SKYONICS, who explained that they hope to be a for-profit technology soon. He explained that the cement plant is making about 1 million tons of cement a year and that they are diverting about 15% of the emissions at this point.

By staying in touch with their suppliers, the precast plants were able to expose us to the company culture at CMC and the innovations at the CA cement plant.

This calendar year brings the 10th anniversary of *ASPIRE*[™] and our team wishes to thank all our supporters and advertisers but also all the authors of the interesting concrete bridge articles. Stay in touch with suppliers and integrate new products and solutions into your concrete bridge projects and then share with the readers of *ASPIRE* what you did. **A**



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Editor-in-Chief

William Nickas • wnckas@pci.org

Managing Technical Editor

Dr. Reid W. Castrodale

Contributing Editor

Dr. Henry G. Russell

Program Manager

Nancy Turner • nturner@pci.org

Associate Editors

Emily B. Lorenz • elorenz@pci.org

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The SR 417 and Boggy Creek Road Interchange is the first standard delivery project in the country to incorporate curved precast concrete U-girders as the primary design. Photo: Parsons.

Ad Sales

Jim Oestmann

Phone: (847) 838-0500 • Cell: (847) 924-5497

Fax: (847) 838-0555 • joestmann@arlpub.com

Reprints

Paul Grigonis • pgrigonis@pci.org

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Robert Risser, President

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