

The official publication of the Idaho Associated General Contractors

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Fall/Winter  
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## THE FORGE STORY



When it comes to self-storage construction, two names quickly come to mind: Hamish Bell and Hayden Farrell. Friends for over 30 years, these two have

“forged” the path when it comes to self-storage developments nationwide.

The two met as young boys in Papakura New Zealand where they found themselves on the same under 19 rugby team. Hayden had a strong silent attack and Hamish a fast wit and skills. The two of them knew right away they were great teammates and celebrated many wins at the local rugby club and at the legendary FORGE Club. This was the start of something much bigger to come.

After finishing school Hayden headed back to the U.S. to work with his dad, Glen Farrell (“King of Storage”), at his installation company. He quickly recruited Hamish to join them. Both Hamish and Hayden worked hard building storage units and travelling throughout the U.S.

In 2001, the pair found themselves on a job in Boise, Idaho. They quickly joined the Lions Rugby team as teammates, fell in love with the city, the people, and the quality of life. In time, they both settled down, started families, and now called Boise home.

After decades spent working in the steel-structure industry, Forge Building Company was created by the pair. Using their expertise in storage and focusing on the three pillars of buildings, designing, and erecting, led the company to a more diverse portfolio and stronger relations across the U.S.

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With a strong portfolio of partners and clients, the Forge team has completed over 500+ jobs, built over 50 million square feet, has over 200+ employees, and remains privately owned.



HAMISH BELL • President



HAYDEN FARRELL • V.P.



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# MESSAGE FROM THE IDAHO AGC CEO WAYNE HAMMON



**G**reetings from all your friends at the Idaho AGC. I hope you find this edition of *Building Idaho* informative and engaging. It's just one more example of how the Idaho AGC strives to bring value to your membership in the state's largest, most trusted network of construction professionals.

By now, most Idahoans are tired of hearing about record-setting growth and the boom in construction. Don't get me wrong – we're happy that our state continues to grow and we welcome the work – but the tremendous volume of construction has only made the shortage of labor that much more of a pressing concern for all of us. There's no doubt about it: finding and keeping talent is by far the number one issue keeping contractors of all sizes and all across the state up at night. Accordingly, it's the top priority for the Idaho AGC.

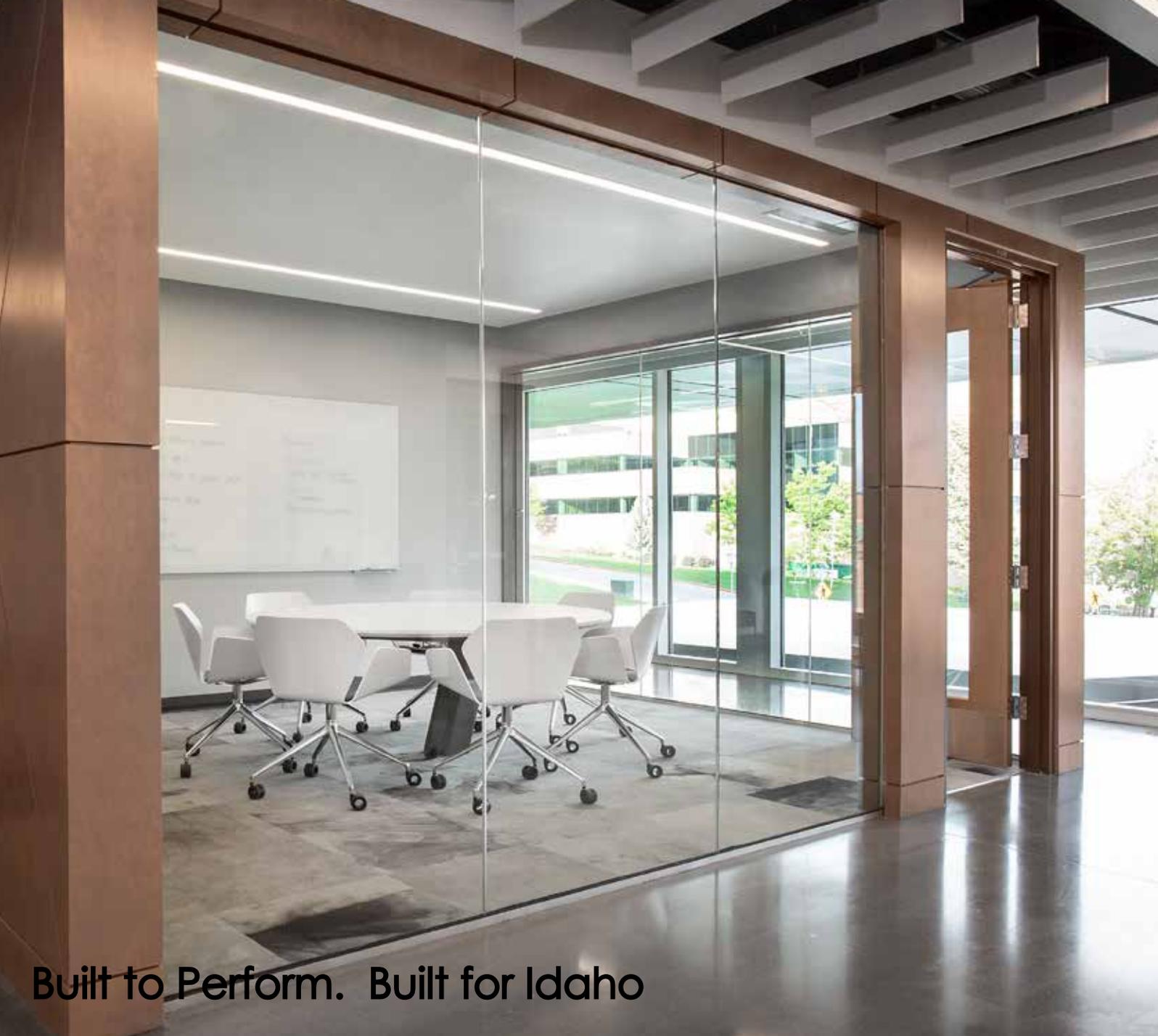
Working with Idaho AGC member companies and other contractors far and near, the Idaho AGC has built a consortium to tackle this priority. It brings together educators at every level, state and federal agencies, and other partners to focus on developing and implementing a contractor-led talent management pipeline (TPM) to bring individuals into the industry, get them started on the road to success, and help them

build a long-term career in construction.

While we've tried many efforts along these lines in the past, this TPM initiative is the largest workforce development undertaking we've ever tried. With the help of our partners, we are attempting to align all the "pieces of pipe" available across all of Idaho into a pipeline that delivers to contractors an ongoing supply of individuals prepared to work in our industry. To be frank, it's not an easy task and we're going to need YOUR help to make it work.

I hope your company will reach out to either myself or Kaycee Cron on the Idaho AGC team today and engage in this important effort. I firmly believe that there is no challenge too large for Idaho's construction industry, when we all work together.

In addition to workforce development, your Idaho AGC team is hard at work tackling the other issues important to you and your bottom line. Let us know if we can help you with reducing your health care costs through the Idaho AGC Health Plan, reward your employees with participation in the Northwest AGC Retirement Plan, or keep your people safe with discounted safety training. All these benefits and many more are part of your AGC membership. Let us know how we can help! ●



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The advertisement for McCallum Rock Drilling features a large, detailed photograph of a rock drilling rig positioned on a steep, rocky hillside. The rig is a complex piece of machinery with a long vertical mast and various components. In the background, a wide valley is visible, showing a river, green fields, and distant mountains under a clear blue sky. The overall scene is bright and clear, suggesting a high-altitude or mountainous environment.

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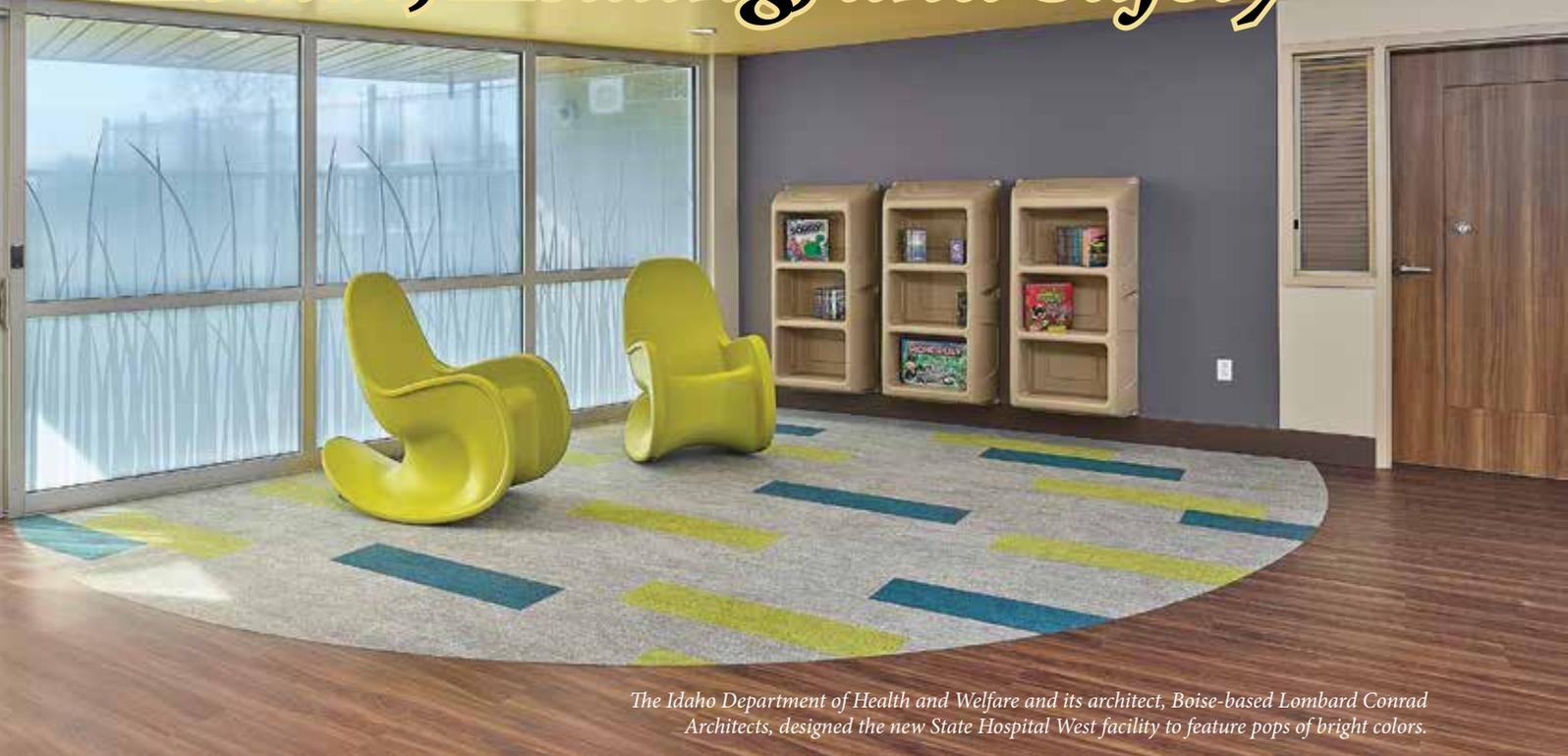
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# New Psychiatric Hospital for Teens Strikes Balance Between Health, Healing, and Safety



*The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare and its architect, Boise-based Lombard Conrad Architects, designed the new State Hospital West facility to feature pops of bright colors.*

\$11 million,  
16,000-square-foot  
facility opened  
in Nampa in  
May 2021

By Peter Jensen

PHOTOS COURTESY OF  
LOMBARD CONRAD ARCHITECTS  
WITH PHOTOGRAPHER NATE TURNER  
OF TURNER ARCHITECTURAL PHOTOGRAPHY.

**W**hen the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare sat down with their architects to design a new adolescent psychiatric hospital in Southwest Idaho, they wanted to create a space that struck a perfect balance. They wanted the hospital to be a healthy and healing environment for patients and their parents, while guaranteeing that it would be as safe as possible for patients, visitors, and staff members.

It was a challenge for the department's administration and their architect, Boise-based Lombard Conrad Architects, who met for a full year just working on the design. In May 2021, they delivered. The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare officially opened the new State Hospital

West facility in Nampa, serving up to 16 youths ages 12 to 17 years old. The new facility, which employs 51 staff members, is a stand-alone building on the grounds of the Southwest Idaho Treatment Center.

Hospital Administrator Gina Westcott said she thinks they achieved the balance between healthy, healing spaces and safety. But, she said the hospital's design needed a third factor to be successful.

"We wanted the experience for the children and parents to really have that 'Wow!' factor," Westcott said.

To accomplish that, LCA and the administration worked to ensure the design featured abundant natural light, beautiful, bright colors, open spaces that are inviting and welcoming, and wood grains in the floors and doors that give the facility an indelible Idaho touch.

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*The nurses station at State Hospital West was designed to be open, without intimidating glass barriers that separate staff from the patients at other adolescent psychiatric facilities.*

*State Hospital West was designed to feature a series of murals depicting scenes from the Idaho outdoors, which will act as calming and de-escalating spaces for patients.*

And, it was essential that the facility be designed with both adolescents and parents in mind. Parents are a crucial part of the patients' treatment, recovery, and rehabilitation.

"Kids get to visit their families," Westcott said. "We have parents here all the time. I tell the staff, when you admit the child, you're also admitting the parent because the child can't get better in a vacuum. We do really want to focus more on the family component. When

they come in, the kid's in a bad place and the family's in a bad place. We transform that over four to six weeks. We're off to a good start. We've had some really exciting success stories."

Getting to the grand opening was the culmination of a years-long process, Westcott said. Before State Hospital West was built, adolescents who needed this kind of treatment went to a unit of a facility in Blackfoot. That made it challenging for the patients, because 60

to 70 percent originate from the Treasure Valley, Westcott said. It made visits with their parents more difficult because of the travel distance. Moving the new building to Nampa made sense because it would be closer to where the majority of the patients and their families live, although the new hospital continues to accept adolescents from throughout the state.

"We've moved the hospital to be closest to where we have the most kids," Westcott said.



*The zen garden in State Hospital West provides adolescent patients with a place to do daily meditations, but also be with their parents. The garden is in full view of the nurses station as a safety precaution.*

*State Hospital West included an outdoor sport court for patients to get exercise and enjoy recreational activities outdoors.*

The Idaho Legislature approved the funding for the new State Hospital West in 2015. The building is 16,000 square feet in size and cost \$11 million to construct. Westcott said she started working on the project in earnest with LCA and other members of the staff and administration in 2017. The department has converted the unit at the Blackfoot facility to serve high-risk adults who are committed to the state of Idaho.

For State Hospital West, they designed the main lobby and entrance area so that it would be engaging and pleasant, and avoid the glass-enclosed barriers that are a mainstay of many other mental health and treatment facilities. The lobby floor has a demarcation between light wood and dark wood, while bright pops of color are displayed in furniture and accent walls.

“We don’t have real segregation between the nurses and the kids,” Westcott said. “You walk in and it’s open. There’s tons of natural light. We tried to incorporate natural light throughout the facility because natural light is so therapeutic.”

Those design elements continue in other rooms throughout the buildings; light wood patterns meld with dark wood, and the furniture provides fun splashes of color. The open format yields safety benefits, too. Nurses and staff can maintain constant lines of sight with the adolescent patients.

Other rooms have gentler color schemes. Two rooms feature murals of outdoors scenes in Idaho — such as a view of mountains at sunset — that are designed to be relaxing, deescalating spaces where the teens can feel safe and calm down.

“We want it to be safe and we want it to be nurturing,” Westcott said. “It is a psychiatric hospital. Everything was safety, safety, safety.”

An example of this is the outdoor zen garden, which is a particular point of

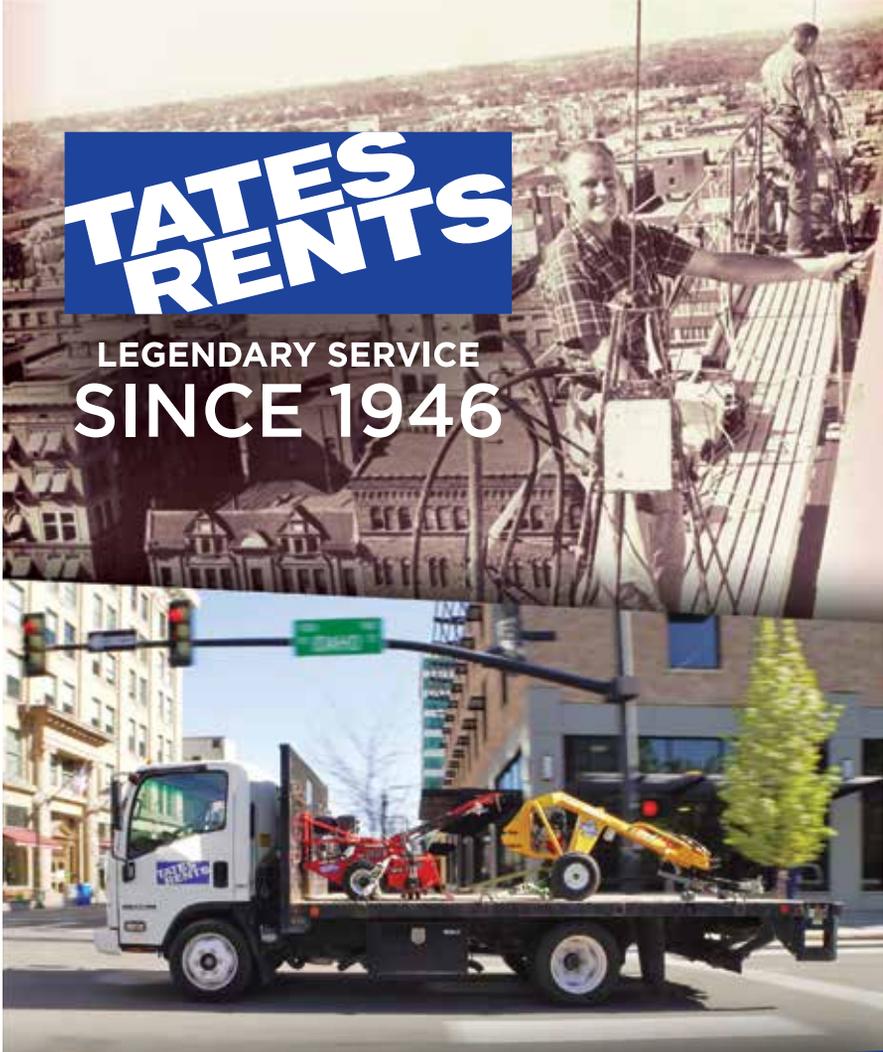
pride for Westcott. The enclosed space is in full view of the nurses’ station, but still offers a place where the patients can be in fresh air and focus. The building also has an outdoor sport court for exercise and other recreational activities.

“We have this beautiful zen garden,” Westcott said. “The kids do their daily meditations out there. That’s where they can have a visit with their family. It’s outdoors but it’s in an enclosed space.

I think that’s pretty innovative for a psychiatric hospital.”

Westcott notes that there’s one more benefit to the new building — the staff members love coming to work there, too.

“It doesn’t look like any other state building that I’ve seen,” Westcott said. “What we’ve gotten, from the beginning, has exceeded all my expectations of what a facility could be. We love being there.” ●



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# ITD Driving Change in North Idaho



By Jim Timlick

*Concrete pour for NB vehicle bridge.*

**D**rivers who commute between Post Falls and Rathdrum in North Idaho can expect their journey to be a little less hectic in the not too distant future.

Work has begun on a \$51.5-million expansion of Idaho Highway 41 that will see it expanded from two to four lanes between those two communities. The new lanes are being added east of the existing lanes. In addition, a pathway is being added for pedestrians and cyclists and an overpass is being built to carry traffic more safely over railway tracks that cross the highway near Hayden Avenue.

Work on the northern portion of the highway began last May while work on the southern portion of the roadway began earlier this year. Completion of the project is scheduled for the fall of 2022.

Randy Durland, a project manager for

the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD), says the expansion is necessary to keep pace with the growing number of new homes being built in the region. Traffic counts in 2019 showed that 19,000 vehicles used ID-41 south of Prairie Avenue during a typical day and that number is expected to increase significantly as new home starts continue to grow exponentially in the area.

“Housing sales are crazy over there. This is really about keeping up with that growth,” explains Durland, who is overseeing construction along the southern portion of the highway. “It’s going to give us a lot more capacity. Everybody who lives here or is moving here is going to benefit from this.”

The expansion of ID-41 is essentially two different projects that have been combined into one, in part because of how and when funding was allotted.

Combining them into one will also help to keep the costs of the project down.

Chance Cole, project manager for the northern portion of the highway expansion, says the project will make it safer for motorists travelling through the region. One at-grade train crossing has been removed, and drivers will no longer cross the train tracks once the overpass is completed. To date, one bridge for northbound traffic has already been built, and a second bridge for southbound traffic is under construction.

In addition, all of the signals along the roadway will be connected and able to “talk” with each other and provide more enhanced and advanced detection “so you should be able to get more mobility going north-south and east-west through those intersections.”

No major traffic disruptions are expected throughout the course of



*Girders for eastern bridge.*



*Looking south toward Hayden Avenue.*

work on the highway as most of the improvements are being built offline. The only noticeable changes will be when vehicles have to be diverted from the southbound to northbound lanes to accommodate reconstruction of the old section of highway, which is being done in sections. Local streets are also shut down several weeks at a time to allow

crews to widen the intersections and tie them in to the new set of lanes.

The biggest challenge involved in the project to date has been moving utilities to accommodate for paving of the new lanes this past spring. Durland says that aspect of the project had to be coordinated closely with the utility companies to give them the time to move whatever was

necessary while allowing the contractor to continue working on the roadway.

“It’s worked pretty well so far,” he explains. “We did have some of the utility work done in advance of the start of construction. That gave them a bit of a head start to get out and get moving. Up to this point everybody’s been coordinating things pretty well.”



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*NB overpass complete.*



*Railroad crossing before overpass.*



*Prairie Avenue to Boekel.*

Cole says it's part of an effort to attract more pollinators such as honeybees and monarch butterflies to the area and hopefully enhance the growth of their populations.

The primary contractor for the highway expansion is Scarsella Brothers Inc., a company based in Kent, WA. The business has worked on a number of big dirt projects for ITD in the past including an expansion of US-95 several years ago.

Because of the location of the section of ID-41 being worked on, the contractor has been able to access a pit owned by ITD to gather fill material rather than using a privately owned source. That has helped significantly in keeping the cost of the project down.

One of the more unique aspects of the project has been ITD's efforts to work with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game to plant a pollinator seed mix along the cut slopes and back slopes along the highway. Cole says it's part of an effort to attract more pollinators such as honeybees and monarch butterflies to the area and hopefully enhance the growth of their populations.

Although ITD is leading the expansion project, it has been working closely with municipal officials in Post Falls and Rathdrum to coordinate those efforts. Both cities were actively involved in the design and construction phases of the project, and the two sides meet regularly to discuss issues or updates. The two cities have also participated financially in the highway improvement by contributing a total of \$5.7 million towards the cost of the project.

"We need to work with them. It began in design, and it has carried on through construction," says ITD public information officer Megan Jahns of the department's partnership on the highway expansion project with the two cities. ●



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 A large photograph of a modern, multi-story brick and concrete building, identified as the Wright Brothers building. The building has many windows and a prominent entrance.
 



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# Mentorship Turned Partnership

Idaho National Laboratory awarded construction projects to ESTECH

By Cindy Chan



*The concrete pour for SPL was one of the largest undertaken at INL since the 1980s.*



*Above: SPL is located on INL's desert Site, at the Materials & Fuels Complex.*

Over the last several years, Idaho National Laboratory (INL) has experienced quite a bit of growth. There has been growth in the number of people they're hiring, growth in the number of facilities they're building, and growth in the number of renovations of existing facilities. While it has been an exciting time for INL, it has also created some challenges.

According to Amy Lientz, director of supply chain energy programs at INL, things don't seem to be slowing down any time soon, which is why they need a good subcontracting community with which to partner and do good work. Lientz says they have since put more effort into supply chain initiatives, collaborating with Stacey Francis, small business program manager.

"There are opportunities available for small businesses to do work at INL," Lientz says. "There are often businesses that are looking at what we're

Construction underway at SPL.



doing at INL but then choose not to pursue those opportunities.” Lientz adds businesses sometimes think they aren’t able to do work at INL, so they don’t bid on the work.

“They’re not often familiar with the administrative requirements or what it takes to do work on a site like ours,” Lientz says.

Some of the things currently in place to strengthen the supply chain as well include improved communications, workforce projections, and a partnership with career technical education. INL, in partnership with the Idaho Department of Commerce, has launched the Quarterly INL Contractors Supplier Roundtable, which aims to share upcoming opportunities, lessons, and ideas on how to do work with INL site contractors, as well as to provide a platform on which suppliers can bring ideas and ask questions. Additionally, the INL Small Business Program hosts a supplier engagement webinar series to highlight partnership opportunities.

INL has also hired a labor economist to project workforce needs for the next five years. The information helps to determine the highest areas of need for subcontracting. Lastly, INL also works with education leadership to put new or revised programs in place to help train the future workforce.

So what do small companies have to do to conduct construction work with INL? Francis says they must sign the site stabilization agreement. A coordinator is available to help the company get signed up, understand the requirements, introduce them to different unions, and make introductions. Companies must also be registered at sam.gov and in INL’s vendor portal on their website, vendor.inl.gov.

“Another thing that is important for construction companies to be successful is back-office, understanding paperwork, and making sure the flow is quick so we can move on with projects,” Francis says.

“We like our in-state small businesses, as we have a contract requirement to do 30 percent of our procurement value within Idaho,” Francis adds. “But beyond the contract requirement, it’s

Left: Estech, LLC has served as the construction subcontractor for the SPL project. They have worked closely with INL throughout the process to ensure they meet laboratory safety standards.



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*As a small business, Estech, LLC has been able to work on one of the lab's larger projects.*

nice to work with companies in-state because they understand what it takes to do a project in Idaho. We have a short construction season in Idaho and there are aspects of doing work here that maybe aren't the same elsewhere.”

Francis says one of the challenges in bringing more construction contractors to INL is that commercial and residential construction industries are way more active. “It's a lot easier to put up a house or commercial building than to work with the requirements we have. It's a different ballgame when you work in a national lab, but there is the potential for a great partnership that can be beneficial to both parties.”

To build more interest for organizations to bid on their projects, INL has put together a supplier engagement webinar series

focused on partnership opportunities, including those available in construction, in order to put those opportunities out there. Companies are able to have an idea of what is coming up and what they can bid on.

INL wanted to highlight a recent project that exemplifies a solid working partnership to encourage more small businesses to work with them. INL recently mentored ESTECH, a small construction company in the Boise/Meridian area who hadn't completed large federal projects before, especially nuclear-type projects.

ESTECH won through competitive procurement construction of the MFC (Materials and Fuels Complex) Administration Building, which established a feel for doing work on-site, and then won SPL (Sample Preparation Laboratory). The MFC consists of 17 different nuclear facilities. The SPL is INL's biggest project since BEA (Battelle Energy Alliance) took over the contract.

“It will establish a Category 3 nuclear lab for assessing materials in a nuclear environment,” Brady Orchard, project director for the MFC at INL, explains, adding the construction project is just shy of \$85 million. “Right now, we are one year into a three-year construction window on that project.”

“One thing I've been particularly happy with ESTECH is their ability to look forward to what's coming up and plan ahead versus

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being reactionary in the field,” notes Orchard.

During the procurement planning process, INL issued a bundle of three RFIs (request for interest), inviting local and regional companies with the capability to support the sizes of these projects. ESTECH was one of the applicants. Orchard says ESTECH won the MFC Administration Building job, which gave them an opportunity to get their feet wet to understand INL’s processes and procedures.

“We were pleased to award SPL to ESTECH also based on the RFP process,” Orchard adds. “They demonstrated their ability to deliver that facility in a cost-effective manner.”

Mark Allen, director of operations at ESTECH, says they saw a lot of good work coming out of INL and wanted to be a part of it. It was ESTECH’s interaction with INL on the first project, understanding of the requirements, desire to work, and overall past experience that earned INL’s confidence to give them the SPL project.

“They understood the importance of safety in our environment and the importance of quality, schedule, and cost,” Orchard says.

“As a small company, it’s hard to find opportunities to compete. The work at INL is somewhat intimidating for a lot of contractors if their background has mainly been commercial, residential, and private work. The volume of paperwork and the safety standards are at a significantly higher standard; you’ll only see that in government, military, or large-scale projects. However, ESTECH

has proven that businesses should not shy away from working with the lab. They have learned quickly how to meet these requirements and, with strong mentorship from INL, have quickly proven their capabilities.”

Lientz advises companies interested in doing work with INL to not disregard a government contractor as a customer simply because there are additional requirements. While government contractor work is different from the commercial industry, INL provides mentorship to help companies meet safety and quality expectations so they are successful.

Allen says the mentorship by INL was a smooth process; the RFI initial proposal stages included efficient back-and-forth communication. ESTECH was able to have all their questions answered, and INL provided plenty of detail and depth.

After working with ESTECH, Orchard is confident that there will be additional long-term opportunities for more companies to work on similar projects after witnessing the growth at INL for the past four to five years. Lientz adds that the opportunities don’t just start and end at INL. There are opportunities for small companies to complete work for other contractors in addition to working with INL.

“That’s always good for business – they see the suite of opportunities that surround them,” she says.

“There are lots of exciting projects coming up on the site, and we would like to be involved in as many as we can,” Allen says. ●



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# Building Awareness for Suicide Prevention in the Construction Industry

By Cal Beyer, National Advocate for Worker Wellbeing in the Construction Industry

**A** robust construction industry is the foundation of a healthy economy. Construction and industrial tradespersons help build America. From the hands of trades workers come the necessary infrastructure and buildings where we conduct our lives in every way. The construction workforce helps build the economic prosperity and social progress we all enjoy.

Unfortunately, the construction workforce is paying a steep price for their efforts. There is mounting evidence the construction workforce is a high-risk industry for various physical and behavioral health conditions.

There are statistics to support each listed condition. However, the purpose of sharing the issues is to create awareness and understanding that the construction workforce is considered high risk for both physical and behavioral health. More importantly, this is a call to action for construction employers, labor unions, associations, workforce development specialists, and even medical and behavioral health-care professionals to take note and provide resources to help employees take care of themselves, families, coworkers, and friends.

## The construction and industrial trades have high incidences of the following representative ailments and conditions

### Physical Health Conditions

- Fatigue
- Obesity
- High-blood pressure
- Tobacco use
- Cardiovascular disease
- Musculoskeletal disorders
- Chronic pain

### Behavioral Health Conditions

- Social isolation and loneliness
- Stress and anxiety
- Depression
- Propensity for risk-taking
- Heavy/binge drinking
- Substance misuse
- Suicide

## WHY ARE THE RISKS SO HIGH IN THE CONSTRUCTION WORKFORCE?

There are many fundamental industry factors that influence the risk factors. The ebb and flow of economic cycles, combined with end-of-project furloughs and seasonal layoffs, impact the financial wellbeing of workers. Construction is a pressure-packed industry with increasing demands to meet rising performance standards in schedule, budget, productivity, quality, and

There are many fundamental industry factors that influence the risk factors. The ebb and flow of economic cycles, combined with end-of-project furloughs and seasonal layoffs, impact the financial wellbeing of workers.

safety. This stress undermines the well-being of the workforce. Additionally, workers are paid on an hourly basis, so if work is canceled by weather, schedule, or sequencing delays, there is no pay. This creates access barriers to adequate medical healthcare and behavioral health services.

### ARE THERE OTHER RISK FACTORS?

There are four other interrelated risk factors that further impact the physical and mental health of the construction workforce:

Workforce culture, including the stoic “tough guy and gal” work ethic where feelings aren’t talked about and the job must go on. Stigma about mental well-being runs high, as is typical of male-dominated industries.

Company factors, including the nature of the work of specific trades, location of work, amount of work, schedule and sequence of work, and the amount of overtime.

Job, task, and environmental stressors, including the long hours, and physically and mentally demanding working conditions in sometimes harsh environmental conditions.

Worker lifestyle choices, including whether a worker is receptive to seeking medical care and behavioral health services; individual choices made with respect to nutrition, exercise, alcohol, and substance use; and adoption of stress management and self-care practices.

The net effect of these risk factors is that construction has the second highest rate of suicide, which is over three times higher than the rate for the general population in the United States. Because of the size of its workforce, construction has the highest number of suicides among all occupations. The reality is that more construction workers die by suicide annually than die in all occupational fatalities in safety incidents.

There is good news: suicide can be preventable, but only if we talk about and help reduce the stigma that keeps people at risk from seeking and accepting help. For starters, everyone should load these two resources into their cell phones and share this with their family, coworkers, and friends:

**NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE: 1 (800) 273-8255**

**CRISIS TEXT LINE: TEXT “HELP” TO 741741**

### IDAHO-SPECIFIC RESOURCES

1. The Idaho Suicide Prevention and Crisis Hotline can be

reached by dialing 1 (800) 273-8255 or via text at (208) 398-4357.

<https://www.idahosuicideprevention.org/get-help>

2. Ms. Lee Flinn is the Director of the Idaho Suicide Prevention Lifeline. She can be reached at [lflinn@jannus.org](mailto:lflinn@jannus.org) or (206) 258-6991.

3. American Foundation for Suicide Prevention ([www.AFSP.org](http://www.AFSP.org)). Justine McClure is the Area Director for both Idaho and Washington. She can be reached at [JMcClure@afsp.org](mailto:JMcClure@afsp.org) or (206) 459-7617.

4. The Idaho Chapter of the National Alliance for Mental Illness has a website for non-crisis support: <https://namiidaho.org/about-nami-idaho/> and a general informational email address: [idahonami@gmail.com](mailto:idahonami@gmail.com).

### RESOURCES

Center for Workplace Mental Health. One-hour webinar on Mental Health, Depression and Stigma-Ending in Construction: <https://vimeo.com/452199706>.

Construction Industry Alliance for Suicide Prevention: [www.preventconstructionsuicide.com](http://www.preventconstructionsuicide.com) – posters, sample toolbox talks, and other free resources are available.

Free construction suicide prevention videos: [www.Joyages.com/construction](http://www.Joyages.com/construction) (9 short videos less than four minutes in length).

Washington Department of Industry and Labor. Two-minute video on opioids and suicide prevention: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=empsWzqpQaE&feature=share](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=empsWzqpQaE&feature=share).

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cal Beyer, CWP, SCTPP is Vice President of Workforce Risk and Worker Wellbeing for CSDZ, a Holmes Murphy Company. He’s been dedicated to construction risk and safety management since 1996. From 2014 to 2020, he was director of risk management and safety for a paving contractor in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho. He is a member of the Executive Committee of the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention and the Expert Advisory Group of the Center for Workplace Mental Health. Cal was instrumental in the launch of the Construction Industry Alliance for Suicide Prevention. Contact him at [cbeyer@CSDZ.com](mailto:cbeyer@CSDZ.com) or (651) 307-7883. ●

# IDAHO INFLUENCER: Mayor Robert Simison



**M**ayor Robert Simison came into his role well-prepared. He has experience from working in politics, he has a hunger for improving transportation and infrastructure, and he wants Meridian to be a place for families to work, play, and live.

**Q: Why did you choose to run for Mayor?**

**A:** I worked for the previous mayor, Tammy de Weerd, who laid out a vision for the community when she was in office. I believed in the vision of Meridian being a premier City that focuses on families.

**Q: What challenges does rapid growth bring to Meridian?**

**A:** Transportation has always been the biggest challenge. Second would be education and schools. Ultimately, growth challenges come down to the need for infrastructure. We are a city that doesn't build our own roads, and schools are handled by the school district. When you have growth occurring with the roads following several years later, that becomes a challenge.

**Q: You've made transportation an important priority for your administration. What specific problems are you looking to fix?**

**A:** I'm trying to find ways to get people to move in and around Meridian effectively from point A to point B. We have the Interstate that runs east to west and divides Meridian, which means we need

north to south connections to connect the community. The more connections we have, the easier it is for everyone to move. The Linder Road Overpass is one specific project. We also have Discovery Park in the south and Owyhee High School in the north, both of which are on the fringes of our community. We want an improved road network to better serve those two destination locations so it's safer and more efficient for people to access these facilities. We will do what we can to work with our partners to make that happen.

**Q: How does the city interact/cooperate with ACHD?**

**A:** We're trying to work with them to help them get the road improvements they need to make the Linder Road Overpass happen. We've been talking with them about putting in a new urban renewal district to provide funding for the southern portion of that road. We also encourage our development partners to interact and cooperate with ACHD. Brighton Corporation is working with the ACHD on a cooperative agreement to build a road to connect Discovery Park in the south part of Meridian. We also work with ACHD on individual projects to the best of our ability and identify the ones we hope they will prioritize.

**Q: What steps have you taken to improve the city's relationship with ACHD, the county, and the other communities in the valley?**

**A:** We try to have open lines of

communication with our partners, especially when it pertains to transportation issues. We hold joint meetings with ACHD, and I meet with Commission President and others regularly. I also regularly meet with other mayors and county commissioners to discuss our regional priorities. We all understand we need to work together to address our regional issues. Our conversations with ACHD have led to greater staff engagement regarding transportation projects in Meridian.

**Q: What steps is the city taking to make Meridian more than just another bedroom community?**

**A:** I don't think you can consider Meridian a bedroom community due to the job growth we have seen over the last two decades. What we need to focus on is bringing family-wage jobs to reduce the amount of people who have to commute to other parts of the Treasure Valley to work – and we are seeing that more and more. As far as shopping and entertainment, we are a destination location and that makes us a desirable, full-service city.

**Q: What has surprised you the most since becoming Mayor?**

**A:** The easy answer is how to govern during a pandemic. The other answer has been the importance of having relationships with the staff in the organization. It took time for me to get to know them, and them to get to know me. I've been impressed by all the things the City of Meridian

He has experience from working in politics, he has a hunger for improving transportation and infrastructure, and he wants Meridian to be a place for families to work, play, and live.

team has been able to accomplish throughout the pandemic. They've kept the community functioning at a high level. We kept providing the services to the community such as holding public meetings and finding innovative ways to perform inspections. Our staff has really stepped up.

**Q: What do you know now that you wish you had known before becoming Mayor?**

**A:** Because I worked for the previous mayor, I had a pretty good grasp on what the expectations of the job would be. One thing I wish I had known was the weight of some of the decisions you make. You don't know how it affects you until you experience how your decision might impact the citizens in the community.

**Q: What's the next big and exciting thing we can expect in Meridian?**

**A:** Hopefully, we can expect the Linder Road Overpass. That type of traffic and transportation connection would be huge. We've got a lot of things going on as a growing community. We have new schools opening, like Owyhee High School. The next phase of Discovery Park is moving forward. And we are making improvements to our golf course. On the commercial side, Top Golf is coming soon and there is more on the way that we don't even know about yet. So as they say, the best is yet to come for Meridian. ●



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# *The Boise Area is Booming.* Here's How Local School Districts are Handling Growth

Boise School District, West Ada plan  
for new school construction projects

By Peter Jensen



*Boise School District used funding from a \$172 million bond measure to pay for renovations for Pierce Park Elementary School.*

PHOTO CREDIT: BOISE SCHOOL DISTRICT.

*Originally built in 1977-78, Amity Elementary School received a renovation project that eliminated the need for portable classes on the school campus, and brought all students, teachers, and staff under one roof.*

PHOTO CREDIT: BOISE SCHOOL DISTRICT.

**T**he Boise School District began in 1881 and predates Idaho's statehood by nine years. While its buildings were not that old, the district still had a number of facilities whose birthdates would appear similar to members of the baby boomer generation — or older generations.

Retirement is a burgeoning trend among boomers, but that wasn't an option for the Boise School District. Instead, in recent years several of its school buildings have received major renovations that are breathing new life into them as they accommodate new generations of students. And with the population booming in the Boise area as

never before, the Boise School District is relying on a mix of major renovations and new development projects to handle an expected influx in student enrollment.

In the West Ada School District, administrators and school board members are handling growth in a similar fashion, using a mix of major renovation projects and new school development, according to district spokeswoman Charalee Jackson. The district just opened a new high school in Meridian, Owyhee High School, at the start of the 2021-22 school year. A new elementary school in northwest Meridian called Pleasant View Elementary is now in its second year of existence.

The pace of development projects

being approved at city halls throughout the Treasure Valley will influence the districts' future plans. In the Boise School District, affordable housing will be an important issue, spokesman Dan Hollar said. The district is planning to build a new elementary school in the Harris Ranch area, which is currently in the design phase.

"Plans are in place to add new residential housing in southwest Boise," Hollar wrote in an email. "And growth is expected to continue in the Harris Ranch area, hence the need for a new elementary school there. As home prices increase, adding and supporting affordable housing to support our young families moving into the Boise area and enrolling



Boise School District is growing in the same style as the city it serves, with a plan to construct a new elementary school in the Harris Ranch area of Boise by 2023. PHOTO CREDIT: BOISE SCHOOL DISTRICT.



One project that received funding from Boise School District's bond package was to expand the Dennis Technical Education Center to host a dental assistant program. PHOTO CREDIT: BOISE SCHOOL DISTRICT.

their children in the Boise School District becomes an important issue for us to monitor.”

### IDAHO POPULATION BOOMS

In August, the U.S. Census reported its latest decadal population figures for Idaho, showing the difference between 2010 and 2020. The change would be apparent to anyone who's spent time in the Treasure Valley lately — the state population grew dramatically, especially in the Boise area.

Idaho was the second-fastest growing state in the U.S., just behind Utah. Its population totaled 1.8 million people, which was an increase of about 17 percent from 2010, according to the Census data.

Treasure Valley cities saw their populations spike, too. The population in Boise swelled to about 235,000 last year, which was about a 15 percent increase over 2010. In Meridian, the numbers are even more stark: The city was the fourth-fastest growing community in the U.S. It grew from about 75,000 people in 2010 to almost 118,000 in 2020 — an increase of almost 60 percent.

The growth wasn't limited to Ada County. Canyon County's largest city, Nampa, experienced a population increase of about 23 percent and now totals about 100,000 people. However, Nampa School District spokeswoman Kathleen Tuck said the district is not experiencing a growth in student

enrollment. Therefore, it's not planning on any new school construction, but will instead focus on improving and maintaining the existing facilities, Tuck said.

### BOISE SCHOOL DISTRICT RENOVATES AND EXPANDS WHILE HONORING HISTORY

In 2017, the school district sent a \$172.5 million bond to voters, and it was

approved with 86 percent of the vote. Hollar said that resounding victory was a demonstration of the trust that the district has with the community it serves.

“We're fortunate to live in a community that supports those investments,” Hollar said. “That's a trust factor and we earn it every day when we serve our students.”

The bond has paid for a bevy of projects, including renovations to



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In the West Ada School District, newly constructed Owyhee High School in Meridian opened for the 2021-22 school year and is helping to ease strains on capacity in other nearby high schools.

PHOTO CREDIT: WEST ADA SCHOOL DISTRICT.

Pleasant View Elementary School opened in Meridian in 2020, and was part of a \$95-million bond measure that voters in the West Ada School District approved in 2018. PHOTO CREDIT: WEST ADA SCHOOL DISTRICT.

Amity Elementary School, Pierce Park Elementary School, and Whittier Elementary School, as well as redoing the gymnasium at Boise High School. Boise High's gym was originally built in 1936, but the renovation project preserved its history while adding modern recreational spaces, apparatus, and locker rooms. The facility also added a music wing and a performing arts center.

"It's a new lease on life for that building," Hollar said of the Boise High project. "It's a tremendous opportunity for our students and our staff."

The renovations for Amity, Pierce Park, and Whittier also brought all of the students and teachers under one roof, and

removed portable classroom buildings that had been set up to accommodate growth in student enrollment over the years. That has been a major benefit for students as well as teachers, Hollar said.

The district expanded its Dennis Technical Education Center to increase the size of classrooms and add new programs for HVAC, plumbing, and electrical, while supporting existing programs such as emergency medical technician, dental assistant, certified nursing assistant, graphic arts, and cybersecurity. A new classroom wing was added for Timberline High School that includes modern science labs and art classrooms.

Hollar said that Boise School District is about 80 percent finished with its plan for capital improvement projects that are funded through bond revenue. One of the final major remaining projects is the new elementary school in Harris Ranch, which will be called Dallas Harris Elementary School. That honors a request of the Harris family, which donated the land for the new school; Dallas Harris started Harris Brothers Lumber Company and he and his wife, Alta, lived at Harris Ranch for many decades. The new elementary school is scheduled to open in fall 2023.

### NEW SCHOOLS EASE CAPACITY STRAINS IN WEST ADA

For West Ada, the addition of Owyhee High School and Pleasant View Elementary School helped alleviate some issues of overcrowding in Meridian, Jackson wrote in an email. The new high school helped ease capacity at Meridian High School, Rocky Mountain High School, and Eagle High School. Pleasant View did the same thing in northwest Meridian and in the southern portion of Star, she wrote.

In 2018, voters approved a measure authorizing West Ada School District to issue \$95 million in bonds. Owyhee cost approximately \$60 million to construct, but the bond funding also paid for Pleasant View as well as expanding Mountain View High School to add 20



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classrooms and build a larger cafeteria. More projects included expanding and renovating Star Elementary School and expanding Mary McPherson Elementary School.

Long term, West Ada sees a need to invest in acquiring land for future middle school and high schools, but that will be 10 to 20 years out, Jackson wrote. The district has also identified additions and remodels for Centennial High School, Desert Sage Elementary School, and Lake Hazel Middle School, but no definite timelines have been set. One consideration will be anticipated growth and land-use decisions that affect the areas those schools serve, she wrote.

“For example, (Ada County Highway District) expanding Lake Hazel will likely change what that remodel could look like,” Jackson wrote.

The expected development and growth in the area will be a major factor in the district’s future plans, according to Jackson.

“With the developments that have been approved by the local city councils, we know that we’re still going to be experiencing the growth from those numerous developments for the next

three to five years,” Jackson wrote. “The type of housing that is being approved (single or multifamily housing), the number of developments, and completion timelines are all factors.” ●



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*Perrine Bridge.*

# Magic Valley Study to Consider Region's Future Transportation Needs

By Jim Timlick

**I**n 1974, Snake River Canyon became famous around the world when legendary daredevil Robert (Evel) Knievel attempted to jump it on a specially designed rocket-style motorcycle.

Crossing the canyon could become much easier – and safer – for people living and working in southern Idaho as a result of a recent decision by the state's transportation authority. In May, the Idaho Transportation Department

(ITD) allocated \$4 million for a study to examine a new Snake River crossing. The study is scheduled to begin sometime during summer 2021 and is expected to take 18 months to two years to complete. An outside agency will be brought in to conduct the study.

The planning and environmental linkage study is a follow-up to an origin-destination analysis conducted in 2020 that considered possible locations for a third bridge across the canyon in addition to the existing Perrine and Hansen bridges near Twin Falls. That previous study also considered what potential benefits there could be from adding an additional crossing in the region.

Jessica Williams, public information officer for the ITD's District 4 office,

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Clear Lake Grade.



Hansen Bridge.

says the new study is part of an effort by the department to be proactive and look toward the future transportation needs of the communities it serves.

“Really, what we’re doing right now is just looking at where those potential options are and looking out toward the future,” she explains.

“We are trying to do some of the groundwork now so that when that need does come, or the possibility comes to proceed with this in the future then we’ll hopefully have some of the groundwork done and we’ll have a better idea of how we might best to approach things in the future.”

The new study will investigate a number of considerations, including the anticipated growth of several nearby communities and their future transportation needs and potential locations for a new crossing should it be determined one is required.

“What this study will hopefully do is look at several potential crossing locations and perhaps narrow it down even further to determine if one option might need to be thrown out immediately because something comes to light that would make it a poor potential location,” Williams says. “Conversely, some other potential locations that might not have been considered before we can now look at them and say this might actually be a good location for a future crossing and here are the reasons why.”

The new study does not guarantee a new crossing will be built over the Snake River. In fact, Williams points out one possible

outcome could be a determination that a new crossing will not be required at any time in the near future.

The study has the full support of public officials in the communities of Twin Falls and Jerome. Commissioners in both counties recently entered into agreements to advocate for the project. That doesn’t come as much of a surprise considering the previous origin-destination study indicated multiple points of Blue Lakes Boulevard near the Perrine Bridge will reach an F level of service during peak evening hours by 2040.

“This isn’t just an effort that’s being driven by the Idaho Transportation Department,” Williams says. “The communities and various entities in Jerome and Twin Falls are looking at how much their communities are growing and what will be the potential need for another crossing in this area to help alleviate congestion and support overall growth in those communities.”

In addition to analyzing future growth

and possible locations for a new crossing, the study will also consider the potential environmental impacts of such an undertaking. Williams calls the canyon and surrounding area a “natural jewel” and says it’s important that ITD protect the natural landscape while at the same time “ensuring we have a reliable transportation infrastructure to transport business, services, and people throughout the state.”

In conjunction with the study, ITD will engage in public outreach efforts to solicit public input and keep residents and area stakeholders informed.

“It’s always important for us to engage communities with all of our projects, especially one like this that has the potential to be as impactful as this does,” Williams says. “While many of us live within the communities we serve, there may be things we don’t realize or know about until we add that community involvement aspect which allows for people to bring something to our attention.” ●



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# Idaho AGC Education Foundation Scholarship Recipients 2021

**T**hese students are building a brighter future for themselves and Idaho, thanks to the Idaho AGC Education Foundation. The Idaho AGC Education Foundation's mission is to attract and retain quality workers in the construction industry – and one way they are doing that is by providing opportunities and funds to Idaho students who show an interest and high skill level in the trades. The five 2021 Education Foundation Scholarship recipients are:



## GARRETT LOVELL

Garrett is a Construction Management major at Boise State University. This spring, he began an internship with Andersen Construction, working on a tenant improvement hospital project in Boise. He has been a member of the BSU CM student chapter for his entire college career, and for the 2021-2022 school year, he will serve as President of Sigma Lambda Chi (Construction Management Honor Society). He will graduate in spring of 2022.



## KENDRA MATTSON

Kendra is a Construction Management major at Boise State University. Kendra is a member of the WICED (Women in Construction, Engineering, and Development), Engineering and Design, and the CMA (Construction Management Association) groups on campus. Kendra is also a REVIT Specialist and has worked as a CAD drafter since December of 2020. She will graduate in spring of 2023.



## JASON CLEVINGER

Jason is a Construction Management major at Boise State University. He has been on the Highest Honors Dean's List at BSU for both 2020 semesters and is a very active member in the CMA (Construction Management Association) group. In his senior year, he will serve as Treasurer for both the ACI (American Concrete Institute) group and Sigma Lambda Chi (Construction Management Honor Society). He will graduate in spring of 2022.



## KEVIN TODT

Kevin is a Construction Management major at Boise State University. Kevin is a member of two on-campus groups, the CMA (Construction

Management Association) and Sigma Lambda Chi (Construction Management Honor Society). In his senior year, he will be President of the CMA group and the Vice President of Sigma Lambda Chi. As captain of the ASC student competition in spring 2021, he helped lead his team to a second place finish at the national competition. He will graduate in spring of 2022.



## PARKER REGUERA

Parker is a Construction Management major at Boise State University. Parker has received Dean's List honors while attending BSU and currently

owns his own construction business, Reguera Builders, LLC. His company specializes in the installation of doors and windows on construction projects in the Treasure Valley. He will graduate in spring of 2023.

# GUESS THAT PROJECT!



In each edition of *Building Idaho*, we will share a photo of a place, project, or piece of equipment. The first reader to identify it correctly will receive an Idaho AGC swag bundle, and be mentioned in the following edition. To identify this project, email Hailey Reyes at [hreyes@idahoagc.org](mailto:hreyes@idahoagc.org) with your answer, name, company, and mailing address.



Nobody was able to correctly identify our last photo challenge, which was the Four Mile Bridge north of Ketchum on SH-75 MP 148 crossing the Big Wood River. Can you guess this Idaho project?

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# Idaho AGC Helps Pave the Way for Major 2021 Highway Funding Package

New legislation adds \$126 million in one-time funds, \$80 million in annual funding for transportation

By Peter Jensen

PHOTOS COURTESY OF IDAHO TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT



*By approving a revenue package this spring that could result in up to \$1.6 billion in bond funding for transportation, the Idaho Legislature has enacted the dawn of a new day for roads projects throughout the state.*

*For more than a decade, lawmakers have known that Idaho was falling hundreds of millions of dollars short in annual transportation funding needs. The package approved in 2021 covers the majority of the identified need.*

**T**he smooth operation of America's political institutions relies on compromises in the same way cars rely on gasoline. But neither cars nor political compromises will get very far without a road to travel on. In politics, that's why it's critical for coalitions to help lay the groundwork that forges a path to successful compromise — and to keep well-intended negotiations from running headlong into a ditch.

The most recent session of the Idaho

Legislature provided a resounding example of this lesson. Lawmakers approved and Gov. Brad Little signed a transportation funding package that will infuse millions of new dollars every year into Idaho's network of roads, bridges, and highways. The package adds \$126 million in one-time surplus funding this year, and then will supply \$80 million every year after that. With these new revenue sources, the state can use its strong credit rating to secure bond funding up to \$1.6 billion, and come close to fully addressing

the \$262 million that's needed annually to preserve the existing transportation network, according to a 2020 Boise State University study.

Idaho Associated General Contractors helped form and lead the coalition to secure the funding package's approval in the Legislature, said CEO Wayne Hammon. Crucially, the package relies on existing sales tax revenue sources — so it does not require any tax hikes. He said AGC aided the coalition by helping to produce the Boise State



Above: The funding package approved by the Idaho Legislature will pay for transportation projects from Lava Hot Springs to Sandpoint, and everywhere in between.

Right: The new funding for transportation will create a set, reliable annual schedule for contractors bidding on roads and highway projects in Idaho, in contrast to the fluctuation that occurred in recent years when lawmakers devoted a portion of their budget surplus to transportation.



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*According to an updated Boise State University study, Idaho was facing a transportation funding shortfall of almost \$242 million annually. Unless the Legislature took action, Idaho was in danger of slipping further and further behind in transportation.*



*The average daily traffic count across Idaho neared almost 4 million users in July 2021, which was a year-over-year increase of almost half a million, according to the Idaho Transportation Department.*

study, by issuing fact sheets to show the positive outcomes that will result from this investment, and to help keep lines of communication open between the Legislature and the governor. Hammon said the communications efforts were aided by the existing friendship between the respective chairs of the House and Senate Transportation Committees, Rep. Joe Palmer, R-Meridian, and Sen. Lori Den Hartog, R-Meridian.

For Hammon, who worked on transportation issues as a top advisor to former Gov. Butch Otter before coming to Idaho AGC in 2012, the end result was unusual for Idaho politics.

“It came through with very little opposition in the end,” Hammon said. “Having worked on transportation issues for 15 years, I can tell you it’s very unusual to have little opposition in the end. It didn’t raise anyone’s taxes. It was a much easier process. We didn’t reinvent anything. They all had to compromise to get there.”

The package will create a significant impact on Idaho’s economy, Hammon said. It will fund a bevy of projects from Lava Hot Springs to Sandpoint, including major work on Interstate 90 near Coeur d’Alene, on Interstate 84 in the Treasure Valley and in the Magic

Valley, and on important local routes like Highway 75 in the Wood River Valley that suffer from megasized potholes when the winter snows melt in spring. These projects will help improve the safety and reliability of the transportation network for drivers and passengers, while easing the efficient movement of goods, materials, and products from producers, farms, businesses, and industries to their markets.

Significantly, the package will offer a reliable, annual source of funding for construction projects statewide. To address pent-up funding needs for transportation, in recent years the Legislature had enacted a “surplus eliminator” provision that took a portion of budget surpluses and devoted it to transportation. However, the amounts fluctuated year to year depending on the state budget revenue and the Legislature’s and governor’s spending priorities. That made it tough for contractors to know when projects were going to happen and where, and thus made decisions more challenging on hiring, materials, equipment, and other factors.

The new legislation will provide contractors with certainty for future planning and growing their businesses, Hammon said.

“It’s going to stretch contractors’ abilities to get the work done,” Hammon said. “They’ll have to grow and hire and expand.”

Hammon cites three areas of the state where the new projects will be “game-changers” in their respective communities. The first is in Eastern Idaho, where the Idaho Transportation Department will be able to ease traffic congestion and improve safety with projects in Rexburg, Idaho Falls, and near Chubbuck. In Rexburg, ITD will pursue improvements to the interchanges on Highway 20 at Main Street and University Boulevard to improve traffic flow. In Idaho Falls, a project will address six interchanges between Highway 20 and I-15 and implement roadway realignments as well as additional improvements. And between Idaho Falls and Pocatello, ITD is planning on adding a third lane to I-15.

In North Idaho near Coeur d’Alene, Hammon said I-90 will be widened to add a truck lane.

“There are thousands and thousands of semis on I-90,” Hammon said. “Having an additional truck lane will immensely impact the economy.”

And in Meridian in the Treasure Valley, one project will help move traffic off of



*Idaho Associated General Contractors played a key role in forging and leading the coalition that successfully advocated for passage of the recent transportation funding package in the Idaho Legislature.*

Eagle Road and onto a four-lane divided highway.

“Getting traffic off of Eagle Road and onto a four-lane divided highway will change Meridian forever,” Hammon said.

He noted that the work on transportation isn’t finished. Next, the coalition AGC is helping to lead will be working with lawmakers and Gov. Little to address local roads and bridges. In some communities, the tax base is large enough to adequately fund maintenance on this infrastructure. Others struggle with funding that maintenance while paying for other essential services like public safety.

The improvements to the state-funded system will be evident to drivers who use the main highways, such as those who drive between Nampa and Boise. The backlog of maintenance and improvement projects on local roads and bridges won’t be as evident, unless you’re a farmer or a timber producer who’s trying to get products to market and one of those roads or bridges is shut down, Hammon said.

“On a scale, (those local roads and bridges are) just as important to the local farmer as the highways are to Micron and Simplot,” Hammon said. “If you’re driving from Nampa to Boise every day,

you don’t see it. What do we do about those local roads and bridges? The first step to getting that product to market is on a local road. The need on the local level is just as big.”

But, Hammon applauded the effort and hard work that went into this spring’s legislation, including Gov. Little, Rep. Palmer, Sen. Hartog, and many others. He said the transportation package was a key first-term priority for Little, because the alternative would have been to fall

further and further behind on funding.

“We were still behind schedule,” Hammon said. “Brad Little came in in 2019. He said, ‘I want to do a transportation package.’ We had started late and we hadn’t met the need. We were falling further and further behind. How do we advance something that tackles this head-on? The governor got what he wanted. It’s big enough to move the needle. It’s big enough to directly impact the state’s economy.” ●

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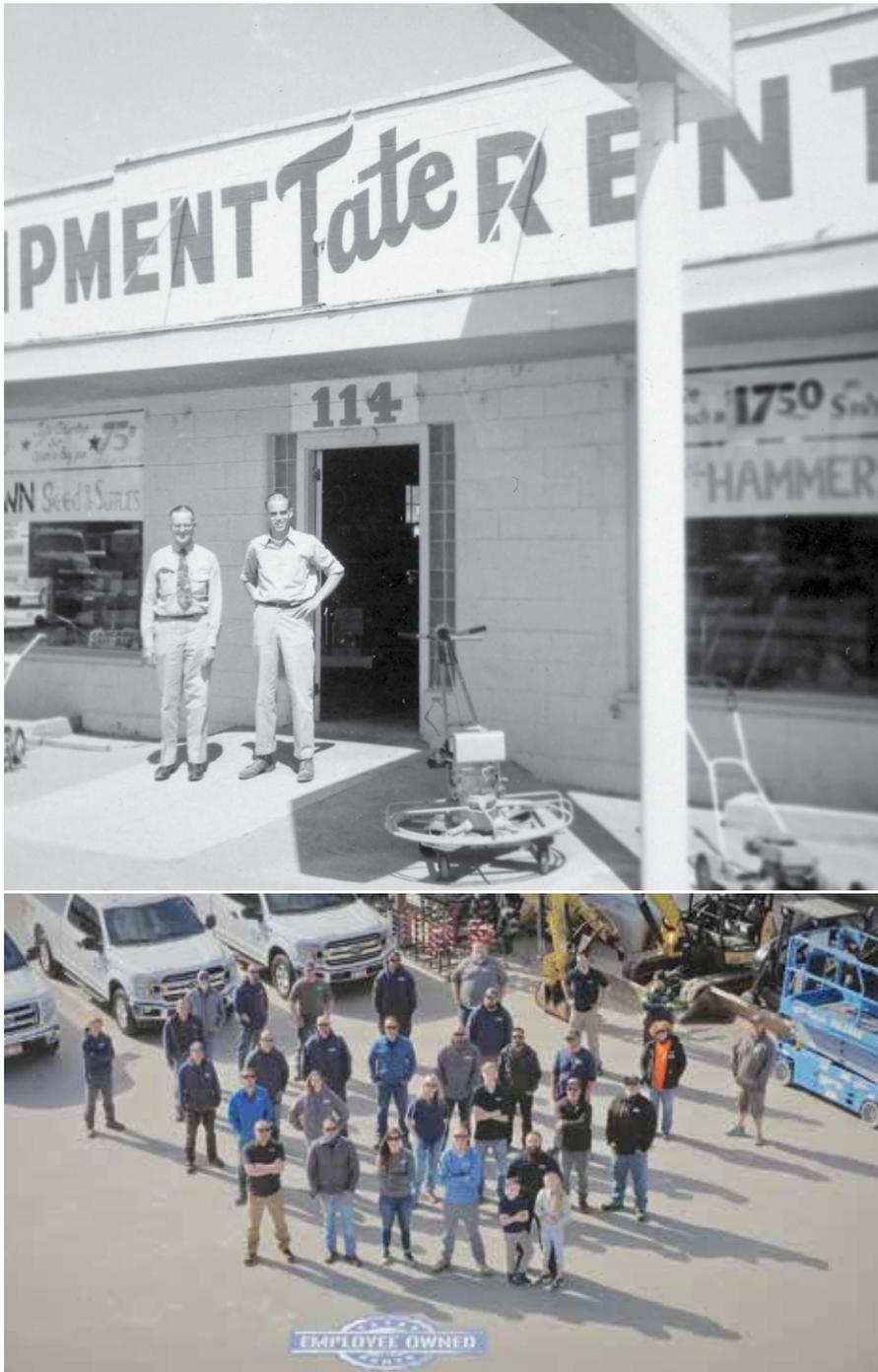
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## Idaho's Largest Commercial Glazing Specialists

# Getting the Job Done Right with Tates Rents for 75 Years

By Brooke Strickland



Tates Rents has been helping build Idaho for the last 75 years. From small subdivisions and apartment complexes to large high-rise buildings in the middle of downtown, the tool and equipment rental company is proud to be a part of what makes Idaho such a popular place to live.

Founded in 1946 by Paul Tate, the company was initially called Safway Scaffolding Company. Over the years, various ladders, liquefied gas, cable tools, and other lines were added to the inventory. In the early 1960s, Paul's son Syd came to join the family business, which had changed names to Tate Scaffolding and Power Tool Company. Syd opened the first branch store, and in 1969, he took over as the company's president so Paul could retire. In the early 1980s, the store was renamed Tates Rents, and the rest is history. The family continued to operate the company until last year, when it was officially sold to its employees via an Employee Stock Ownership Plan. This decision was made to ensure the family's legacy and the business it worked so hard to build continues to serve and be a vital part of communities around Idaho.

Today, the 100-percent employee-owned company is thriving and has the largest inventory of rental equipment available. Contractors or do-it-yourself (DIY) enthusiasts around the Treasure Valley know that they can find any tools or other equipment they need to get the job done right. Whether it is a forklift, an excavator, lawn and garden equipment, or something else, Tates Rents is proud to carry virtually everything people need for a construction, building, or DIY project. The company also has over 50,000 replacement parts from more than 100 suppliers, so chances are if something on a piece of equipment breaks, Tates Rents has the part to fix it.

Haley Hennessey, CEO of Tates Rents said, “Our company culture is treating people right, working hard, and playing hard. We are no longer the single location mom-and-pop scaffolding rental of our history, but we are proud to have maintained those family values. I think I can speak for the team when I say all the employees in the business who had the chance to work for the Tate family greatly admire their generosity and ability to make sure each employee felt like more than a number. Tates has an expansive fleet, eight locations, and big delivery capabilities, but we are most proud of knowing our repeat customers by name, being nimble, and supporting our community.”

It’s a given that Tates Rents has made a lasting impression. In fact, the company has become a fabric of the local community. Driving around town, it is not uncommon to see Tates banners on softball fields, racetracks, rodeos, or other nonprofit events. “We support the things that are important to our customers and employees. This is our main marketing strategy, but we also believe giving back to the community that’s supported us for 75 years is just the right thing to do,” Hennessey said.

Hennessey added that another part of what has made Tates Rents such a success in the local community is its commitment to help people through the lifecycle of the customer experience. “When we rent equipment, we are invested in making sure our customer’s life was made easier and they got a better end product as a result,” she said.

This dedication to customer service is what the company has become known for over the years. As a matter of fact, it is somewhat of a legend, according to Hennessey. “We strive to always go above and beyond to make sure our customers have a solution. Often, we can save DIYers hours of work and buckets of sweat with the right advice and rentals,” she said. “We



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Having been an icon in the community for so long, Tates Rents has surely had its share of weathering different economic climates. But the pandemic was something entirely new and required finding ways to adapt quickly and creatively to maintain positive momentum. In the spring of last year, the company changed its operations daily and moved to a contact-free model of business overnight. “I’m still in awe of the team’s ability to pivot and come to work every day in the face of so much uncertainty,” said Hennessey. “We emerged stronger as a company after facing the challenges of 2020 together.”

As a result of the pandemic, Tates Rents enhanced its online interface, and now customers can begin the rental process through a quote request or chat feature. Showrooms are back open now, which gives team members the opportunity to help customers face to face, but the expansion of online services was well-



received by customers, too. Because of that, the company plans to grow its online services so it can offer added value and convenience to its customer base.

The team at Tates Rents recognizes that the first 75 years were the foundation for the rest of the company's future – and there is a lot to look forward to. The business is continually evolving and doing what it can to serve the booming Treasure Valley. It anticipates the need to grow its fleet and service area and will capitalize on the knowledge and expertise of Tates Rents operators who know the inner workings of the rental industry.

No matter what, Tates Rents is here for the long haul and will maintain its dedication to legendary customer service and selection. Hennessey said, "We don't just rent equipment; we team up with customers to make sure they have what they need for a successful project."

This content represents a revised version of an article that originally appeared in the 2021 *Milestones*, a special publication of the *Idaho Business Review*. ●





# A Reason to Join AND a Reason to Stay

By Sue Fudge, Idaho AGC Senior Health Plan Director

**I**n a world where Walmart and Target are paying \$15 an hour to start and 100 percent college tuition for their employees, companies have no choice but to find creative and innovative ways to attract candidates for open positions. An employee's experience, in the first 90 days of employment, will determine if they stick around or seek another job elsewhere. Setting your company apart from your competitors may not be as hard or expensive as you think. In fact, by making a few changes within your company you can differentiate your company and start attracting top talent by giving them a reason to join and a reason to stay.

It is no secret that turnover, recruiting, and hiring has cost impacts for every business, but losing a new hire within the first 90 days is worse than it may at first appear. A business can expect to spend from 20 to 200 percent of an employee's annual salary to hire and train a replacement. Hard costs associated with turnover include administrative work, temporary workers, overtime, recruiting, interviewing, and selecting replacements, onboarding, and training. The soft costs are loss of production, missed deadlines, disruptions, loss of expertise, and damaged team morale. Luckily, there are simple things your company can do to

combat high turnover rates among new hires.

Hiring candidates that are a good fit for your organization can slow the revolving door to your company. Review the job description, making sure it accurately reflects the position. Be transparent with your candidates. If the position requires working in harsh conditions, tell them during the interview. Set the candidate's expectations and help them decide if the position is a good fit by being honest about the type of work they will be performing. Full disclosure of the good, the bad, and the ugly will save new hires from feeling surprised — or worse, deceived — by the company.

A new hire is an investment. Great onboarding is key to maximizing that investment and creating an experience, early in the new hire's career, that can influence their long-term relationship with the organization. Many companies do not take time to onboard or train new hires in a way that helps them succeed. Organizations should have a consistent, detailed onboarding process. The onboarding process should include a personalized touch, such as swag tailored to the new employee's role. Take the time to understand the new hire's level of knowledge and needs. A seasoned professional will have different needs than someone new to the industry.

Introduce the new hire to the team. Many times, a new hire is forgotten and left feeling very disconnected if introductions are not done. Proper introductions acknowledge the importance of the newest team member. Take the time to encourage the new hire to share information

about themselves and ask existing team members do the same. Adding a program that matches an experienced employee with a new hire to your onboarding is also a great way to help a new hire navigate their new environment. The experienced employee acts as a mentor and checks in with the new hire weekly for the initial month, tapering off through the second and third month. Programs like these are easy to implement at a very low cost to the company.

No one wants to guess what his or her role or responsibilities are when beginning a new job. The new hire's manager should meet with them on day one to review their role and expectations. Depending on the position, shadowing another employee or having a co-worker train is an easy and quick way to begin knowledge transfer. Have you asked for feedback from a new hire when they spent the day training with a co-worker or even a manager? Do you have company processes and procedures

that trainers follow universally? Are your trainers trained? If you answered "no" to any of these questions, your new hires may not last very long. There is nothing more frustrating to a new hire than conflicting messages while training. This can distract and take away from effective training. Be certain when you hand over a new hire for training, you are not sending them into the lion's den. Being a new employee is stressful. Do not compound that stress by placing them with a trainer who is grumpy, disrespectful, has a bad attitude, or is not good at training. A new hire is not likely to stick around if they feel disrespected or made to feel deficient when learning a new skill. Ask your new hires for feedback on their onboarding and training experience. You may have developed it, but they are living it and can tell you what works and what can be improved upon.

Every organization has its culture (even if you are not aware of it, it is there).

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Culture includes how your organization communicates. Lingo or jargon used within the organization can be unfamiliar or confusing to a new hire. The onboarding process should include an explanation of terms your organization uses regularly to help the new hire acclimate. Including some company history in the onboarding process can help a new hire gain insight into the organization's norms, values, and unwritten rules. Many times companies focus on what they do and not why they do what they do. Describing your company's purpose can instill a higher calling in your team members and can be used as the guiding principal for all you do.

Most new hires want to know or understand what it takes to advance within a company. Part of a new hire's onboarding process should include a clear line of sight to their next level and the steps needed to reach it. When the path to growth within the company is obscure or not communicated, your new hire may

pursue employment in an organization that helps their employees reach their full potential. Communicate to your new hires on their progress early and often. Too many times an employer is frustrated with the slow development of a new hire, but there is never a conversation with the new hire to understand what may be preventing them from being successful at their job. Understanding roadblocks and working through them will show the employee that the organization cares and wants them to thrive. Communication is also vital when a new hire is a rock star. Do not assume they know they are doing a great job; have a conversation with them. Giving them a raise is a fantastic way to tell them they are performing above expectations. Tell them that they are getting a raise and why. Having additional pay show up in a paycheck with no explanation can be confusing or set expectations that raises come automatically at certain intervals. Imagine

their disillusion when they are expecting another raise and it never arrives.

A great onboarding experience can improve employee retention. Most organizations do not onboard well. Creating a consistent and comprehensive onboarding process that is engaging and exciting for your new hires can give your company the upper hand when retaining top talent.

These suggestions are simple and inexpensive programs your company can implement to start slowing turnover. The Idaho AGC offers members resources through workforce development. Through work done by the Idaho AGC and AGC of America, Idaho contractors can build and launch a workforce development plan that fits their company. Companies can also lean on their brokers for assistance in hiring, training, and retaining employees. Take the first steps in building an organization that people want to join and give them a reason to stay! ●



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# The Employee Retention Credit Offers Significant Benefits for the Construction Industry

By David Hegstrom – Harris CPAs

**T**he construction industry took a brutal hit when the COVID-19 pandemic drove millions of construction sites to a screeching halt. For some, projects resumed quickly; however, skyrocketing material costs and worldwide supply chain disruptions continue to affect virtually every employer across the industry.

Luckily, the IRS issued welcomed relief for employers that kept employees on their payroll despite the hardships of the pandemic. In a labor-heavy field, the Employee Retention Credit (ERC) could offer significant benefits for many employers across the construction industry.

## WHAT IS THE EMPLOYEE RETENTION CREDIT?

The Employee Retention Credit (ERC) was created by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act in March 2020. Between sweeping lockdowns and strict government mandates, the ERC was designed as an incentive for businesses to keep employees on their payroll during the pandemic. As COVID-19 continued to wreak havoc well into 2021, the IRS extended the ERC through the end of 2021 as part of the American Rescue Plan Act.

## WHO QUALIFIES?

As an industry widely impacted by COVID-19, most construction businesses have a pretty good chance of reaping the

benefits of the ERC. However, determining the extent of that benefit can get a little complicated due to varying rules based on the year in which you qualify as an eligible employer.

On the most basic level, an eligible employer must have experienced at least one of the following two scenarios:

1. The business shut down operations (either entirely or partially) due to government mandates or reduced business.
2. The business experienced a significant quarterly revenue decrease compared to the same quarter in 2019. For 2020, that is 50 percent compared to the same quarter in 2019, and for 2021 it is 20 percent compared to the same quarter in 2019.

It's worth noting that the ERC did not initially allow for employers to obtain both a Payroll Protection Program (PPP) Loan in addition to claiming the ERC. While modifications to the original CARES Act now allow all eligible employers to claim the ERC regardless of receiving a PPP Loan, the same wages cannot be used for both PPP loan forgiveness and the ERC.

### WHAT'S THE BENEFIT?

This part of the equation depends on the calendar year of eligibility and the average number of full-time employees in 2019. Keep in mind that the IRS considers a full-time employee to be one that worked at least 120 hours in a month or averaged 30 hours per week each month.

#### 2020 CREDITS:

- Businesses that averaged 100 or fewer full-time employees may claim up to 50 percent of all wages and health insurance benefits paid to employees up to \$10,000 (\$5,000) per employee for 2020.
- Businesses that averaged more than 100 average full-time employees can only claim the wages and health insurance benefits paid to an employee not providing service due to pandemic-related circumstances.

#### 2021 CREDITS:

To reach more businesses, the employee threshold was increased from 100 to 500 average full-time employees beginning in the 2021 calendar.

- Businesses that averaged 500 or fewer full-time employees in 2021 may receive up to 70 percent of the first \$10,000 of qualified wages paid per full-time employee per quarter. This could add up to a whopping \$28,000 per employee.

### THE BOTTOM LINE

Despite the lingering effects of COVID-19 in the construction world, the ERC offers a shimmer of hope to many businesses in need of a financial boost. With few restrictions, you could use this extra cash for anything from equipment updates to promotions and marketing campaigns. Talk to your accountant about how you can take advantage of this credit for your construction company. ●



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# Building Committee Action Plan Facilitates Growth in Idaho



By Sean Schupack,  
Idaho AGC Director of Government Affairs

Post-session, the Building Committee also examined the possibility of new P3 funding legislation in Idaho. Public-private partnership statutes are currently utilized in other states to create a consistent mechanism to allow investment in all types of projects from jails and courthouses to parking garages. Because of the constitutional requirements in Idaho in regards to financing debt, the investors in these projects have been hesitant to consider Idaho in the past. Through the initial discovery process, the Committee has found that Idaho municipalities are already seeing success in this area without legislative action. As a result, the committee decided that legislation would only complicate the matter, and elected not to take action.

All year long, the Idaho AGC and its committees are working for the betterment of the industry. We do this by staying on top of an ever-changing landscape, interceding to stop bad policy from going into effect, creating or shepherding forward policy that is beneficial to the industry, and educating industry partners and policy-makers. As an organization, the Idaho AGC is excited to expand the engagement and effectiveness of the Building Committee.

Moving forward, the Building Committee will be taking up a variety of issues including public works licensing for modular builders, consistency in local building codes, educating owners on CM/GC contracts, and monitoring the electrical apprentice ratio. If you would like to serve on the Building Committee or join the Committee list serve to stay informed on these matters, please email us at [sschupack@idahoagc.org](mailto:sschupack@idahoagc.org). ●

**271,449.** That is the number of new residents Idaho has seen move into the state in the last decade, according to the latest census bureau report. Over 50,000 of those have been in the last year. The tremendous growth is not just evident in the Treasure Valley but in every corner of the state, from Idaho Falls to Coeur d'Alene, the latter of which being recently featured in a *Wall Street Journal* article as one of the fastest growing real estate price indexes in the country.

All of this growth is fueling an unprecedented demand in building construction, creating new challenges and opportunities for our industry, but as the state faces incredible growth, policymakers are already galloping to keep up and need a trusted and unified voice from the construction industry to help guide their policymaking. The Idaho AGC Building Committee is that voice, providing direction on public policy positions and other decisions that directly impact the building contractor community.

The 2021 legislative session proved to be one of the longest in history but also produced a number of wins for

vertical builders, the most important of which was defending QBS (quality-based selection) as a delivery method for public works projects. The Idaho AGC led a broad coalition of organizations, including the Idaho Association of Cities, Counties, Architects, and Engineers, to not only successfully defend against the dismantling of CM/GC but also pass a bill improving the current statute.

During the 2021 Legislative Session, the Building Committee was also made aware of an effort by an out-of-state organization that would cause direct harm to contractors and to Idaho's taxpayers. The new contract method pushed by this organization would add a seven-plus percent surcharge on certain public works contracts, as well as a number of other onerous requirements, while at the same time allowing very little flexibility for input price increases. Since then, the AGC has made it a top priority to educate stakeholders and public owners on the true costs of this contract method and to stop its implementation in Idaho. This ongoing effort is expected to continue throughout the rest of the year and most likely into 2022.

# The Benefits of Offering Benefits

By Sue Fudge, Idaho AGC Senior Health Plan Director



**I**n today's competitive market, small employers cannot afford not to offer their employees benefits.

While employers with fewer than 50 full-time (or equivalent) employees are not required to offer medical coverage to employees, employers that do offer benefits such as medical, dental, vision, or more put their companies in a much better position to hire and retain top talent. While hiring and retaining talent in this competitive market is high on a company's list of priorities, offering benefits has other advantages as well.

Not having employer-sponsored benefits impacts your employees, and your company, in ways you may not have considered. The additional worry and work of securing coverage on their own, or worse, going without adequate medical coverage, has an impact on employee performance and morale. Not having access to medical basics like annual physicals, immunizations, and wellness visits can all weigh on an employee and can lead to absenteeism, presentism, or an employee coming to work when they are not feeling well, spreading illness to

others in the workplace. All of this leads to decreased performance.

Offering benefits that include health care can eliminate some of the worry for employees, while the ability to see a doctor on a regular basis or when sick will help employees get healthy and stay healthy. This adds up to less time away from work or working while ill, and more employees focused on their job and working at peak capacity, all contributing factors to a more productive workforce.

Employee benefits may also create a tax advantage for your company. The cost of many benefits offered to employees can be deducted as a business expense for the company. If the employees pay a portion

of the cost, their deductions can also be set up as a pre-tax deduction, giving the employee a tax benefit as well. Utilize the services of your health care broker and CPA to ensure your company is getting all the tax advantages by offering a benefits package to its workforce.

Do not let shopping for an employee benefit package that fits your company be a deterrent. The Idaho AGC Health Plan is available to most Idaho AGC members. The plan has brokers throughout the state of Idaho appointed to quote and sell Idaho AGC Health Plans. If you are interested in learning more or getting a quote for your organization call (208) 344-9755 or email [healthplanteam@idahoagc.org](mailto:healthplanteam@idahoagc.org). ●



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# Section 179D Tax Deduction for Energy Efficiency Made Permanent

**A** recently enacted spending package made permanent the Section 179D deduction (179D) that was scheduled to expire at the end of 2020.

## WHAT IS THE SECTION 179D TAX DEDUCTION?

179D is a section of the IRS (internal revenue service) tax code that allows a deduction of up to \$1.80 per square foot for energy-efficient commercial building property (EECBP), including interior lighting, the building envelope, and mechanical systems. Keep in mind tax codes are a form of law that govern the way business and individuals contribute their fair share to local, state, and federal governments.

The 179D tax deduction is available to taxpayers who have built and renovated their property since 2006, as well as those who have designed/built government-owned buildings such as architects, engineers, and contractors, in an open tax year.

## HOW MUCH IS THE 179D ENERGY TAX DEDUCTION WORTH?

The maximum 179D tax deduction is \$1.80 per square foot of qualifying property. As an example, 100,000 square foot commercial buildings may qualify for up to a \$180,000 deduction under 179D.

## GOVERNMENT-OWNED BUILDINGS

### WHO CAN TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE 179D TAX DEDUCTION?

The “designer” of government-owned EECBP is eligible for the 179D tax credit. A designer creates the technical specifications for installation of EECBP and could include architects, engineers, general contractors, and subcontractors. However, a person that merely installs, repairs, or maintains the property is not a designer. Note: projects may have more than one qualifying designer. It is advantageous to pursue this deduction as early in the process as possible. If you were the designer of the EECBP of a government-owned facility placed in service in an open tax year (typically the last three), you could benefit from the 179D deduction.

### A RECENT EXAMPLE

We worked with an architectural firm who designed the EECBP for several government-owned buildings to obtain the 179D deduction, spanning the prior three tax years. A total of

799,000 square feet were analyzed, netting them a \$872,400 deduction.

## PRIVATELY OWNED BUILDINGS

### WHO CAN TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE 179D DEDUCTION?

Privately owned properties placed in service as of January 1, 2006 could benefit from the 179D deduction. The deduction is available for building owners, as well as tenants who pay for and are depreciating the energy-efficient improvements.

### A RECENT EXAMPLE

We worked with a manufacturing company to obtain the 179D deduction. The manufacturing facility underwent an 183,000 square foot expansion, which included installation of both energy efficient HVAC and lighting. By gathering the necessary information and completing the certification, the client received over \$325,000 in deductions on their current year tax return.

## HOW IS THE 179D TAX DEDUCTION OBTAINED?

To claim the 179D deduction, energy savings must be certified by an unrelated “qualified individual” who is a contractor or professional engineer licensed in the same jurisdiction as the building. A site visit of the property is required, as well as energy modeling using software approved by the Department of Energy.

Eide Bailly’s in-house energy incentives team includes professional engineers and energy modelers who can generate and certify these deductions once a proper audit is done.



*Travis Burgess, CPA*

Partner

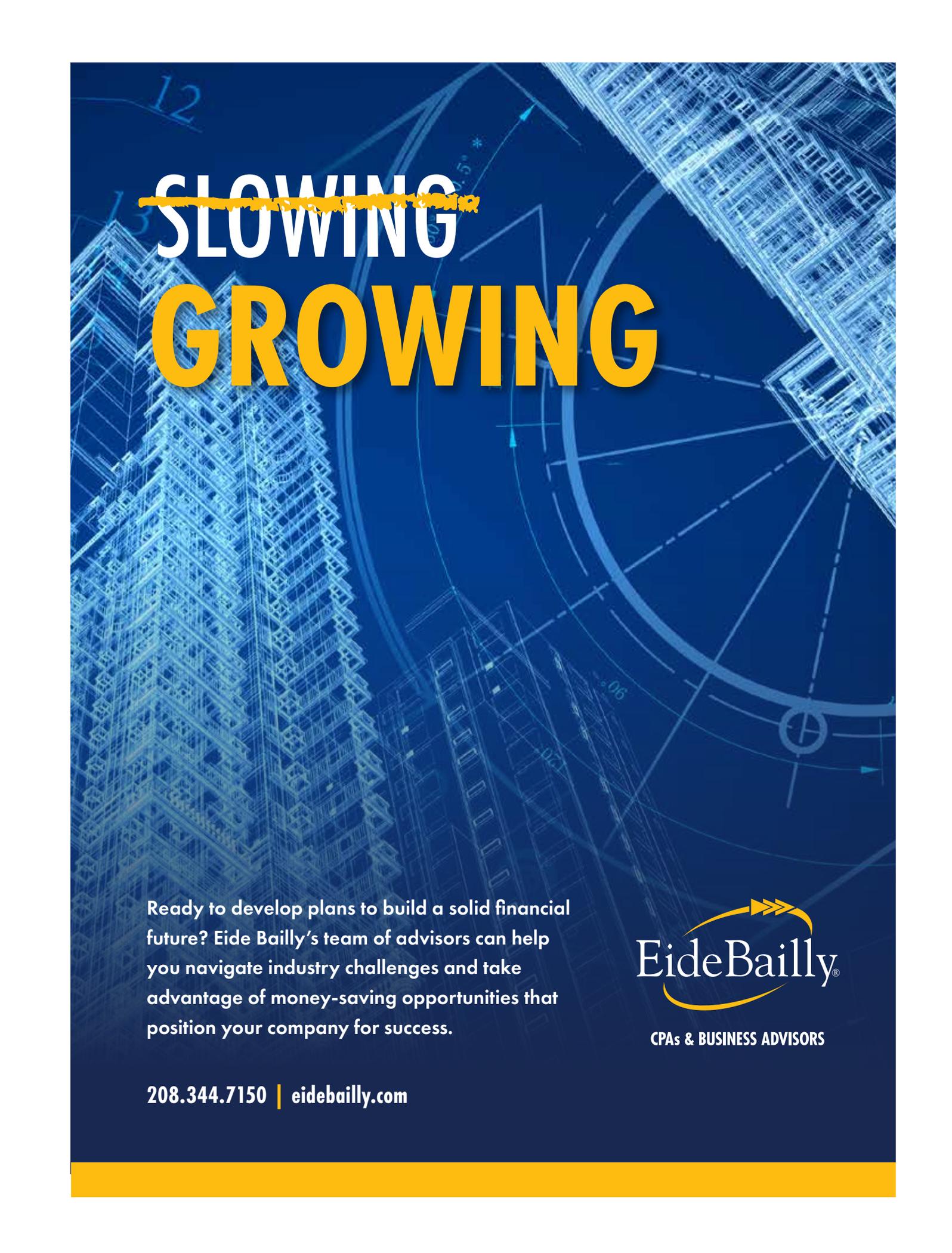
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## NORTHWEST AGC CHAPTERS RETIREMENT PLAN:

# What Are You Offering Your Employees?

By Grace Josten, NWPS Consultant

**O**ne of the many reasons why associations exist is to cultivate services and benefits for their members.

In this case, the Northwest chapters of AGC have combined efforts to offer a quality retirement and 401(k) plan exclusively for our members, and because it is specifically designed to meet the unique needs of the construction industry, this isn't an ordinary off-the-shelf plan.

Open to all AGC member companies from the Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Alaska chapters, the association plan has over 6,000 participants from more than 120 employers, with more than \$280 million in aggregate plan assets. Each AGC

chapter in the Northwest region has staff and member seats on the Board of Trustees that oversees the Plan Trust. Trustees meet regularly along with the third-party administrators at Northwest Plan Services (NWPS) and investment advisors at Reliant Consulting and Research to deliver a superior and competitive program to our member companies and their employees.

Those employees know that a company offering them a good benefits package is a company that values its employees — a company worth staying on with long-term.

Employers know the competition for skilled workers is fierce, and must do what they can to retain their productive, dedicated, and trained workforce.

Companies also know that in order

to be competitive, any business tax deductions are helpful (are you bidding prevailing wage and public works projects that require a bona fide benefits program? Did you know you can save on FICA, FUTA, and other payroll taxes by contributing fringe benefit money into a pension?) Anything that can be done to minimize the payroll tax burden improves a company's cash flow.

Options for employers include 401(k) and Roth 401(k), Davis Bacon (prevailing wage), safe harbor, matching, and profit-sharing contributions. Employers have the ability to award various classes of employees with different levels of profit-sharing contributions and participants may take advantage of a multi-fund

approach that offers a full range of investment options. As long as they meet IRS guidelines, employers can create a program for office and salaried employees or project-specific employees, with no set-up fees or employer cost outlays.

The AGC Team at NWPS provides individualized support to help you design a plan that is compliant and best meets your company's retirement package goals. The Form 5500 tax filing is done for you, the trustees take responsibility for the fiduciary duty and oversight of the administration, and your accounting department won't have to deal with the monthly billing of employer and employee fees.

All fees are paid by plan participants, so there are no invoices to employers. The investment fund expenses vary by mutual fund, ranging from 0.035 percent to 1.10 percent. Administrative expenses depend on the employee's balance and the overall employer balance in the program. As of June 2021, the weighted average investment expense ratio was

0.25 percent, and the average participant administrative fee was 0.30 percent. In total, the average participant paid 0.55 percent in fees, well under the fee rate of most other plans of this size and type. Further, the Plan is expected to become even more competitive over time as the Board constantly assesses whether fees can be further reduced or waived. In Q3 2021, for example, no participants will have any administrative fees charged – the Plan's efficient budget management and an expanding market have resulted in a large enough fee reserve that all individuals will get to enjoy a fee holiday.

Not only will your company be supported, so will your participants: each individual receives quarterly statements to keep him or her current on account activity, and can easily view and manage the AGC account online 24/7. Employees can contact the AGC Participant Benefits Center for assistance with transactions or with inquiries about account activity. Any employee who would like to speak to an advisor about investments or savings

strategies can work with the Plan's certified financial advisor at no cost.

In addition to great support, the plan offers a lot of choice. Individual participants can pick and choose from among 29 participant-directed investment choices, including 12 Vanguard institutional class "target retirement date" funds, and can make changes and control their portfolios as they wish. The Plan's investment lineup is closely monitored by experts to ensure that each option continues to exhibit strong performance and low fees for that investment type.

If you don't currently offer a retirement plan, the Northwest AGC Chapters Retirement Plan may be the solution. If you already have another plan in place, consider comparing your current fees and plan flexibility to the AGC Plan. You may be pleasantly surprised. The Northwest AGC Chapters Retirement and 401(k) Plan is a robust AGC member benefit we encourage you to take advantage of. ●



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# Leveraging Data to Empower Operators and Boost Output

By Tyler Simmons, Technology Business Manager



Productivity and uptime are critical to the success of any organization, but can be hard to measure without the right technology. The technology team at Western States Cat has been able to set clients up for success with effective solutions to reduce maintenance cost, increase uptime, engage operators, and utilize all of the data available for their machines using tools like Cat Inspect and Cat Productivity.

Our goal is always to help the client to leverage data and information to make more informed decisions about their operations. Sometimes improvements can be as simple as helping clients to develop solutions and plans to incorporate the technology into their operation long-term. Connecting our clients to the best solutions for their needs is a big part of what our team does; after talking through their goals, we can assist in implementing a business process that effectively captures and manages data on each machine, regardless of manufacturer.

For example, a recent client needed a solution to improve productivity through increased machine uptime, but also encourage a stronger sense of operator ownership and accountability for machine health. After a two-hour on-site assessment to understand what the client was already doing and what they needed moving forward, our technology team recommended using the free Cat Inspect App to develop a customized inspection for the whole fleet that operators could perform at the beginning of each shift.

Before they adopted this process, machine maintenance

issues like low oil levels would stop a machine in the middle of a shift. Now, with a tablet assigned to each machine and a regular inspection process in place, operators create machine-specific databases of inspection information and have been identifying maintenance issues before they impact machine uptime.

The Western States team also provided the client with manuals and training materials to onboard new operators in the future — as operators with less experience come onto the jobsite, the client will have the tools to help introduce them to the inspection process and foster a sense of accountability in machine health from the beginning.

Another client adapted Cat Productivity into their business, and quickly saw a significant improvement in their overall efficiency. With new access to insights into their machines and material load, supervisors could see hour-by-hour payload and tonnage reports from each machine and make corrections as necessary, rather than waiting weeks or even months to find out whether or not the operation was on schedule.

Solutions like these are beneficial for the organization as a whole and for the equipment operators. With the introduction of new technology, clients are able to reduce downtime, maintenance costs, damage, and safety issues in the long run. Whether a client is approaching the use of technology from a productivity standpoint, maintenance and repairs standpoint, or an operational standpoint, Western States Cat has the knowledge and resources to help them overcome the challenges that can come with owning and operating a heavy equipment fleet. ●

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