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Editor's Message

Make Time, Make a Difference
in Your Future

by Ben Hershey

"A ground bird is pushed back to earth again and again as he flings himself into the teeth of the changing winds; a soaring bird covers immense distances by taking advantage of the winds of change by riding and being guided by them—usually faster though perhaps not as directly to his ultimate goal."

—author unknown, circa 1975

For most of us, March is a month of change; out go the winter grey skies, in comes the early spring sun. As for all of us in this industry, I am hopeful that we are starting to see the proverbial "light at the end of the tunnel" of this economy; though there are those detractors who think we are still far off. I think I can speak for everyone—this has been a challenging time trying to push forward in a constantly changing economic wind. Every one of our businesses has had to make some very tough choices when it comes to personnel and operations. Whether we are laying people off (including Qualtim, our SBCA management company, needing to lay off seven staff members in 2008) or reducing some of our operations, we have had to make some tough personnel choices. I know that in our business we have had to get very creative in how we attack what little business is out there, while maintaining a quality team. Many of us have had to look at two people and ask, who can I afford and who is going to help our company through this? But, the two assessments of "who can I afford" and "who will help the most" are clearly not the same. Keeping good people and being creative with how you compensate them right now can be the key to your future success.

Personnel and Safety is the theme of the magazine this month. As I have said in earlier articles, it is at times like these that companies that continue to invest in their people, train and prepare for the upturn will be successful on the other side. Companies that turn and hide their head in the sand? Well, you might have an incredible hill to climb if you expect to profit in the future. And, I cannot say enough about safety in our facilities. Safety must be our first priority to the men and women who work for each of us.

SBCA has numerous programs to assist you in keeping your employees trained: the Operation Safety program, In-Plant WTCA QC, In-Plant Basic Training, TTT program, ORisk program, the TRUCK program and the CRANE program. Yes, you might have to pay a little bit now, but what happens when times are busy? Most of us put off these training opportunities so we can focus on the customer pressures of the day. You could be missing the opportunity to improve your team, your company, your customer. Yes, even your customers. Here is yet another area where you can use SBCA to help you train them. SBCA offers many continuing education programs (TTWs) on subjects such as bracing, reading truss placement plans and truss design drawings, quality, building codes, among many others.

One of the opportunities or challenges (depending how you look at it) our industry is going to face is that as we have downsized our companies, some of the employees we have laid off will invariably seek out other opportunities in other industries. They are not going to wait around for the housing industry to improve; they have their own welfare to consider. So one alternative is for us to try to hire personnel from each other, which we all know does not work and only pushes wages out of line. A more sustainable option is to bring new "blood" into the industry. Now is a good time for you to review the training programs above so as you hire these individuals, you have the tools in place to train them along side your own training program.

Our SBCA Insurance Broker Program can not only assist you with your insurance

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at a glance

- We have had to get creative in how we attack what little business is out there, while maintaining a quality team.
- It is at times like these that companies that continue to train and prepare their staff for the upturn will be successful on the other side.
- Turn to page 18 to read how Tri-County Truss earned the VPP (Voluntary Protection Program) award from OSHA.

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needs; but have you ever asked them to come out and do an OSHA-type risk management walk through of your facility? Our company does this once a year (in addition to the visits that they normally make). Not only does it allow us to address any issues that we might not be aware of, but they also refresh some of the safety talk materials we have for our teams.

One of our members, Tri-County Truss in Washington, even went above and beyond and earned the VPP (Voluntary Protection Program) award from OSHA; see article starting on page 18. My congratulations to them on what I am sure was a very rigorous process, but one that will reward them in the future.

So, let's get back to that soaring bird above. As you have read this article, I am sure you said, "yes, I agree we need to be doing this, but we just can't right now." Well, I have to ask, when will it be the right time? If you are not using these SBCA programs, do you think you will use them in the future? Are you going to be that bird that just gets pushed back to the ground in a fruitless effort against the wind, or are you going to soar above and adjust with the wind so that you can reach your goals? Ponder on that, set a goal and act on it.

Remember what I said in last month's article about our loyal BCMC Exhibitors and our **SBC Magazine** advertisers? Did you take some time to call them and see where they can assist you? If you did not, then I encourage you to do this. Of course they would like to have the opportunity to sell you equipment, plates, or services, and you should make the decision to give them priority in your purchasing decisions; but remember they can assist you too.

The SBCA staff, **SBC Magazine** advertisers and BCMC exhibitors are here to help. Call them, make the time, and make a difference for your future. Have a great month! **SBC**

SBC Magazine encourages the participation of its readers in developing content for future issues. Do you have an article idea for a future issue or a topic that you would like to see covered? Email your thoughts and ideas to editor@sbcmag.info.



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The mission of Structural Building Components Magazine (SBC) is to increase the knowledge of and to promote the common interests of those engaged in manufacturing and distributing structural building components. Further, SBC strives to ensure growth, continuity and increased professionalism in our industry, and to be the information conduit by staying abreast of leading-edge issues. SBC's editorial focus is geared toward the entire structural building component industry, which includes the membership of the Structural Building Components Association (SBCA). The opinions expressed in SBC are those of the authors and those quoted, and are not necessarily the opinions of Truss Publications or SBCA.

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Component Collapses Not Responsible for Firefighter Deaths in 2008

The U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) posted its provisional 2008 firefighter fatality report in January with data that closely resembles that of previous years (data collected from 1990 - 2008). Tragically, there were 114 reported on-duty firefighter deaths in 2008. The three most common sources of fatality were heart attack/stroke (50 deaths), wild land fires (21 deaths), and vehicle crashes (29 deaths).

Based on USFA's findings of the most common sources of firefighter fatalities, structural collapses involving structural building components didn't make the list. However, structural building components are often improperly singled out as one of the main causes of firefighter deaths in the United States. The recent Underwriters Laboratory fire service training program (funded by a Department of Homeland Security grant) online education series, "Structural Stability of Engineered Lumber in Fire Conditions," leads viewers to believe that building components overwhelmingly cause firefighter deaths. And in several areas of the country the fire service has proposed, supported and passed building labeling legislation focused on trusses that singles out structures made with structural building components.

How can we bridge the gap between the reality reflected in the recent USFA report and assertions against structural building components? Communication and education is the answer.

The Structural Building Components Association (SBCA) is working through our membership and chapters in concert with the education material that the Carbeck Structural Components Institute (CSCI) has created to educate the fire service. Through its local chapters, SBCA has provided 35 truss plant tours, ten live educational programs, three fire demonstrations and participated in two tradeshow for firefighter groups. CSCI also offers free online education about how trusses react in fire situations and provides many other fire-related industry resources to anyone who is interested in learning about our industry. Through our members and chapters, we have mailed and hand delivered over 1150 Carbeck CDs and publications to interested fire departments, seeking to build relationships where meaningful conversations can take place.

Communication and cooperation have the potential to positively impact relationships between the fire service and our industry in ways that do not always seem apparent. Simply put, there is great value for our industry and our members by taking the time to learn, discuss and understand each others' points of view.

For more information about the resources available through SBCA and CSCI, contact Melanie Birkeland (mbirkeland@qualtim.com). **SBC**

SBCextra

More of the SBC stories you love, plus a few words from our industry vendors.

Don't miss our fresh online news vehicle, highlighting a bonus **SBC** feature article and important news from **SBC** advertisers.

In this first addition, we offer "A High-Caliber Quest" by Marisa Hirsch, a look at why two facilities chose to step outside their companies in order to step up quality.

Go to www.sbcmag.info/sbcextra to read all about it!

STRUCTURAL BUILDING COMPONENTS™

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